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Reflective Piece

The podcast assignment is very different from the previous ones; first of all, our theme is not limited within the field of music any more. For a couple of days, I had many ideas of various things to write about, but I couldn't make the final choice. Then professor Dean explained the prompt of this assignment in class; he mentioned that we should choose something that we are not only interested in, but moreover, have expertise in. After that class, the idea of Japanese anime got stuck in my head, since I have watched tons of them, and furthermore, looked up some research about the industry in my spare time. The question has thus moved on to which aspect of anime I should put my focus on. In order to make it easier during the research process, I decided to narrow the topic down to technological changes in recent animes. However, it turned out later that talking about 3D effects alone took up around 5 minutes in my podcast, so I chose to cut some other techniques that I have noticed (and have found less supporting research on.)

The form of the podcast itself was fairly new to me as well. I didn't have a clear idea of it until I listened to the Mario piece. It helped a lot in terms of identifying word choice, general tone, and other genre-specific patterns. I realized that there were a lot more elements to play with than writing alone—I mean, we had several classes dedicated to technical issues of recording with Audacity or Garage Band—no one would ever expect that from a writing class, but it turned out to be a lot of fun.

For the main audience, I pictured them as devoted anime fans, so there was no need to provide much background knowledge within the field. I also wanted to create an illusion that I

have been doing the Genshiken podcast consistently, so I added "instead of our *weekly routines*," to lead my introduction. The name of my program, "Genshiken," came from a well-known Japanese anime meaning "The Society for the Study of Modern Visual Culture." Being an anime fan myself, I tried to show pathos by telling a story at the beginning to generate a sense of intimacy. I also invited participation and conversations by starting and ending with questions.

The whole podcasting experience has been enjoyable for me. Even the most difficult part was simply to find a quiet place to record—and though I thought it would be totally embarrassing and/or awkward to record myself in front of my roommate, the process appeared to be much easier than what I expected, and my voice did not sound so bad either. Compared to previous assignments, the podcast was neither the easiest nor the least time-consuming one for me, but I was more excited and driven when doing this piece. I found it interesting writing about soccer anthems and anime songs too, however, I felt more connected to this topic of my own choice, and I definitely had a great time learning and playing with it. I hope others can share my joy listening to my podcast as well.

Podcast Script

[Insert Sound Effect: Beat]

[Insert Music: "El riu Des Ptals"]

Host: Welcome to Genshiken radio. I am your host Zhinan Li. Before starting our show today, let me first ask a question: while watching animes, have you guys ever wondered how they are made? I didn't when I was little, but that was before *Gundam Seed* came out. I was so fascinated by the battles between mobile suits (robots) that I looked up all the information I could find—from director's comments to seiyuu events—ALL of them. That was when I learned a lot about

the stories behind the stories, and now I watch each show with two perspectives—not only do I seek entertainment from it, I also try and figure out what happened behind the scenes that might lead to certain decisions presented on screen. So, instead of doing our regular anime reviews, we are going behind the scenes and have a three-week special edition on technological changes in recent animes.

For this week's topic, I'm choosing **[Insert Sound Effect: Drum roll]** 3D effects! While 3D movies are growing rapidly in number, producers of Japanese animes cannot seem to resist the urge to jump on the bandwagon. From last year's *Attack on Titan*, to the most recent *Tokyo Ghoul*, 3D effects are used in defining moments to depict grand scenarios, enhance the intense atmosphere, and probably most importantly, to draw eyeballs from the audience. However, it certainly costs a lot more to adapt this effect than going with the regular drawing process. Being a fan of trendy tech advances myself, I cannot stop worrying about financial issues for production companies whenever I watch a relatively long clip with 3D backgrounds, since I have already witnessed—and been hurt by—so many shows that have used, or sometimes abused, this eye-catching effect, only to disappoint their viewers with the painful consequence of terrible drawings in the following episodes. **[Insert Sound Effect: Why?]**

The author of *Anime Bijinesu*, Masuda Hiromichi, has estimated that the average cost expended by a Japanese production studio is 11,000,000 JPY per 30 minutes, while in major US animation studios would spend the equivalent of hundreds of millions of Japanese Yen for the same length (Masuda). Therefore, it is a common pattern that Japanese production companies seek subcontractors in Korea and China for cheaper labor, while keeping the core team within Japan to ensure overall quality. However, when it comes to circumstances (i.e. the overuse of 3D techniques) that companies cannot afford the Japanese crew at all, the stability and continuity of

original pictures are thus not guaranteed. In addition, among overseas studios, there is also a wide range of prices that correspond to different levels of drawing skills; when the budget cut is large, production companies might not be able to find a subcontractor that can produce decent drawings. Moreover, the subcontractors are also free to further outsource their projects to other studios with cheaper prices; not only do the final staff recieve less money, they face a closer deadline as well, since valuable hours are lost in transferring the work. "Sometimes the pictures are traced, colored, and examined overnight, and transported back to Japan" (Mori). In these kinds of situations, TV stations have to do simple—or no—examinations of the anime in order to make the schedule, and that obviously cannot leave the viewers satisfied.

[Insert Music: The Dreamers]

However, does the application have any causal relationship with viewers' cognitive and emotional engagement with a certain show? Truth is, high costs and favorable outcomes do not necessarily go hand in hand. Research being done on fantasy films reveals that "the viewers from the 3D condition rated their experience as more perceptually realistic and reported being less distracted during the film than their 2D counterparts" (Rooney & Eilis). However, taking average anime-watching conditions into consideration, I would highly doubt if the "distraction-eliminating" result still holds; if it does, is it helpful, or even relevant, to your viewing experience as a whole? In addition, the research also shows that "no significant group differences were observed in self-reported emotional arousal or satisfaction with the whole experience" (Rooney & Eilis).

Is 3D like former tech changes in motion pictures such as color, wide screen, and HD? Can it actually lead a revolution, or is it just another frenzy we are only obsessed with for a short time? In my opinion, the use of 3D in anime serves mostly as a signal of how much confidence the

sponsors and producers have in the show. However, when the extra expense takes up too much of the budget, the production team is taking the branches for the roots.

How do you feel about the use of 3D effects? What other experimental technologies do you want me to talk about? Leave your comments, and I will get back to you guys in next week's Genshiken radio! And that's it for today, have a nice weekend! **[Insert Sound Effect: Buzz Beat]**

Works Cited

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