

## **Opinion Piece: "Otaku -What's So Great About Them?"**

You might be asking yourself, "What the heck is an Otaku?" Well the answer is that Otaku's are a bunch of people who enjoy anime, manga, cosplaying (dressing up and role playing in costumes) and pretty much anything from the Japanese culture to an obsessive extent. Strictly speaking the "otaku" label should only be applied to extremist fans, but nowadays many enthusiasts (hard and soft core) are also adopting the label. Put simply, if you enjoy the different forms of Japanese media you can call yourself an "otaku" (I do!)

Many people in society regard fans like myself as freaks, but are we? Just because an individual enjoys something other than generic, mainstream pop culture shouldn't mean they are ostracised or looked down upon.

Twice a year we dedicated fans roll up for the long awaited Animania Festival. The what festival? The Animania Festival! This weekend festival springs up in the Australian Technology Park in Eveleigh. Along with other associated events like Smash, this is an event that involves the appreciation of anime, manga, music, games and Japanese culture by the Otaku community.

Events like these are hosted on a much larger scale in overseas countries, and are held more frequently as well, which sucks! The point of these events is to allow us Otaku's the chance to congregate, communicate, collect and above all have fun.

Animania was the first festival of its kind to debut in NSW for us with its inaugural event in 2002, attracting over 500 Otaku's, and to this day attracts even more excited fans from all around Australia as it tours the continent. Unfortunately Animania will not be going to Brisbane this year, and it remains to be seen whether Animania will make its appearance for the fanbase's of Melbourne or Adelaide as well, which would really suck!

But enough with the negativity. What really makes this event so great for us? Or rather. What do we otaku' make so great about this event? The answer. We otaku' make this event so memorable and a repeated success by just turning up.

The event itself is important but it is we otaku who keep it around. By buying the tickets we support the organisers who go out of their way year after year to make this event spectacular as they organise the events, vendors, guest speakers and competitions. We otaku also contribute to this event by volunteering as helpers and go out of our way to receive the training required to oversee the different areas of the festival.

We also ensure that the vendors come back to sell their wares year after year by buying their cool and crazy products, ensuring they make a profit from the experience of seeing us dress in wacky outfits that you would never normally see in your everyday life.

Also we as people are an important quality to comment on. I feel that as a community we are vastly underrated and viewed as fat shut in pimple faced geeks with nothing better to do than play video games, watch anime/cartoons, read graphic novels and surf the net. Well, I must tell you... You are wrong! We are fun loving individuals like any other person! We come from all walks of life and come in all different sizes and appearances! And we are what make this event so great and the toast of the otaku community!