

ALL EYES ON ANIME

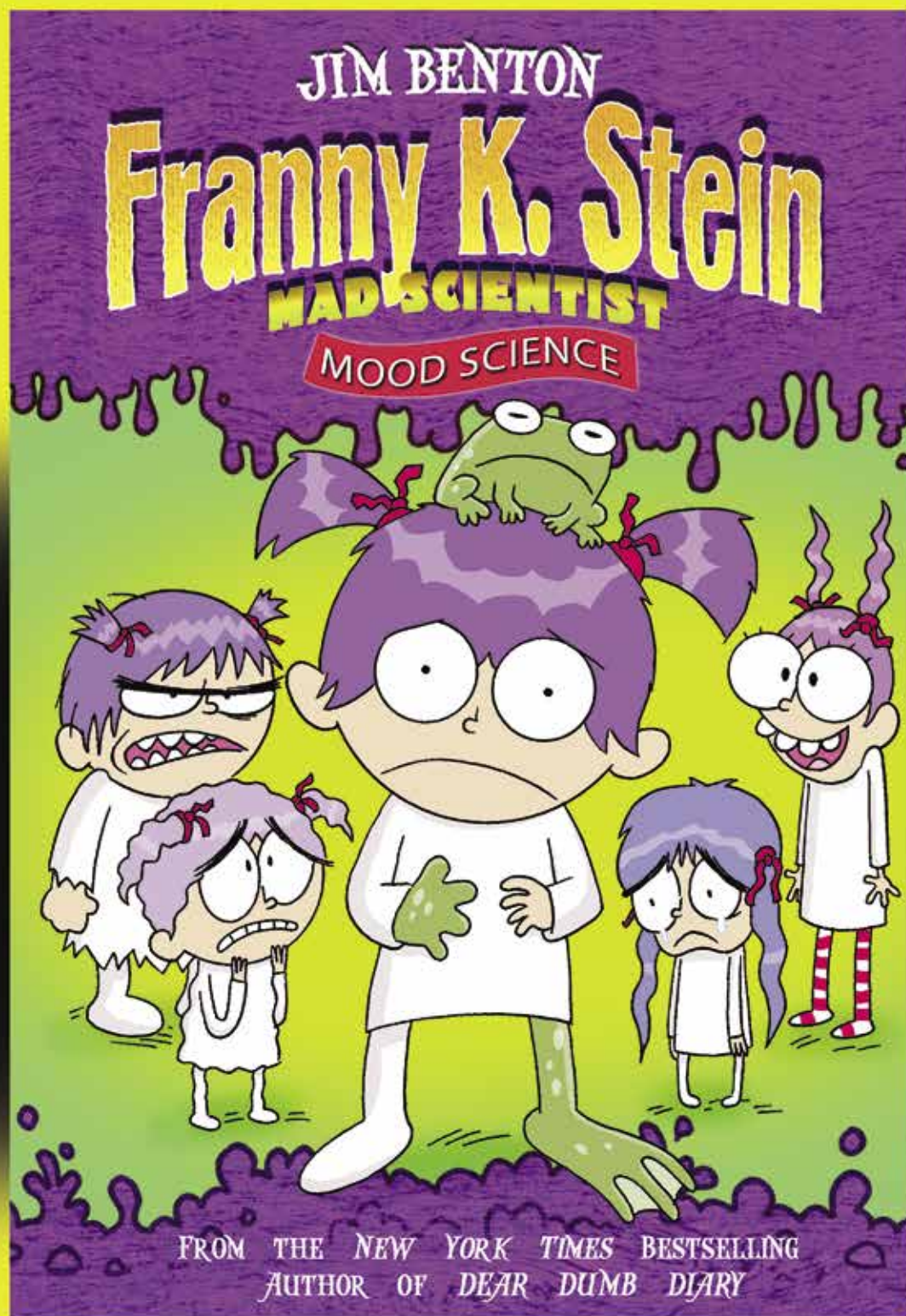
Anime's ultra-distinctive aesthetic, edgy undertones and emotional weight have long made it a cult favorite with teens, adults and legions of Pokémon-loving kids. But with the rise of global streamers like Netflix, the genre has exploded, hitting a much wider demographic and driving demand across TV, film and books.

Exploring the impact of this resurgence, *Kidscreen* takes a look at the state of anime today, the growing popularity of manga—anime's source material—and how producers around the world are interpreting and adapting the genre. What emerges is not unlike anime content itself: a complex world with vexing challenges, colorful characters and a constantly evolving storyline.






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THE FUTURE OF KIDS ANIME

The anime market is hotter than ever as streamers continue to drive more and more demand. It's traditionally been a complex genre that's hard to break into, but there may be new opportunities brewing for hybrid anime series that can travel.

BY: JEREMY DICKSON

From auteur-based domestic beginnings in the early 20th century, to a global breakout driven by brands like Astro Boy, Sailor Moon, Dragon Ball Z and Ghost in the Shell, anime has long since outgrown its niche genre status.

And today's proliferation of streaming services such as Netflix, Disney+, Amazon and Sony-owned American anime SVOD Crunchyroll is fueling demand for both Japanese-made anime—often classified demographically for children (kodomo), girls (shōjō), boys (shōnen) and adults—and anime-influenced content produced elsewhere.

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Crunchyroll and Sony Pictures released *Dragon Ball Super: Super Hero* theatrically this summer, exceeding expectations with a US\$21-million domestic opening weekend



The anime market worldwide is expected to increase in value by 7.5% to US\$52 billion by 2032, according to Future Market Insights, with sales of content to online platforms driving much of this growth. And while Japan is likely to maintain the largest share of this business (it cornered 43% last year), other regions are starting to emerge as players—particularly the Middle East and Africa, where the anime market is predicted to expand by nearly 10% in the next 10 years.

Silas Hickey is a former Cartoon Network APAC executive who recently co-founded an animation studio called Custom Nuts (*Amy & the Afterlife*) in Tokyo. He says that while the global anime market hasn't reached a saturation point yet, domestic factors in Japan like an over-supply in certain anime genres, the cyclical nature of content trends and the country's declining youth population are making change necessary.

"Massive shōnen action-comedy shows like *One Piece*, *Demon Slayer* and *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* have a huge export market driven by growing fandom and exposure on streaming platforms. But slice-of-life shows aimed at the bridge audience, such as *Doraemon* or *Crayon Shin-chan*, don't work outside of Japan because they're very parochial and quite different culturally from Western shows," Hickey explains. "I've been researching how to hybridize a new type of bridge anime that will work overseas and in Japan. Japanese studios need to start addressing generic diversification so that when the market does

cycle down, there will be other genres with massive potential to tap into, especially in terms of consumer products."

DEVELOPING ORIGINAL ANIME

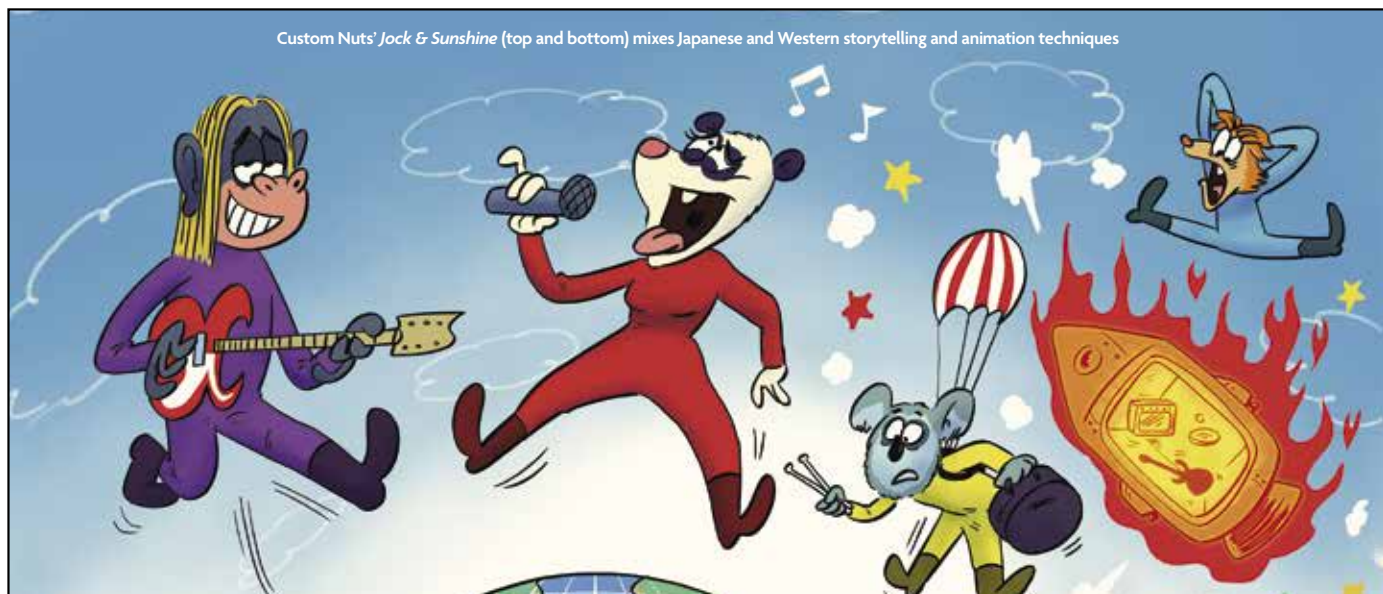
What will this new hybrid content look like? In Hickey's view, exportable anime shows could blend slapstick mechanics à la *Tom & Jerry* (still one of the top American shows on terrestrial TV in Japan) with slice-of-life sitcom elements and heartfelt moments. Custom Nuts currently has a few original hybrid series in development, including *Jock & Sunshine*, a 2D-animated shōnen slapstick sitcom about a couple of crash-landed animal astronauts who are forced to work dangerous part-time jobs in order to survive life in a version of 1980s Tokyo.

"*Jock & Sunshine* mixes Japanese and Western storytelling with Japanese and Western animation techniques," says Hickey. "It's a great example of how we are proposing an important cultural exchange."

Yoshiya Ayugai, a creative producer at Singapore's August Media (*Tish Tash*) and a former Disney Japan and Cartoon Network Japan exec, agrees with Hickey's views on the potential for new types of hybrid anime shows for kids.

"For the development of an international co-production, slapstick and tears work well together, as they do in shows with heart like BBC's animated preschool series *Bluey*," says Ayugai. "Japanese audiences love to cry, so an emotional rollercoaster

Custom Nuts' *Jock & Sunshine* (top and bottom) mixes Japanese and Western storytelling and animation techniques



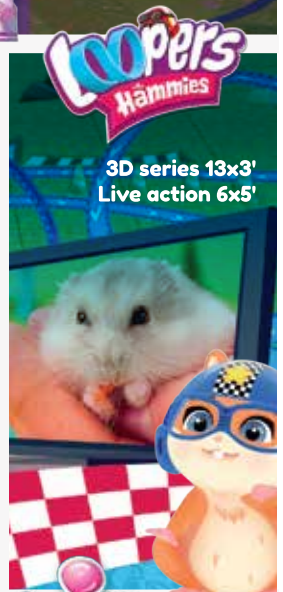


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S02: 13x7'

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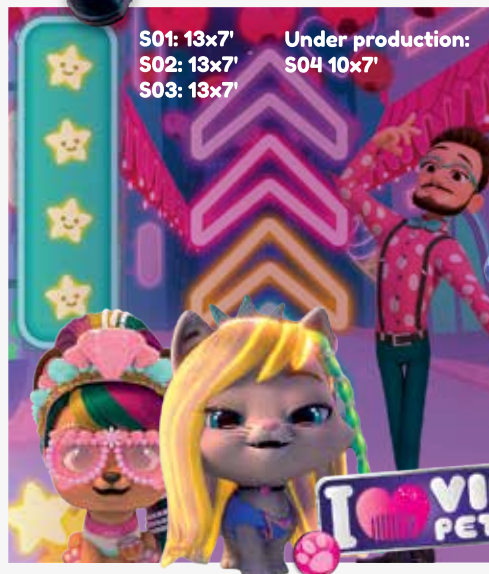
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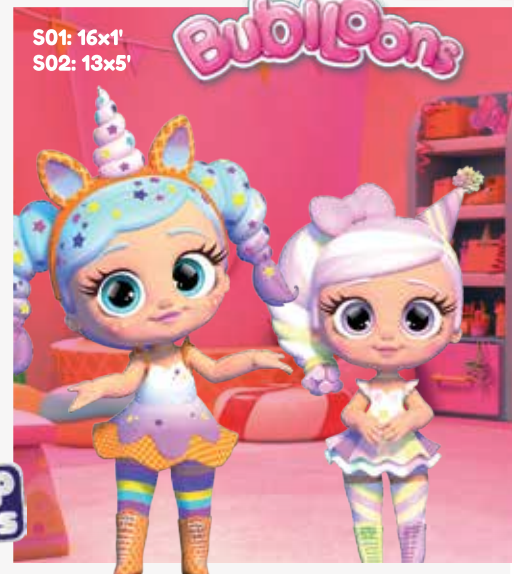
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Japanese studio TMS Entertainment's *Bananya* has a robust merch program and a place on Crunchyroll's preschool roster

© Q-LIA/Bananya Partners



type of story with a protagonist who is more humble than cocky could work well. Characters like SpongeBob SquarePants and Peter Parker from *Spider-Man* would resonate well with Japanese kids."

And Hickey believes US audiences, in particular, could benefit from hybrid anime shows with heart. "It's quite uncommon in the US to have narrative pauses for moments of introspection or emotional resonance. But in Japanese anime shows, it's very common to have close-up shots of facial features with tears, for example, and hold on these moments a lot longer than in a Western cartoon," he says. "There are a lot of Japanese series that have as much heart as shows like *Bluey*, but no one's made exportable versions of them yet."

INTERNATIONAL CO-PRODUCTION GROWTH

Custom Nuts isn't the only production company looking to develop new original anime series for kids through authentic collaborations. France's Cyber Group Studios (*Gigantosaurus*) recently struck a long-term partnership with veteran Japanese prodco Nippon Animation to co-produce new IPs and reimagine several

of Nippon's classic series. First up is *Nanami and the Quest for Atlantis*, a 2D/3D-animated feature film based on Nippon's '90s anime series *Tico and Friends*. And a new animated series that continues the film's storyline is also in the works.

"Given that the export market is so much more important to Japanese studios right now, I think they'll be more receptive to co-pro opportunities than they would have been just a couple of years ago," Hickey says. "Now is a really good time to have these conversations at industry events."

TMS Entertainment, which launched in 1946 and produces hit teen series *Detective Conan*, is another Japanese studio that's not averse to making Western-friendly content for younger kids, adds Ayugai. Though it's not a co-pro, TMS's popular two-season preschool anime series *Bananya*—about an adorable cat who lives in a banana—is currently streaming on Crunchyroll, which has given the show a global audience and wider L&M presence. Its consumer products program currently includes deals with partners including Gucci and Bioworld for products such as T-shirts, ties, footwear and desk collectibles.

"TMS is looking into making more kids content that will travel because its parent company is Sega Sammy," says Ayugai. "So anything in the kids space that works for an international audience and could eventually sell games and merchandising is encouraged."

Meanwhile, Crunchyroll has grown in a big way since Sony's Funimation acquired it from AT&T and WarnerMedia in 2021 for US\$1.2 billion. Now available in more than 200 countries and territories, the platform has become the world's largest anime streaming service, offering more than 16,000 hours of content. The company also does business in theatrical distribution, video games, home entertainment, live events and manga.

As a measure of its success in the feature film market, Toei Animation's *Dragon Ball Super: Super Hero*—the first *Dragon Ball* movie to be distributed by Crunchyroll—shattered expectations with a US\$20.1-million opening weekend in North America at the beginning of August. And its global take had

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increased to more than US\$47 million by the end of the month, according to tracking site Box Office Mojo.

Though Crunchyroll's audience tends to skew more 18 to 34, the majority of its content is appropriate for older tweens and teens, and the platform also provides a selection of family-friendly titles.

"When fans come to Crunchyroll, they're looking for a mix of new simulcast series [shows that can be watched the same day—usually within hours—as their broadcast in Japan] and nostalgic or classic anime titles," says Crunchyroll COO Brady McCollum. "Within anime, we offer hit tentpole shōnen titles like *Naruto* and *My Hero Academia*, but also romance, sports and slice-of-life content."

In addition to *Bananya*, the platform's family-friendly acquisitions include *Shōnen Ashibe GO! GO! Goma-chan*, about a baby spotted seal and a first-grader; and *Mitchiri Neko*, which tracks a group of mysterious cat-like creatures.

On the originals front, Crunchyroll has produced more than 60 titles to date, including several co-pros with Japanese partners, says McCollum. "We recently premiered the fantasy series *Kaina of the Great Snow Sea* at this year's Crunchyroll Expo. It's a co-production with [linear network] Fuji TV for its +Ultra programming block."

According to August Media's Ayugai, securing a partnership with a Japanese terrestrial channel is key for the success of new international co-pros in Japan. "Linear TV—not streaming—is the number-one way to access entertainment in Japan," he says. "Without some sort of terrestrial strategy, you are probably not going to be very successful there, especially on the kids side."

Custom Nuts' Hickey concurs. "To get a slot in Japan is a really difficult thing, and an expensive proposition because they are still massively coveted," he says.

OTHER ROADBLOCKS

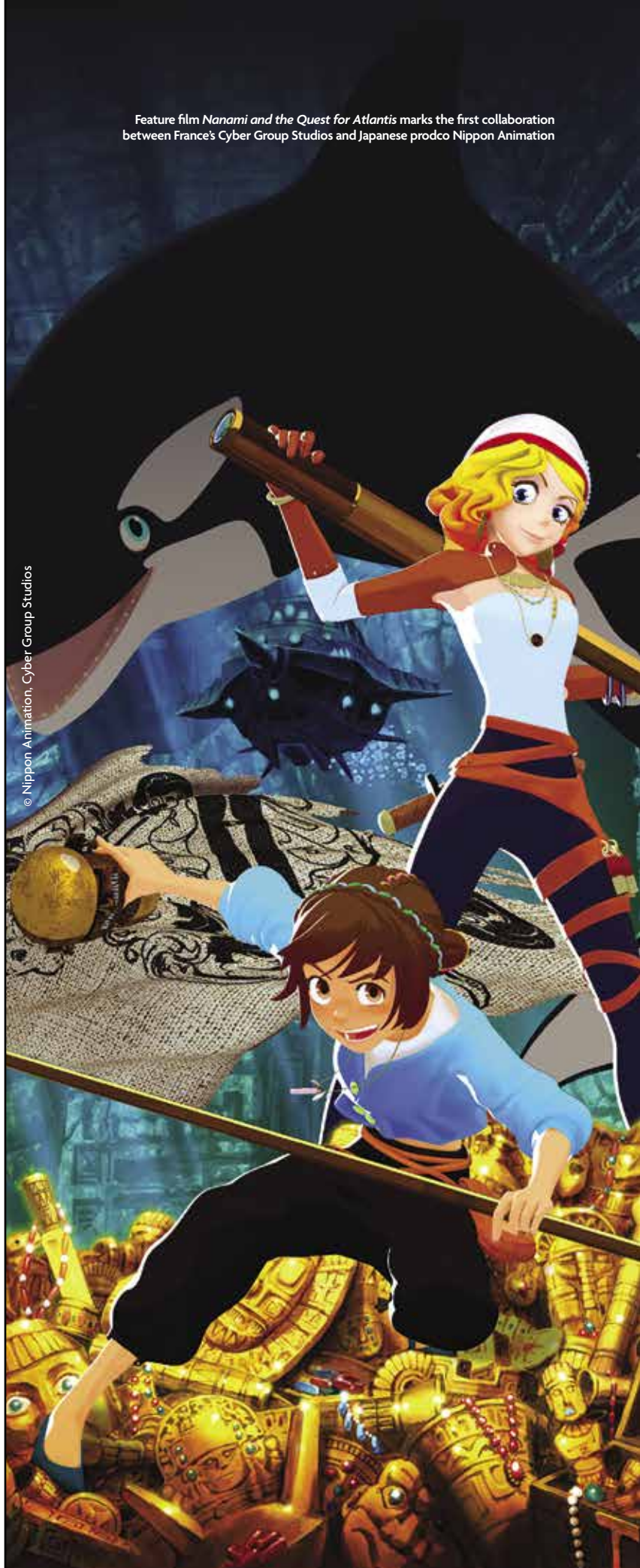
Aside from getting Japanese linear nets on board, new original anime co-pros will face a number of additional challenges. The biggest, according to Ayugai, is the language issue.

"Most Japanese artists don't speak English, and when characters speak in Japanese, not only is the sentence structure very different from other languages, but so are the accent points," he explains. "Because the spoken words are different, the emotion in the animation is, too." Fortunately, studios are now making a concerted effort to find more English-speaking production staff to help with translation, according to Hickey.

Another hurdle is that Japanese development and production is radically different from how things are done in the West, says Ayugai. In particular, the scripting-to-storyboarding stage is very fluid in Japan until the final picture, whereas Western culture has a much more rigorous step-by-step approval process. "Japanese prodcos often tend to hold work until they think it's ready—then when they show it, it might not be what you wanted," he says.

Hickey agrees that the creative checkpoints usually written into contracts in the US don't necessarily apply in Japan.

Feature film *Nanami and the Quest for Atlantis* marks the first collaboration between France's Cyber Group Studios and Japanese prodco Nippon Animation



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New original anime series *Kaina of the Great Snow Sea* will premiere on Crunchyroll in January 2023



Courtesy of Crunchyroll

"This could be a major roadblock, and quite frustrating for an international co-pro partner," he says.

Another major issue is that many Japanese artists still prefer hand-drawn techniques. "I love this, but it is really inefficient," says Hickey. "It poses serious compatibility issues with the way you will be working with a US producer, for example, and it's very hard if you have to make changes during development and production. If you are talking about high-volume series production, you want all of it to be digital."

Hickey also notes that a lot of Japanese anime series use *kisho-tenketsu*, a classic four-act narrative structure that's very different from the three-act hero's journey model developed by American writer Joseph Campbell and commonly used in the US and Europe. "I think there is enormous potential to figure out how to merge both storytelling structures, but these are the difficulties you are up against from a creative point of view," he says.

FUTURE FORECAST

Moving forward, Hickey wants to see Japanese studios get more adventurous with the development process because the majority of anime is adapted from manga or video games.

"In Japan, only about 5% of purely original production is for anime TV series," he says. "And with the Japanese consortium model [a long-held system whereby multiple partners including TV networks, toyco's, publishers and other media companies invest in entertainment projects as a collective], you often have too many cooks in the kitchen weighing in creatively, which is stifling and diminishes risk. There needs to be another development model for people who aren't manga artists."

For Ayugai, since Japan has manga for every demographic and most shows are manga-based, the domestic market is already at the saturation point. "I'm not exactly sure how many manga series are currently being made in Japan, but we estimate it is more than 200 per year," he says. "A healthier

number is probably around 120 so that everyone can make a little bit of money, and we do need that international revenue coming in."

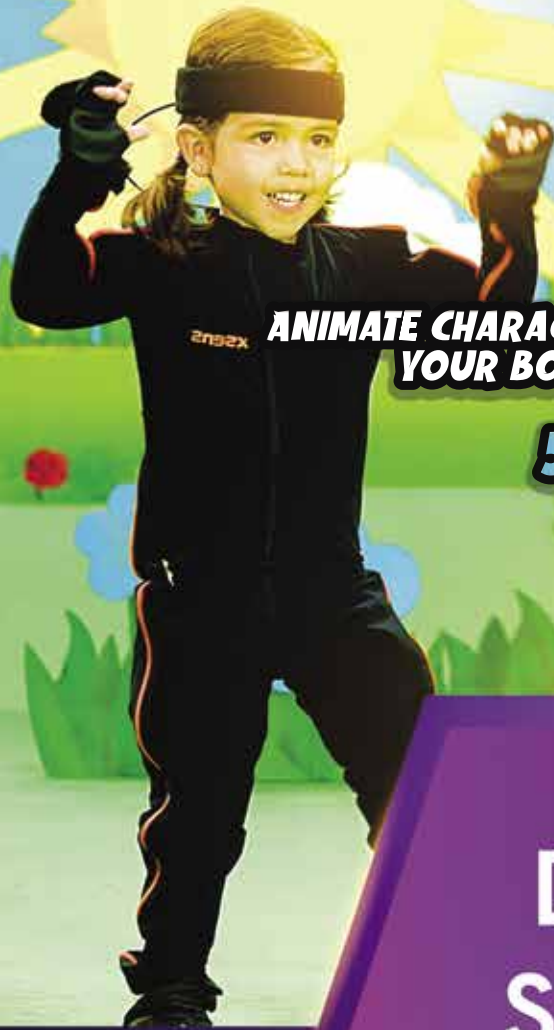
With so many manga series in production, Ayugai says Japanese studios are booked up for at least the next two years, which could be a problem for international co-pro growth. "They don't have pipelines to do any other animation unless they can miraculously find some out-of-work animators who have left other studios in Japan," he says.

Ayugai predicts the industry won't see a new crop of hybrid anime co-pros actually launch until 2025, but adds that achieving popularity in Japan will require a mindset change among Japanese audiences. "Unless there is a major cultural shift in the next two or three years to recognize true authentic co-pros, I don't see Japan accepting international content as much as people might like," he says.

McCollum has a rosier outlook for Crunchyroll's global business. After lowering the price of the service in nearly 100 territories in July, Crunchyroll saw higher engagement and strong, steady growth in both subscribers and viewing in India, the UK, Latin America and the Middle East.

"Our fans are hungry for localized anime, particularly as a result of a first wave of series we made available on our platform this year, fully dubbed and subtitled in Hindi, Italian, Arabic and Castilian Spanish," says McCollum. "The biggest challenge is keeping up with consumer demand. Our fans want new content at the speed of Japan, so we do our best to share anime localized in 10 languages, day-and-date with Japanese premieres."

McCollum also agrees that there's space for new types of hybrid anime shows for kids. "Anime is such a dynamic medium that lends itself to a variety of stories and genres," he says. "We're also seeing continued advancements in computer-generated animation, so the sky's the limit with the types of stories that can be told to resonate with audiences around the globe." **K**



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ANIME. EXPORTED

With global interest in the genre continuing to soar, local producers and buyers are taking note.

BY: SADHANA BHARANIDHARAN

While anime is very deeply and distinctly Japanese in origin, its exploding popularity means that, in many ways, it now belongs to the world. But when you take the anime out of Japan, is it still anime? Does it work when it's adapted to stories from other cultures? Or, to start with a simpler query, why are we all so interested?

With reports estimating the genre's market worth in the billions—and global appetites only growing—these questions deserve some exploration.

Uttam Pal Singh, head of kids for Warner Bros. Discovery in South Asia, says the versatility of anime's tropes make it widely accessible across different demographics, cultures and geographies. "We've observed that the popular shōnen [boy] anime, in particular, appeals to a wider Indian audience, including kids," he says, referring to the sub-genre that blends themes of friendship, action, comedy and science fiction.

India's relationship with anime can be traced back to 1993's *Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama*, a feature film adapted from an ancient Indian epic. It was produced and animated by Japan's Nippon Ramayana Film and financed by Tokyo's TEM, the IP's current rights holder. *Ramayana* is an early example of true cross-cultural storytelling—a creative team in India prepared

Squarefish/Dadal Animation co-pro *Mekka Nikki* is based on a French comic and mixes European and Japanese design

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Rorisang & The Gurlz, from South Africa's Cabblow Studios, uses anime to help tell broader emotional stories

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the script and storyboards, while a team in Japan handled animation and brought the story to life.

This collaborative process helped ensure that all aspects—including the traditions, attire, customs and architecture in the film—depicted Indian culture, while still retaining the defining look of anime.

Anime's place in India was cemented when Cartoon Network's Toonami programming block brought series such as *Dragon Ball Z*, *Cardcaptors* and *Beyblade* to local audiences, building a fan base that was later picked up by Animax, an anime-dedicated linear channel launched by Sony Pictures Entertainment in 2004.

But there's more room for anime to grow in India and develop a homegrown style, says Pal Singh, adding that he's interested in local, anime-based stories for Cartoon Network, POGO and Discovery Kids. "We would love to bring an amalgamation of Indian storytelling in the anime genre to our audience and reconnect with the new generation by presenting timeless stories," he says.

The scenario is similar in South Africa, where the genre has captured the interest of Kabelo Maaka, creative director of Cabblow Studios. "Anime gets to tell playful stories for kids that are brightly colored, fun and wacky. But it also gets to tell serious stories with maybe heavier issues," she says. "It gets to cover the full spectrum. That kind of approach to animation is quite freeing, and it's the way that we approach our projects."

Cabblow has two anime-inspired series in the works—*The Mom & Daughter Clean Up Crew* (26 x 24 minutes) and *Rorisang & The Gurlz* (22-minute episodes, volume pending).

While *Clean Up Crew* targets a girl-skewing audience ages eight and up, it is also designed for family viewing. The series is about a mother-and-daughter duo who have the ability to make people switch bodies—and in the process, learn empathy. "They don't save the day; they save relationships," Maaka says.

Using anime allows for a broad tonal range in the series, from the wacky humor of the premise to the more in-depth emotions of relationship conflicts, she notes, adding that the daughter has a bright red afro, while the mother has purple eyes and hair—visual choices inspired by the strikingly colorful wardrobes and hairstyles often seen in anime. "Somebody will just casually have pink eyes, pink eyebrows and pink hair, and it's fine," Maaka notes. "It's totally normal in the story world of anime."

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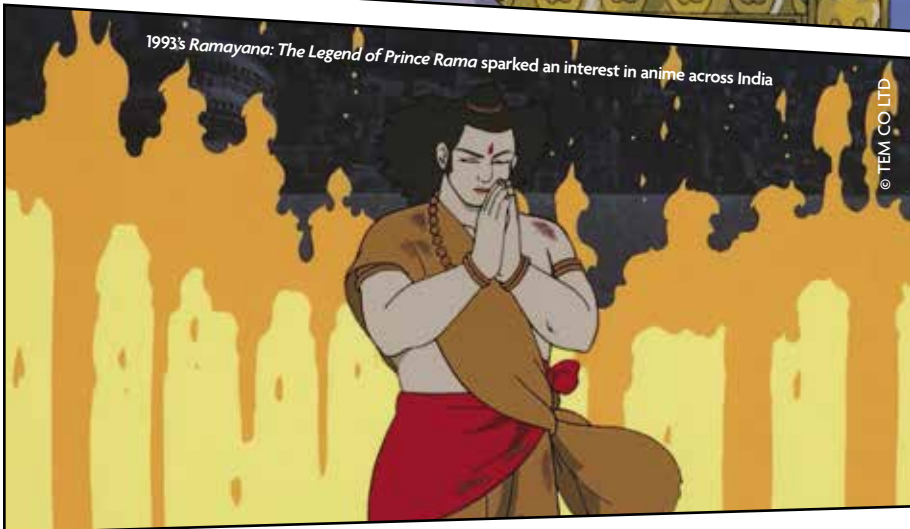




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1993's *Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama* sparked an interest in anime across India

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Meanwhile, *Rorisang & The Gurlz* is a musical series aimed at tweens and teens, centering on a high school K-pop superfan who starts an Afro-pop band with her best friends. The only problem? The regressive choir mistress at their all-girls school is disdainful of pop music.

Such “slice of life” stories about the daily lives of students are common in anime. Afro-pop music accompanies the visuals, bringing a blend of cultures to the show’s storytelling.

Over in Europe, one prodco currently exploring anime is Belgium-based Squarefish, which conceived *Mekka Nikki* (10 x 30 minutes) and set it up as a co-pro with French studio Dada! Animation. “It’s really interesting how we can mix the European feeling with the design and techniques from Japan,” says Squarefish co-founder Valentin Grégoire.

Aimed at a 12-plus audience, *Mekka Nikki* is a 2D/CG-animated adaptation of a same-name French comic book series by Exaheva and Félix Laurent. The authors were influenced by manga style, and the TV series retains the same look, says Grégoire. Set in a distant galaxy, *Mekka Nikki* tells the story of a rebellious teenager who must defeat a tech-savvy tyrant named Mekka. Her journey to find the cure for a mysterious disease is complicated when she falls in love with a cyborg girl who works for Mekka.

The advancement of animation technology has played a role in drawing more international studios and artists to the challenge of creating content around this style, notes Grégoire. “Traditionally, anime in Japan was made on paper by very efficient artists,” he says. “Now, you have software like TVPaint and Toon Boom Harmony that speeds up the process.”

That accessibility also extends to audiences. In the past, Indian viewers could only watch anime in Japanese with English subtitles or dubbed in English, but kids channels are actively making an effort these days to add more dubbing in some of India’s 100-plus regional languages, notes Pal Singh. In May 2022, for instance, Cartoon Network launched *Dragon Ball Super* in three regional languages: Hindi, Telugu and Tamil.

Similarly, Cabbrow’s Maaka points to the creative potential of “the African perspective and the African voice” in anime. Animation in general is experiencing a boom on the continent, and she has observed anime’s influence on younger animators in a popular local Facebook group dedicated to the craft. “Every now and then, you’ll see a high schooler or a recent graduate saying something like, ‘I want to make my own African anime.’ It’s a sentiment that I can appreciate,” she says. **K**

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MANGA MANIA



The Japanese graphic novel genre is riding a wave of heightened popularity, generating new content for anime and fresh trends and opportunities in consumer products.

BY: COLE WATSON

Underpinning the massively popular anime industry is an even more popular industry that feeds it—Japanese graphic novels, commonly known as manga. And manga is hotter than ever.

Action-fantasy powerhouse *Demon Slayer*, animal romance *Beastars* and comedy series *Spy X Family* all originated as manga. And while it has been massively successful in foreign markets for nearly two decades, manga is really flourishing in North America right now, with US-based publishers such as VIZ Media and Square Enix Manga reporting that sales in the region have more than doubled in the last two years.

Manga is now the number-one graphic novel format in North America, beating the likes of Marvel and DC Comics on their home turf. In a February 2022 report, the NPD Group noted that manga was responsible for one-quarter of all growth in the US book market in 2021, and the publishing category's annual sales were up by US\$218 million year over year.

Several factors are at play that have helped Japanese graphic novels skyrocket to these new heights, according to Masaaki Shimizu, GM and publisher of Square Enix's manga and books imprint. "The driver behind the unprecedented growth for manga is a chain-reaction effect, triggered during the early stage of the pandemic and amplified throughout it," he says. "It began with major video streaming services experiencing a surge in their subscriber numbers, which led to anime gaining more and more attention, and increased consumer interest in the original manga series."

When physical stores began reopening in 2021, major book retailers such as Barnes & Noble and Books-A-Million started dedicating more shelf space to manga, while independent bookstores, comic book shops and even retail giants like Walmart and Target began carrying manga titles for the first time, adds Shimizu.

Despite being a new competitor in the market, Square Enix Manga has experienced growth each year since it was founded in 2019, driven by titles such as action-fantasy saga *Soul Eater: The Perfect Edition*, wholesome slice-of-life series *A Man and His Cat* and the LGBTQ+-targeted *I Think Our Son Is Gay*.

In its first year alone, Square Enix released 24 manga titles and five tie-in books based on video games. Its annual output has expanded significantly since—the imprint currently has 59 publications expected to drop by the end of 2022.

Meanwhile, the largest manga publisher in North America, VIZ Media, continues to hold steady, publishing



Initially self-published by author Umi Sakurai as a web comic, *A Man and His Cat* has since been adapted as a magazine manga by Square Enix, imported to North America by Penguin Random House, and developed for TV by Crunchyroll



Set in a fictional Death City, *Soul Eater* is a manga, anime and video game series licensed for distribution in North America by Square Enix Manga



between 300 and 325 volumes a year. Founded in 1986 and owned by Japanese publishers Shueisha and Shogakukan, VIZ publishes six of the fastest-growing manga series in North America, according to the NPD Group's February 2022 report.

In addition to *Demon Slayer*, these titles include long-running graphic novel series such as *Jujutsu Kaisen*, *My Hero Academia*, *Promised Neverland* and several horror graphic novels created by author Junji Ito. Each of these series has spawned an anime series that is currently airing on a streaming platform; and another—dark fantasy *Chainsaw Man*—is set to premiere on Crunchyroll in October.

While an anime adaptation launch or announcement can result in huge sales spikes for the company's manga titles, it isn't required for a publishing rollout in North America, says Kevin Hamric, VIZ's VP of publishing sales.

"Manga just needs to have a good story and good art," Hamric tells *Kidscreen*. "We have the luxury of being owned by the two largest publishers in Japan, so we get to see how a manga performs there and what kind of success it has, but it also has to be able to be translated and understood in English. There are many manga series that we do not bring over or translate because they wouldn't work in a Western setting."

Manga is no longer a niche category in North America like it was in the early 2000s, adds Hamric. "Manga is mainstream now—it's a mass-market category," he says.

Tencent Kids Originals





YoRHa: Pearl Harbor Descent Record is a manga in the dystopian-future genre, written by video game writer and director Yoko Taro



“People who grew up with manga, hearing from mom and dad that it’s taboo, now have kids of their own. So now they’re very accepting of it and encourage their kids to read it as well.”

To increase the accessibility of its titles, VIZ launched a digital Shonen Jump subscription service in 2018 for US\$1.99 per month. The platform features more than 15,000 manga chapters that readers can download, ranging from long-running series such as 1987’s *Jojo’s Bizarre Adventure* and pirate-themed *One Piece*, to titles that have yet to be released in print in North America, such as four-panel comic strip *Lucky Star* and sci-fi comedy *Agravity Boys*.

Hamric says this is the most economical way for newbies to get into reading manga for the first time. And for experienced readers, the benefit of the subscription is the ability to access day-and-date releases of newly translated chapters in sync with their Japanese launches.

While it took manga nearly two decades to become a mainstream category, an emerging trend in the graphic novel industry is the rapid adoption of webtoons and Korean graphic novels known as manhwa.

LA-based digital manhwa publisher WEBTOON reported a global user count of 82 million readers in January—an increase of 10 million since the company’s last tally in 2020, according to Statista.

Looking to tap into the budding success of WEBTOON’s online platform, New York’s Surge Licensing inked a deal with the publisher this year to develop brand licensing strategies and design new licensing and merchandise programs for its original IPs in North America.

Many of WEBTOON’s titles aren’t associated with an anime or live-action series adaptation, but the size and feedback of the manhwa community means there’s enough potential to support diverse CP programs, says Elan Freedman, Surge’s entertainment brand strategist.

“We’re always looking at chatter—whatever we can scour from our own data—and what we’re seeing online and at conventions,” Freedman adds. “And the beauty of WEBTOON being a primarily app-based business is that you can create a dialogue [with fans] and learn a lot about what your audience wants.”

Surge will target three core pillars as it maps out CP programs for the publisher: fashion, home goods and toys. Freedman says it’s an exciting opportunity for the licensing agency because of the potential to develop new, untapped audiences for the genre.

“Compared to the rest of the anime and manga world, what makes WEBTOON so unique is its Gen Z audience,” he notes. “Seventy-five percent of our viewers are 12 to 24 years old, and the platform has a massive female audience, which traditionally has not been served in this space.”

Manga’s ability to continue to spawn sub-genres geared to new audiences is a good indicator of its staying power. And where there is original content to be made, there is opportunity to be had. **K**

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A black and white photograph of a woman with long dark hair, seen from the side, holding a white coffee cup. She is wearing a light-colored top. In the foreground, a tablet is lying on a dark, reflective surface. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a chair.

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COOL NEW SHOWS FOCUS ON ANIME

As anime continues to enjoy a surge in popularity, studios around the world are banking on its unique style to give their projects a distinctive and appealing look, as well as turning to manga—the graphic novel style that inspired the anime genre—to attract existing fans of well-established publishing brands. Here's a look at five new projects with this origin story that are currently in development.

BY: RYAN TUCHOW



Dreamland

Demo: YA

Co-producers: Dupuis Edition & Audiovisuel (France), Chouette Compagnie (France)

Style: 2D animation

Format: 10 x 22 minutes

Budget: US\$5.1 million

Status: Scheduled to start production in October, with scripts for four episodes written, and a bible and trailer available. *Dreamland* is already lined up to air in France on Anime Digital Network, and its partners are seeking international broadcasters.

Delivery: Q4 2023/Q1 2024

Based on a same-name French manga by Reno Lemaire that's published by Pika Édition, this fantasy series centers around an apathetic teen, scarred by his mother's death, who unlocks the power to explore the world of dreams and nightmares. While he sleeps, Terrence explores Dreamland with new friends, and discovers the strength to confront his pain and fears.



Biguden

Demo: Six to nine

Co-producers: Apaches (France), Cosmic Productions (France), Mr Loyal (France)

Style: 2D and 3D animation

Format: 52 x 11 minutes

Budget: US\$200,000 per episode

Status: A bible, script and animatic will be available in October, and the partners are seeking broadcasters, distributors and investors.

Delivery: 18 months after financing is secured.

When a young girl arrives in a village, mythical creatures that were thought to be extinct come back to life. Biguden has lost all of her memories, but with the help of friends—and her own half-human, half-magical lineage—she works to keep the peace between humans and all manner of peculiar beings. This adventure-comedy concept is adapted from a book by Stan Silas (author of the Norman graphic novel series).



Ki & Hi

Demo: Six to nine

Co-producers: Drawsome (France), Method Animation (France)

Style: 2D animation

Format: 52 x 13 minutes

Budget: US\$8.1 million

Status: A bible and two scripts are completed, along with a two-minute teaser animated by Ireland's Kavaleer Productions. Drawsome and Method are currently on the hunt for broadcasters.

Delivery: September 2024

An adaptation of a French manga collaboration between YouTuber Kevin Tran (5.4 million subscribers) and artist Fanny Antigny, this series is about two reckless brothers locked in an epic sibling rivalry. From squabbles to love, the show will explore the universal experience of having a sibling you don't always get along with, but never stop loving. Writer Thomas Krajewski (*Buddy Thunderstruck*) is developing and producing the series with Tran through his prodco (Drawsome), with Macha Uziel-Jardin (*Steampunk Explorers*) also on board as a screenwriter.



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Zoey Oceans

Demo: Six to nine

Producer: Studio Kimchi (Spain)

Style: 2D and cutout stop-motion animation

Format: 26 x 13 minutes

Budget: US\$2.7 million to US\$3 million

Status: A bible, several animation tests, a pilot episode script, treatments for two episodes and six synopses are available, and Studio Kimchi is seeking broadcasters, distributors and co-producers.

Delivery: 2026 to 2027

Five years after her father's ship is lost at sea, a young girl embarks on a worldwide search for him. But her only guide is a trail of rubber duckies that were also on the boat and have floated away on the ocean currents. In every episode, Zoey pilots a ship she made herself to follow the ducks far and wide, gathering clues about where her dad might be—and never giving up.



The Tern

Demo: 12 and up

Producer: Cyber Group Studios (France)

Style: 2D animation

Format: 10 x 26 minutes

Budget: US\$8.2 million

Status: A bible, teaser, two scripts and an animatic (the first five minutes of the pilot) are available. Cyber Group is seeking broadcasters and a publisher to release a prequel story for this adventure series.

Delivery: Q4 2024

After toxic clouds destroy the atmosphere on Earth, a group of human survivors have been living a floating existence in a fleet of dirigibles for five generations—until a group of teens receive a message from someone on the planet below. No longer content to stay on the ship, they break all kinds of rules to seek out the truth behind a massive conspiracy. Tony Valente, creator of French manga *Radiant*, is the show's character designer. **K**