

Lauren's Top Anime List

12. RANMA ½

Recently released on Blu Ray, I had a chance to finally see the whole series (up to Volume 2 so far) in order. When the series was first out, it was hard to get it all. It had a large amount of VHS and even the DVD's were expensive. Now it's been re-released on blu-ray and dvd, and I've been eager to collect it to see the parts I missed.

A comedy through and through, Ranma is the ideal 80's anime, with exaggerated faces, whimsical plots, and random weapons coming out of nowhere.

Ranma Saotome and his father during a training visit to China fall into cursed pools. Now when they are splashed with cold water, Ranma turns into a girl (referred to as 'girl type Ranma' and 'pig tailed girl'). He is engaged to marry Akane Tendo, heir to the Anything Goes school of martial arts. Neither seems to want the union but neither will be the first to admit their feelings. For a long run, the series only seems to get crazier and crazier as poor Ranma finds every source of water he can find.

Another of my gateway animes, it's a nice thing to come back to this series and finally see it all.

11. SAILOR MOON

This series was my gateway anime. Despite the general formula of most animes of this type, this series taught me the benefit of not introducing the entire cast right away. Working the main characters in over the course of two seasons made the large cast work, and provided more flexibility in stories as their relationships evolved.

Serena or Usagi in the Japanese is a young girl whose main interests are video games, boys, and shopping. When a black cat with a crescent moon on its forehead grants her the ability to transform into Sailor Moon, she and her friends are forced into a battle against the forces of evil.

Running for 200 episodes and 3 movies, it was hard for those of us in the 90's to catch this series, as many episodes were edited out for no reason other than censorship, and the series stopped in the middle of a story arc of the second season. Fan demand resulted in the last 17 episodes of season 2 being dubbed and marked as 'The Lost Episodes' as well as seasons 3 and 4 being released on DVD, though they are now out of print.

Funny, with enjoyable musical themes, and a long running story, the series has some faults mainly due to the general formula, but overall it was what introduced me to anime and is directly responsible for me getting into the other things on this list.

10. FRUITS BASKET

Tohru Honda lives in a tent after her mother's death, and discovers she is on the land of the Sohma family. She learns they have a curse, that when they are tired, stressed, or hugged by a member of the opposite gender, they turn into the animals of the Chinese zodiac. Agreeing to keep their secrets, she is invited to stay, and during the course of the series becomes great friends with the family members.

A definite comedy, the series has some common reminders of Ranma, but with a decidedly different flavor. Tohru is an enjoyable protagonist, and one of the few in the series main cast who is not subject to the family curse.

26 episodes in length, the series is a fun experience worth having.

9. CHOBITS

Persucoms are computers that are shaped like whatever you want. A girl, a tiny figurine, whatever they are, they can do anything. Produced by CLAMP, the group behind Magic Knights Rayearth, the series follows Hideki as he attempts to qualify for prep school. He discovers an abandoned persucom in an alley that he names Chi, and in time starts to try to help her find out where she came from.

Featuring numerous themes about personhood and love, the series is both amusing for the protagonists awkwardness towards women as well as Chi's naïve attitude towards the world in general.

As the series researches her origins, Hideki discovers there is much more to Chi than it appears.

8. RECORD OF LODOSS WAR

One of the older animes on this list, I had discovered this on VHS. Remember those? 12 episodes long, it features the story of a young knight living under the shadow of his father who is poorly regarded, leaving his son with the stigma of his father. He is reunited with his priestly friend Etoh, and soon they are embroiled in a struggle for the fate of Lodoss, the accursed island.

While the anime does show its age in some respects, it features a strong set of six fantasy characters and an enjoyable world.

The music in this series is excellent, and it is a stand out anime of the early 90's.

7. BLACK LAGOON

This one was another surprise discovered by my mate, who found it on television and bought the dvds when he discovered it. A gun heavy story with an amusing mesh of characters, the story features a team of pirate mercenaries with complicated relationships.

It begins when gun hand Revy, Captain Dutch, and hacker Benny kidnap a young Japanese businessman only to find out his company doesn't want him back. He joins their group under the new name 'Rock' and soon begins carrying out jobs with and for them.

With a strong sense of humor and a standout character in Revy, this series went for two 12 episode seasons and a third of 5. More than worth it to check this series out, especially if you're a fan of guns.

6. SWORD ART ONLINE

The technology now exists that players can plug their minds into an MMORPG called Sword Art Online. Now you can enter the world as if it were real, and battle the fantasy monsters as you advance in level to win the game. There's only one problem. Now that you're in, you can't get out. The players find themselves trapped inside the virtual world of SAO, unable to free themselves and returned to their true appearances within the fantasy world of the game.

Kirito, one of the beta testers, is one of the most advanced players in the game. Initially playing by himself, he eventually encounters and joins numerous other characters as he begins to make a life in this world and searches to find a way to keep as many people alive as he can.

The story is largely divided into two main story arcs, for a total of 25 episodes. Featuring little details that will delight most gamers, this one spoke to me after it was introduced to me by my mate, who had found it on Netflix. Featuring more than a few surprises, this is one to keep an eye on.

5. NEON GENESIS EVANGELION (Rebuild)

In the year 2015, 15 years after a global disaster known as Second Impact, Shinji Ikari is summoned to Tokyo 3 and the organization NERV at the behest of his father. Joining the organization that uses robots called Evangelions, or Eva's for short. Battling a group of powerful enemies known as Angels, they are the last line of defense.

Featuring a strong cast and dramatic story, the rebuild takes the original and redesigns it into four new feature length films rather than the traditional 26 some odd episode anime, and it loses nothing in the translation. The amazing efforts of the studios in producing the films provide a brand new experience for the modern generation of anime fans.

As someone who generally does not like giant robot stories, this should be noted as the **ONLY** one that has my recommendation.

4. SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN

Lain is just an ordinary girl until she gets an email from a dead classmate. When she discovers the classmate claims she is not dead, but simply no longer a physical being, she dives ever deeper into the Wired, the virtual world in which the world seems to be consumed.

A strong story that will make you think, Serial Experiments Lain was one of my first exposures to anime and still remains one of my favorites in my library.

13 episodes long, the story makes use of every episode it has to expand the story.

3. FINAL FANTASY: ADVENT CHILDREN

While not a traditional anime like the number on this list, this was the long awaited sequel to the finest role playing game EVER, Final Fantasy 7. My first exposure to the Playstation back in 1997, I fell in love with the universe and replayed the game at least once a year for several years. The techno-magical hybrid universe combined the best of what I loved about reality with the best of fantasy, and a strong compelling storyline made me want to play it over and over, and hold it as my standard for video game stories.

This CGI film was produced by Square to follow up a few years after the game, and as an avid fan hungry for any sort of sequel, I dove in. The extended edition with a few more scenes were well worth it.

The story begins when three mysterious men appear searching for Jenova, the alien life form that indirectly led Sephiroth's efforts to summon Meteor, the most powerful materia in the world. Cloud is called back into action by President Shinra to intervene and save the planet, now that the city of Midgar has been abandoned in favor of a settlement on its border called Edge Town.

All the major characters make a reappearance, along with several supporting characters from the game. Capturing the atmosphere and humor of the series, it's an amazing piece of work. The strong visuals are supported by a fantastic score by Nobuo Uematsu, and is an experience not to be missed.

2. EDEN OF THE EAST

“What would you do if you could change the world?” A man asks. 12 episodes, and two movies to wrap it up, this series begins on the front lawn of the white house, as a young Japanese tourist comes face to face with a naked man with a gun.

As he attempts to unravel the mystery behind his memory loss, a mystery emerges. Part Dollhouse, part Battlestar Galactica, 12 people have been given near limitless funds and ordered to change the world as they see fit with the help of a mysterious benefactor and his operator, Juiz. They do not know each other, but they know there are 11 others out there along with an enforcer, to keep watch.

Akira and Saki work together to try and ‘save’ Japan and determine the agendas of the other people in this deadly game, with a complex storyline that’ll keep you interested until the credits roll.

1. STEIN’S GATE

One of the finest animes I’ve ever come across, this 25 episode series is remarkable as one of the strongest total packages I’ve had the privilege to enjoy. Featuring an ensemble cast of strong characters, led by self proclaimed mad scientist Okabe, he runs his laboratory with the help of hacker Daru, hostage Mayuri, and newest addition Kurisu. The story begins when they turn a microwave into a machine that can send messages known as D-Mails into the past. The moment that they do, a butterfly effect begins, with each message altering the world as they know it. In time, they come face to face with the deadly consequences of altering time, and come under the watchful eye of SERN.

Based on a real story involving an alleged time traveler by the name of John Titor, the series features lively humor, complex stories, and is a clear master of the storytelling technique of misdirection.

This is a series so complex and thought provoking; you’ll want to watch it at least twice to make sure you caught it all. With an amazing theme song, “Hacking To The Gate”, it’s one I enjoy just for it’s strength as a composition.

A must have for any anime fan.