

Thank you to all who participated in Sakura-Con 2013! Without the involvement of members, staff, sponsors and community groups we could not have had such a wonderful year!

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General requirements for all volunteer staff:

- Must be at least 16 years old (if you are a minor, you must still have an adult chaperon attend with you). Some positions do require you to be 18, such as those which handle money.
- You must agree to volunteer a minimum of 16 hours for the convention.
- You must abide by all ANCEA/Sakura-Con bylaws and polices.
- You must be responsible and show up for all required meetings and shifts as scheduled by your coordinator, manager or director.
- NOTE that for most staffing positions you are required to be on site during the convention.
- Volunteer Staffers receive a Staff Membership Badge and Staff T-Shirt for the Convention and priority seating at events. Manager and Coordinator level staff may receive some assistance with hotel accommodations.

Contact info@sakuracon.org for more information about volunteering.

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Interview with Reki Kawahara

Q: If *Sword Art Online (SAO)* was turned into a real MMO, would you play it?

Reki Kawahara: As long as it is not perma-death, I might.

Q: This is your first convention in the US. Is there any kind of food that you wanted to try?

Reki Kawahara: I had, for the first time in my life, real oatmeal. It was very delicious. I also want a real American-sized T-Bone Steak.

Q: In a recent interview, you said that coming up with the simple idea of players trapped in a MMO was the easy part, but that finding the mechanism was the difficult part and admitted that the Nerve Gear did have its faults, thus creating plot holes. So if you had more time, or could go back and fix the little things, what would you do?

Reki Kawahara: One of the things that I heard about was if it would be possible to instantaneously destroy the Nerve Gear that the players are using to make it inactive in time before it would kill the player. In order to combat such measures, one of the ideas was to have Kaiba announce that should anybody attempt this or actually succeed, another player would randomly pay for that action.

Q: How much of Kirito's personality is based on you, or characters that you played in other MMOs.

Reki Kawahara: I don't tend to put myself into my characters. But if I had to say there was a point of similarity between the two of us I would say it is the fact that both of us are not good at forming parties and tend to play solo in these games a lot.

Q: Between 2002, when you first made your submission to Dengeki Game Shousetsu contest, and 2008, when you were published – what did you do?

Reki Kawahara: During that period, I was serializing SAO on my homepage, and then it was picked up, reworked and edited before being published in 2008.

Q: Explain the process how your work got turned into a multi-platform, a trans-media property – the series and the manga – what were your intentions?

Reki Kawahara: First of all, if I would have thought it was a multi-media phenomenon, I might have made the main character in *Accel World*, Haruyuki, a little bit more cooler. In the beginning I was more worried about whether or not I would succeed as a writer, let alone thinking ahead to an animated version of my novels, so when my editor came to me and said, "Hey they want to animate this," I was shocked, for one, but very pleased to hear that somebody wanted it animated.



Reki Kawahara Continued...

Q: The SAO novels aren't readily available in English, and there are fan translators who translate light novels and publish them on websites for other fans to enjoy – what are your thoughts about that?

Reki Kawahara: First, I am happy to hear that there are fans overseas that want to read the novels to the point of translating them. So I brought this up to my editors, asking why aren't there translations in other languages, they said that as soon as a publisher in the United States makes us an offer, we're willing to consider it.

Q: SAO delves heavily into MMOs, what are some of your favorite games or MMOs?

Reki Kawahara: My number one favorite is *World of Warcraft*, but more recently I am enjoying *Diablo 3*. I am a big fan of Blizzard's games and am sad that Japanese versions of these games don't exist.

Q: You feel very fortunate in meeting with your editor, Miki Kazumo; were there any times when you couldn't agree on something?

Reki Kawahara: Miki-san is a fantastic editor; he would never raise his voice or get angry about any sort of disagreements. He is also the kind of person that won't back down from an idea, so when we don't see eye to eye, it becomes a very, very long conversation.

Q: How were you able to create such a believable virtual game in your stories? In many other shows, such efforts are more unrealistic and overdone.

Reki Kawahara: I was able to make the virtual world of SAO by studying various American Sci-Fi novelists and all the movies that featured virtual worlds. Learning from those things, I was able to incorporate a lot of what I learned and experienced into my own world. I don't know the English title, but the founding roots came from James P. Hogan's novel about a character trapped in a virtual reality world, the literal Japanese translation of the title is *Virtual World Plan*.

Q: What do you like to do when you're not busy?

Reki Kawahara: In my answer, if I take online games out of that equation, I must say that I really like riding my bike. I recently bought a trek bicycle and when I heard about what happened to Lance Armstrong, I felt very saddened.

Q: In a recent interview, you said that you like to use strategy guides in RPGs, so if you were to create one for SAO, what would you include and what sort of advice would you give? Other than, "don't die."

Reki Kawahara: Alright, hmm, other than "don't die," I would say don't leave the town.



Reki Kawahara Continued...



Q: In *Accel World*, Haru is an underwhelming kid who turns out to be extraordinary, while in *SAO*, Kirito is handsome, smart and skilled and turns out to be even more so in the game – what influenced the big difference between those two characters and did your age at the time or writing make a difference?

Reki Kawahara: Honestly speaking, the character of Kirito existed first, but because that character was seemingly so perfect, Kirito has his weaknesses inside. Whereas Haru has his weaknesses on the external side, but has extreme strength on the inside. Both of them have their strengths and weaknesses and I don't consider either one to be superior or inferior to the other.

Q: When was it that you decided to become a novelist? What led you in this direction? Was it in your childhood? A love of reading stories?

Reki Kawahara: I always liked creating stories since I was little. The initial profession, which I had wanted to

pursue, was a game story writer but that dream never came to be so at some point I had just become a writer. When I was a student in school, I definitely still wanted to become a game story writer. There was one big hurdle to overcome: in order to become a game writer you had to work for a gaming company, and getting hired at a gaming company was an extremely high wall that I was unable to climb over, so I found myself becoming a writer after being a student in my 20s.

Q: What were some of the challenges when writing the stories?

Reki Kawahara: One of the difficulties I had that in *Accel World* you're moving at a thousand times the normal speed, so I had a hard time calculating how much time has passed in the real world after spending a certain amount of time in the virtual world. I really lamented the fact that one minute has to be 60 seconds – why couldn't it be 100 seconds so that the calculations would be easier?!

Q: What did you think of your time at Sakura-Con? Did it meet your expectations?

Reki Kawahara: I have to say that I was very happy to see so many Kiritos. Seeing the Q&A panel room filled with so many fans reacting so positively and openly in such a forum was a big surprise and a very happy experience for me. I can't imagine an event like that happening in Japan in the middle of a large city, in a large venue and the fans having that type of reactions that they expressed here.



Interview With Atsuko Ishizuka

Atsuko Ishizuka is a Japanese animator and director at Madhouse, one of the leading animation production companies in the world. She has been with Madhouse since 2004. Since then, Ishizuka has worked on Madhouse projects as a staff animator (including the television series *MONSTER*), and has directed an additional short film for *Minna no Uta* entitled *Sen no Hana Sen no Sora (A Thousand Flowers of a Thousand Skies)*. After this, she moved up to assistant director on *NANA*. Her art was featured at the 2007 Tokyo International Anime Fair. Her continued rise in prominence at the studio was further confirmed when she was identified (along with Satoshi Kon) by studio head Masao Maruyama as one of the company's talents. Ishizuka was chosen to direct a television series (along with four others, including Morio Asaka) with the October, 2009 release of *Aoi Bungaku Series*, an adaptation of six Japanese literary classics. She co-directed *Supernatural: The Animation*.



Q: Is this your first convention?
Atsuko Ishizuka: Yes. Up until now, it has mainly been interviews rather than events.

Q: What has been your impression about Sakura-Con?

Atsuko Ishizuka: Maybe this is a world that I should not, or cannot enter. This is all because there are people here that know much more than me about anime. I feel like I should apologize even though I am here as an animation director.

Q: Was there a food that you wanted to try on your visit to the US?

Atsuko Ishizuka: One of the things I looked forward to eating while I was in Seattle was recommended by Takahiro Yoshimatsu, who is a Sakura-Con regular; he said to try the clam chowder. I did and it was great.

Q: Unlike other directors, you did not grow up watching anime on TV, but were interested in music and graphic arts. What kind of music are you into and what sort of graphic arts influenced you?

Atsuko Ishizuka: I do not have any favorite artist that influenced me; I was at a technical school and so I think the things that I saw and heard there influenced me. I built expertise and experience over time, particularly from things that I made myself and saw how they turned out.

Q: How does your different background and education in art, music and graphic design affect animation – the styles and concepts in graphic design are different than that of illustration and animation – how different is that?

Atsuko Ishizuka: When I joined a company, I first thought that it would be a weakness, that I wasn't familiar with the animation industry. Actually, now that I have progressed in my career, I consider that a strength – that I don't have the same exposure to anime as others and I am able to create new kinds of experiences and adventures from the point of someone who is not familiar with these. I think that was best expressed in *Tsuki no Waltz*, the short film that I did.

Atsuko Ishizuka Continued...

Q: Of the art forms that you do use, which is the easiest for you to work with?

Atsuko Ishizuka: I think that the easiest for me is expression through animation. I did try my hand at live-action once, but it turned out that the things that I was imagining in my head could only be realized through fantasy; they were pictures and drawing is the easiest way for me to realize my vision.

Q: What kind of challenges were you facing with the *Aoi Bungaku Series* for which you were the director, screenwriter, and storyboard artist?

Atsuko Ishizuka: I really strove to provide vivid and clear images, not so much of an old-looking image, but things that were fresh, vivid and clear in terms of images and backgrounds.

Q: You never watched anime growing up and now work in this field, do you now watch any anime? If so, do you have a favorite?

Atsuko Ishizuka: For anime, even now when I am a part of the industry, I still don't really watch that much anime. I do for study, but not so much for a hobby. I personally think that there are many such people in the anime industry that don't actually watch anime, because they're busy creating it. At some point maybe you become unable to enjoy it, purely for its own merits, because you're so close to it.

Q: Being that you weren't involved in anime before, and aren't really a fan now, are there any series or movie franchises that you would like to work with and possibly make a new entry in yourself?

Atsuko Ishizuka: I really love *Doraemon*. Please promote that I would like to make a theatrical version of *Doraemon*. I think it is a great work with real vision.

Q: Are there any works in classical literature that you would like to create?

Atsuko Ishizuka: There are some works by Kobo Abe that I think would make some stunning visuals.

Q: As you don't find yourself watching anime, do you ever read manga? Do you have friends and family that suggest titles that maybe you would like to work on?

Atsuko Ishizuka: After joining the company, many people have suggested various manga titles. One in particular was Chie Shinohara's *Sora wa Akai Kawa no Hotori*, or *Red River*, which is a very unusual work that I would like to revisit sometime.

Q: You've worked in the genres of the supernatural and horror a lot; do you like these and is this something you'd like to continue with - or has it been a coincidence?

Atsuko Ishizuka: People ask me that a lot; maybe it is because one of my first works was the *Moon Waltz*, which could be why people think there is a supernatural air to it. I think this is a genre that I am particularly good at. When I am pursuing these supernatural worlds it is almost like pursuing the art world – it can be very exhausting and I feel like sometimes I am trying to wring something out of myself that maybe I don't have enough of. I want to continue doing it but it can be very draining when you continue at it for a very long time. Recently I think that maybe I can continue to pursue this kind of warmth that is only possible in anime through works like *Sakura-sō no Petto na Kanojo*, or *The Pet Girl of Sakura Dormitory*, and in between that pursue areas that I am good at like art and fantasy.

Q: Would you ever consider possibly doing *Yotsuya Kwaidan* or any of the classics by Lafcadio Hearn?

Atsuko Ishizuka: I think it would be interesting to try to express the atmosphere of fear or horror that is present in Japanese classical horror through these kinds of visual works. There's no reality, so it would really be a challenge.

Q: What are your future goals as an animator?

Atsuko Ishizuka: There are a lot of people who express hope that I will create these special or supernatural worlds, but I am currently searching for my next project and I think it may diverge away from the art world and may be something for kids or some other genre where I can really use my strengths. One thing I am aware of recently is not to create something that is so much like what I have done in the past but to really go into new areas.

Atsuko Ishizuka Continued...

Q: What lessons have you learned in your career??

Atsuko Ishizuka: I've learned so much. When I was faced with the challenge of writing storyboard, I didn't know how to approach it, so I actually took Masayuki Kojima's storyboard – because he's such a good creator – and I just set it next to mine and would create based on he had done in the past. I've really been building up experience by imitating other people. I've always loved drawing and there's no special direction that I go, so that is why I am not really good at drawing key frames but better at drawing illustrations. I think the best shortcut is imitating great people.

Q: Has there been an artist that you have been imitating the most?

Atsuko Ishizuka: Not so much an artist, but Morio Asaka the director, I really find myself looking at his works and being influenced by them. It seems like from time-to-time there are things I see in real life that I will pull inspiration from – so I will build up a lot of information quickly, like there will be movies that I will see and I won't remember the title or cast or director but I will absorb it. There are a lot of things in certain films that I will see and I say to myself that I have to capture all of this information but then I can't remember what the title was so I won't be able to see it ever again. My folders on my PC are full of images and are a general mess, making it hard to find things I was inspired by.

Q: Since you have all these ideas, what would you do if you had an unlimited budget and were able to create something of any length? What message, if any would you want to convey? Do you have an idea that is always on your mind – more of a dream project?

Atsuko Ishizuka: Thinking about the viewer, 90 minutes would be long enough for me to achieve what I want to. Or, I would like to create a TV series that would go on forever, in 30 minute chunks. As for the content, the hero would have to be someone that is very energetic with a touch of fantasy in there, like psychic powers or supernatural elements. I think the story would be about the hero always helping other people or always following his own dream – a very dedicated character following a very straight path, so that the viewer would be inspired to protect him on his journey or the children watching the program would be inspired to grow along with him. I think that this is something that I would like to do, so I will try my best and try to create this original work. I don't think it would have to be an expensive project, or very flashy, what would be important would be that it be well-loved for a long time, and if I could create something like that then it would be really great. If you have really high production values, then you will go 3D and characters that will be incredibly realistic and by very flashy – you would end up with a well known actor that is motion captured, making it totally real. Another aspect of animation is the lack of feeling that it is done in real-time or that it's live so I think it would be great to have animation that feels like it is live and in order to do that I don't think it is wise to spend too much on it. Animation through live painting maybe.



Atsuko Ishizuka Continued...

Q: When working on a deadline, are there any foods or drinks that you turn to in order to get you through the deadline?

Atsuko Ishizuka: Caffeine. I continue to take in lots of caffeine. If you stay at your desk and continue consuming caffeine then you don't sleep so you can stay there for three days and get a lot done. You can't take any breaks.

Q: What is the longest time that you have not slept?

Atsuko Ishizuka: My maximum is really three days, if I go longer than three days I'll start to forget and some really strange images start to appear, like with *Moon Waltz*; that was the state I was in when I created *Moon Waltz*, so that is why the world ended up like that. In those difficult situations is when good things come out – when you don't really know the difference between what is a dream and what is reality.



Q: If there was one word you'd use to describe yourself, what would it be?

Atsuko Ishizuka: I wonder... I have absolutely no idea, maybe that would be most suitable. What am I really? I can probably say with conviction that I am an Earthling, from Earth.

[It was then suggested that the next anime be about the theme: What am I?]

Atsuko Ishizuka: Yes. In which the hero is searching for himself.

[Suggestion by Sakura-Con Staff: Set in a sleepless dreamworld full of caffeine.]

Atsuko Ishizuka: I think we could make something really unique and strange.



Interview With Eir Aoi and Luna Haruna



Q: At your concert, many people seemed to enjoy your Madoka Magica opening song, your collaboration. What made you decide on the songs you sang? Would you consider collaborating again in the future?

Eir Aoi: Myself and ClariS are from the same place in Japan and I have a lot of respect for her as an artist so I hope we can collaborate again in the future.

Luna Haruna: I really like collaborations. There is a difference in when you sing by yourself or with another artist. It really energizes you and inspires you.

Q: Before performing at Sakura-Con, in front of an American audience, was it a bit stressful, scary or exciting? How were you feeling when you found out you were going to perform in America?

Eir Aoi: I think I was a little nervous before my first live show, but the people here in Seattle are passionate fans. It allowed us to have a lot of fun – the fun outweighed the nervousness.

Luna Haruna: I was really nervous, too; it was my first overseas concert and I wasn't really sure what to expect. At the same time, I was excited to see how the different fans would welcome us here – it was a very warm welcome. I'm really happy that I was able to come here.



Eir Aoi and Luna Haruna continued...

Q: Before you begin recording, as a vocalist, what do you do to get inspired or where do you find inspiration?

Eir Aoi: The first thing that comes to mind is working out – I work out before recording. The abs are very important to singing, so I work out then rest a lot, getting enough sleep the night before and I drink a lot of water. I then visualize what the world I am going to sing about is like in my mind. Then I work out and then I go to recording.

Luna Haruna: I think songs are a good medium of expression, so I read the lyrics carefully and imagine the kind of world those lyrics are trying to create and I try to preserve that image. I really love anime, so I have a good imagination on which I rely whenever I go and record a song.

Q: How have you evolved as a singer over time? How has your involvement with anime changed you?

Eir Aoi: Before my initial debut, I always thought about the pitch and how I have to hit those notes but after I began singing more and did more live performances, I realized that singing is a method of expression. I really think it comes down to communication; I want to communicate my message. I try to entertain the audience and get closer to them.

Luna Haruna: I myself have loved anime songs since I was young. The music would always make me smile and leave a happy feeling inside of me, so whenever I sing and can see that I am putting smiles on everybody's faces; it makes me want to become better. It helps me realize how wonderful the medium of music and songs really is and how it gives people dreams and inspires them.

Q for Eir Aoi: How does it feel to have two Top Ten singles so early in your career?

Eir Aoi: Quite honestly, I did not expect that to happen. It was completely beyond what I was expecting. I was very surprised. It was almost a very surreal feeling that my singles were up there in the Top Ten Charts. Now I realize that the only reason that could happen was because there are a lot of fans that support me and I would like to give something back to everyone that has supported me.



Q for Luna Haruna: What was it like working with the legendary Yuki Kajiura for your debut single?

Luna Haruna: I'm a big fan of the anime series, *Gundam Seed*, and Yuki Kajiura worked on a lot of the tracks in that series. I really liked the world that she creates through her music and when I was able to work with her it was an unreal feeling. She is someone I have a lot of respect for and after listening to the track that she had created it felt like I was being immersed in her world. To be a part of that immersion into her world was very exciting for me.

Eir Aoi and Luna Haruna continued...

Q: Is there any artist, either Japanese or American, that you would like to collaborate with?

Eir Aoi: There are many Japanese artists that I'd love to be able to work with; I'd really like to be able to collaborate with Mizuki Nana, Nakagawa Shoko, or Hirano Aya. I really love rock, so if I had to choose a western band to collaborate with, I'd choose Linkin Park.

Luna Haruna: I would love to collaborate with Ali Project. Another kind of collaboration I'd like to do is with *Gothic & Lolita Bible* – we've done a fashion-centered collaboration before, but I hope to do more of a musical collaboration in the future. I love the expression of GothLoli and I hope to express our feelings together through this medium.

Q: Are there any western artists that have influenced your work?

Eir Aoi: For me it would be, Slipknot, Evanescence, Whitney Houston (I sang a lot of Whitney at karaoke), Eminem.

Luna Haruna: I generally listen to a lot of anime songs, so I can't say that I really exposed myself to different music, but if I had to mention a few, I would listen to U2 and Britney Spears – a long time ago.

Q: For the songs that you did for *Fate Zero* and *Sword Art Online*, how much input were you allowed to give? Do you read as much as you can about it so the lyrics will fit with the series, or do you go with a general feeling?

Eir Aoi: A lot of this is in a pre-anime phase, the anime doesn't quite exist yet, so I do try to read as much of the original works as possible. I try and imagine what the characters' expressions would look like as well as the world they live in. Since I also write the lyrics, I want to capture the feelings that these characters might have.

Luna Haruna: The music that I have done has generally been for the second season of an anime, so there is a preexisting anime that I can watch. I try to get my hands on any material that there is; I dive in and go for it to immerse myself in that world. I try to imagine what that character is trying to tell people; I try to capture the feeling of each one of these characters as I sing.



Eir Aoi and Luna Haruna continued...

Q: What has it been like to start out as a fan and now be able to be a part of the anime industry? How has your perspective changed?

Eir Aoi: When I was a fan, I didn't really think about much more than being the consumer. As I began to work more on the creative side of things, I thought about what I wanted to express. I have to carefully choose each word in the lyrics because different words can carry different meanings; some words are better at expressing certain feelings than others. It is a very difficult process. I think about how certain sections can be softer to convey a different feeling; I sometimes even talk with the director to see if we can try the song in different ways.

Luna Haruna: Until now, I was more of a consumer – just watching anime. Now that I am a part of the creation stage, I think of each anime as a single world – when people look into this world, I can sense that it gives them a happy feeling. When I see my music and this anime footage linked together for the first time, I feel like the gap between reality and the anime world is being bridged. I really feel like dreams do come true.



Q: Now that you have worked in the anime industry, are there any anime that you would like to work on? What other anime series are you aiming to contribute your voices to?

Eir Aoi: I personally love fighting – whether it be games or anime, like *Dragon Ball Z* or *Sailor Moon*, they all have an element of intensity and fight to them. I hope that I will work on projects in the future that have more fighting in them.

Ever since kindergarten, I have been lifted up and inspired by anime, so I am really happy to be able to be here right now working on these anime songs. I would like to continue working in the anime industry. I also want to work really hard to have as many people overseas hear my music as well.

Luna Haruna: As long as it is anime, I am all for it! Being able to sing and contribute my voice to any anime project is like a dream come true.

I really would like to continue pursuing my career in anime music. I really feel that it is a representation of Japanese culture; anime really connects people. I am happy to be able to do this.

Eir Aoi and Luna Haruna continued...



Q: What do you like to do to relax when you are not singing? Do you have any hobbies?

Eir Aoi: I like video games. I play on the Xbox360, PlayStation 3, PSP, Nintendo DS; I like all consoles. If I had to say there was one genre that I really get into, then that would be online gaming. I like First Person Shooter games the most. I like *Left 4 Dead*, *Gears of War* and *Call of Duty*.

Luna Haruna: I am a really big anime fan so I like to watch a lot of anime in my free time. I like to go on walks around Akihabara. Whenever there is an event, I take the first train out in order to get there really early so I am the first one there; I am the stereotypical fan. Anime is everything to me and it is what helped create who I am. I love anime.



Gashikon

The Interview and Hangry & Angry Fashion Show



In 2004, GASHICON entered the graphics production company of S-INC – “INCS.” GASHICON became the person in charge for the graphic design of the fashion brand “h.NAOTO.”

In 2005, the “gro-kawa” (grotesque-cute) character brand “HANGRY&ANGRY” produced by h.NAOTO was started. As the illustrator “GASHICON”, she is in charge of the production of HANGRY&ANGRY’s characters and comics.

Q: How difficult is it to keep the balance between too cute and gothic when designing?

Gashikon: It is occasionally difficult to find the balance between the gothic aspect and the cute aspect. I design by thinking about what I would like to wear. Personally, I gravitate more toward the cool designs, so that is the sort of thing that I want to wear and I would prefer more. If I am thinking about what I want someone else to wear, it is usually more toward the cute area. So I pay a lot of attention to the balance between what I want and what other people would want, or what I would like other people to wear.



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Gashikon continued...

Q: Where do you find your inspiration?

Gashikon: Sometimes the characters I'm designing for have their own personality so that can be used as inspiration. Also, I really enjoy watching movies and I watch a lot of movies. I especially love horror movies; so if there is a particular scene in a horror movie that I tend to like, then I'll use those for inspiration. I also love reading horror manga, so I'll use those as well.

Q: What inspired you to do live Hangry and Angry, and did you ever think it would ever become as successful as it is today? Do you think it will become so successful that you'll open up a store in the US?

Gashikon: The chance for Hangry and Angry originally came about because I was offered a chance to collaborate, for musical purposes, with this group, which is how Hangry and Angry Future was created. I think that fashion and music have many deep connections and that is one of the things we're exploring with Hangry and Angry. We're thinking about how we want to use music and that group is part of the inspiration for the musical activities that they're participating in now. The chances that I've had to come to conventions like Sakura-Con here in the U.S., these sort of chances for reaching out and going to overseas events, have been increasing recently and I definitely enjoy my chances to come overseas. I think I would really like to open a store in the United States if I ever got the chance.



Q: Up until recently, most of your clothes have been a little darker – white, black, and red – but this year you've been introducing brighter colors. Are you hoping to include a variety of more colors in the future?

Gashikon: Yes, the trend that you noticed is a real trend. Up until last year, basically, we were concentrating on the darker aspects of Hangry and Angry, but since then we've started exploring the brighter aspects. We've been playing with the "Pop Star" aspect – with the day-glo colors and the bright colors. As a designer bright colors attract me, so I think that I am going to enjoy the opportunity to use brighter colors in the future as well.

Gashikon continued...



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Q: As a designer, who are the people – artists – that you are inspired by and look up to?

Gashikon: That's a great question. I have to say, as movie directors go, I am really attracted by the works of Tim Burton and I really enjoy watching his movies. The settings that he uses, his world-view in particular, really comes through in the settings and styles of his movies. I really think that his has a lot of intersections with my personal world-view, and so I really enjoy his movies.

Q: After creating Hangry and Angry and focusing on them for the past few years, do you think that you will create new characters for the line? Or will you keep the line only with Hangry and Angry?

Gashikon: Actually, I have created a lot of characters that nobody has seen yet because they have not yet been officially introduced. There are some that I would love to give the opportunity to introduce to everybody but I don't know if that chance is going to come or when that would be, but it is definitely something that I look forward to.

Q: How did you start out as a designer? Did you go to school or did you start out in a company and find your way to it?

Gashikon: Actually, I studied as a graphic designer in school, so that is what I studied and what I was hired as in my current company. So I am not actually a fashion designer – an offer came to me – would you like to work on developing a character brand? – and that's how Hangry and Angry came about. It was from there that I actually began being pulled into the fashion side of things.



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Gashikon continued...

Q: Did you always want to be a graphic designer, or as a child, did you dream of being something else?

Gashikon: As a kid, I wanted to create manga when I grew up. I practiced drawing manga all the time when I was a kid. I was good at drawing; I was pretty talented at that, but coming up with the stories was something that I definitely wasn't good at that part of it. So then I thought - what are other ways that I can approach stories and give life to them? - and that's how I came to graphic design.

Q: As you've previously mentioned, you like horror manga. What are some of your favorites?

Gashikon: I don't know if you'll be familiar with these manga-ka, but there are two in particular manga-ka whose works that I enjoy reading: Umezu Kazuo and Ito Junji. I have actually read everything that they have drawn since I was a child.

Q: What are some of your favorite horror movies?

Gashikon: I'm afraid I only know the Japanese title of these horror movies and sometimes they're given different titles than in English. There's one called *Akuma no Ikenie*, or *The Devil's Sacrifice* in Japanese, and there's a character called Leather Face that appears in this movie – do any of you know the title of this movie?

[a fan chimes in from the audience - Leather Face is from *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*]
Yes, that one!! That's my favorite.

Q: Are you familiar with and fond of movies like *Ring* and *Grudge*?

Gashikon: I think those are really well made movies and I get asked that a lot since people know I like horror movies, but the truth is that out of the different kinds of horror movies, ghost stories are the kind that I don't like. I have seen all those movies but I didn't watch them in order to enjoy them as I would other types of horror movies.

Q: You spoke earlier about your love of horror movies, do you hope to one day make one of your own if you had the chance?

Gashikon: Yes, I would love to create my own horror movie. If possible, I'd love it to be a Hangry and Angry horror movie. It would have to be live action, of course.

Q: What kind of horror movie would it be? Regular horror? Gore?

Gashikon: I think it would definitely be a splatter-fest if I was to create the kind of horror that I like the best. [Gashikon then posed a question to the audience]... and here's a question from me to you, if I was to make a horror movie, would you watch it?

[Let's just say there was a resounding YES from the audience.]



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Gashikon continued...



Q: When you're designing and a deadline is looming, do you have any favorite drinks, foods, or music that you rely on to make yourself work through it?

Gashikon: I'm always eating snacks while I am working. As long as I have snacks to eat I can basically accomplish anything. My favorite snack is a Japanese brand of chocolate called Kiroro Chocolates.

Q: Do you consider more of a cat person or dog person?

Gashikon: Definitely a cat person.

Q: How often do you interact with the other designers under the S-INC name? Have you ever thought about doing a collaborative collection?

Gashikon: We do collaborate sometimes. For example, I have collaborated with Sixh, who are also designers for S-INC; Ibi and Mint were incorporated into the Hangry and Angry world for a short time. In the past, h.Naoto has collaborated with the design on Hangry and Angry Future. There is definitely inspiration going back and forth.

Q: If you could give any advice to any designers who are about to enter the field, what would it be?

Gashikon: There's more than one way to approach being a designer. For example, there's a method where you only design things that you like – when you're thinking of new designs, they're things that you like. There's also another way, where you think about what you want to convey in the design, how you want to affect people with that design. When I first became a designer, I didn't actually know the methods that you could use to convey this message, so learning that is part of what I have been doing as a designer. A good way to prepare would be to learn those methods – how to get your message across and how to affect people with your design.

Q: Does your company take interns? If they do, have you worked with them at all?

Gashikon: Yes, my company has hired interns in the past, and I have worked with them. They are generally students who are studying in the graphic design field and so they get a little bit of experience that way.

Q: If you were in a horror movie with Hangry and Angry, what would you do to ensure the maximal survival rate? [This one got a lot of laughs]

Gashikon: Almost certainly Angry would be the only survivor in that situation. The hierarchy of relative strengths put Angry at the top, followed by Hangry and Gashikon at the very bottom; nobody is as strong as Angry.

Q: In your future splatter movie, what actors would you like to see in it? What actors would you like to see killed off?

Gashikon: Do you have any recommendations for actors to be in this movie?

Q: It would be funny to pick someone from a teen idol group and have them killed.

Gashikon: That sounds good. I like that approach.

Gashikon continued...



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Q: You said previously that Tim Burton is a huge inspiration to you. Have you ever tried to contact him in order to collaborate, or have you thought about possibly contacting him to collaborate in the future?

Gashikon: If I ever possibly could do it, I think the very best way to realize the image would be to have Tim Burton film something with Hangry and Angry in it. I think that would be awesome.

Q: What is your favorite horror anime?

Gashikon: I'm afraid that I don't watch horror anime. There's horror anime? I am having a difficult time visualizing this.

Q: What is your favorite Tim Burton film?

Gashikon: It is really difficult to pick my favorite Tim Burton film, but I think that the first one I saw which really impressed me was *Edward Scissorhands*. It is really hard to quantify what it is about that movie that appeals to me, but visually it is very stunning, I think.

Q: How was it working with Hitomi and Rika of Hangry and Angry?

Gashikon: One thing that is interesting is that I enjoy music, but I do not play any instruments myself, so one thing that they brought to the collaboration was bringing the world of Hangry and Angry to completely unexplored territory. With that collaboration it took Hangry and Angry from fashion, all the way into music and just opened up a lot of new areas for us.

Gashikon continued...

Q: You just mentioned that you enjoy music – what are some of your favorite bands?

Gashikon: I listen to a variety of music, so it is difficult to choose a favorite, but one in particular that I haven't heard much new material from lately, someone that I listened to a lot when I created Hangry and Angry is Marilyn Manson.

Q: When choosing the clothes for the fashion show, what story or image were you trying to share with the audience at Sakura-Con?

Gashikon: When I was choosing the clothing for the fashion show, what I really wanted to do was show the world of Hangry and Angry, especially to people who might not know anything about this world or be familiar with the characters at all. I wanted to specifically select clothing that would give you the whole story of their world in one glance. In particular, I wanted to show who and what Hangry and Angry are, so I selected clothing that had a lot of the character's faces on it, more than I usually would. This is partly because this is my first time coming to Sakura-Con, so I knew that there would be a lot of people unfamiliar with the brand.

Q: Why is the one character named Hangry? What is the reason for that name?

Gashikon: I get asked this question a lot, about the particular origin of Hangry's name. If you go back to the original setting for the characters, Hangry is poor and always hungry and Angry is really angry all the time. I took their personalities and I made that into their names. The particular spelling comes from the fact that if you take the "h" away from the name, you get "angry," so there's that, and also if you are writing it in Japanese, the "a" and the "u" sound get mixed together a lot, so written either way will sound the same in Japanese.

Q: Your show was very fun and your models were allowed to “play” a lot more than in other show – what sort of instructions did you give them to help them embody the characters?

Gashikon: The world of Hangry and Angry is this dark world, but it is actually a happy world as well and this is what I tried to convey with my instructions to the models. For a lot of the models, the fashion show was their first ever, so they were pretty nervous. If you have models that are really enjoying what they are doing – enjoying the clothes that they are wearing and getting the chance to get up in front of people – then that really comes through to the audience. My instructions were to think of themselves as the cutest person in the room and once each of them thought of themselves in that way then, of course, they wanted to express themselves and show themselves as part of the fashion show. That allowed them to enjoy being out there and came through in the way they walked and moved.



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Gashikon continued...

Q: What are some of your favorite fashion designers?

Gashikon: It is difficult to think of examples, but one designer who has influenced me for a long time is h.Naoto. His starting up the h.Naoto brand and my joining the brand is where Hangry and Angry came to be, which is why I am greatly influenced by him.

Q: This is your first time here in Seattle; have you had any time to see any of the city?

Gashikon: I am afraid I haven't had a chance to see any part of the city. I am afraid that if I went walking around by myself that I would probably get lost, so I haven't done much of that.



Q: When designing and developing, what sort of software do you use? Illustrator? Photoshop?

Gashikon: Yes, Illustrator and Photoshop are basic tools that we use a lot. When I am drawing illustrations myself, instead of drawing digitally, I prefer the feel of drawing by hand, so I will find myself doing that as well.

Q: Before creating your clothing line for Hangry and Angry, what types of clothing would you usually wear?

Gashikon: When I was first hired, I really loved h.Naoto clothing, so that was basically all I wore. I still wear h.Naoto sometimes.

Gashikon continued...

Q: What is your favorite type of material that you like to work with? Is there any type of material that you would like to work with that you haven't worked with yet that you would like to try?

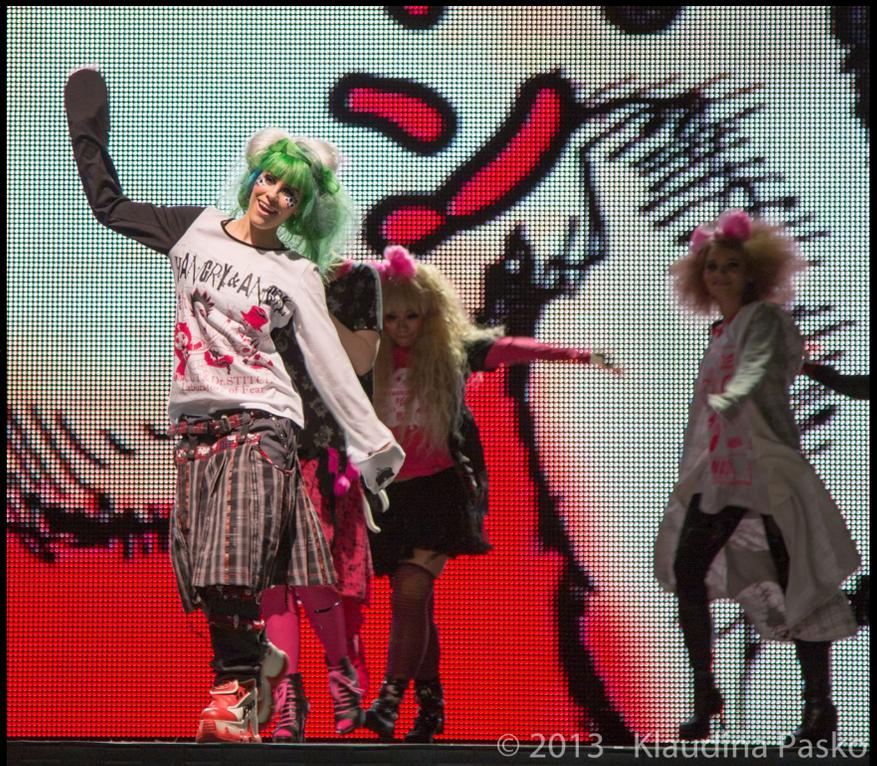
Gashikon: One of the materials I like a lot is the furry or fluffy type of material. Unfortunately, in Japan, because of the hot summers, you can't use this type of material in the summertime. One material that I haven't had a chance to work with, but would like to work with sometime is leather-based goods. Leather isn't really used for the Hangry and Angry line but I occasionally like to wonder how I would work with this type of material and what I could do with it.

Q: When working with materials, do you get advice and input from a fashion designer – how something would work or look – or do you experiment on your own and figure it out?

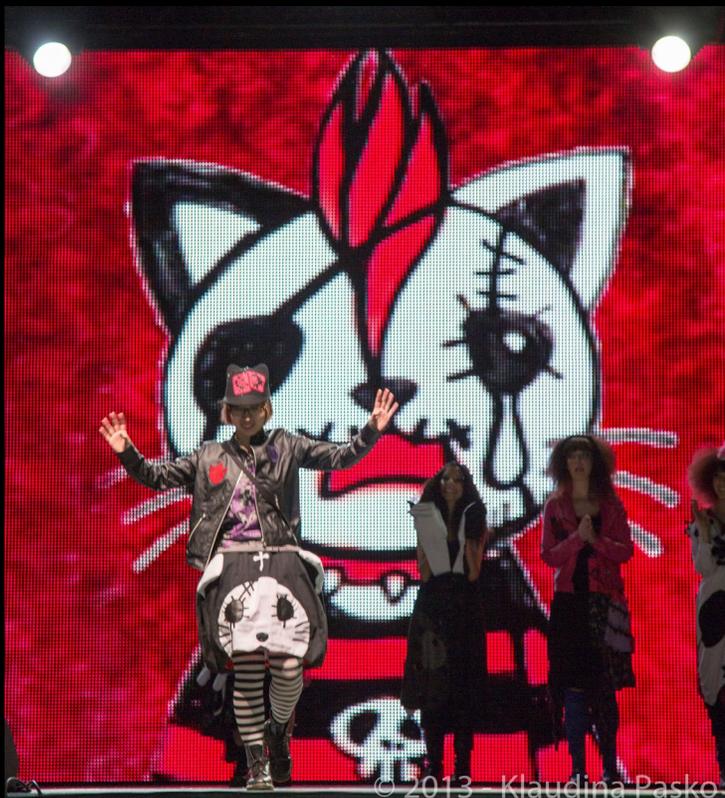
Gashikon: I definitely get a lot of advice from the people around me. Since I am not a fashion designer, there is a lot of basic and background knowledge that I don't have, and I ask a lot of questions of fashion designers and the support staff around me. We discuss what would be the best in the clothing that I am designing for Hangry and Angry. One thing that you should know is that we are not designing any of these things in a vacuum, it is not something that one person can do all by themselves and we all work together on this.

Q: How has it been seeing people at Sakura-Con dressed in Hangry and Angry clothes? What kind of feeling does it give you, seeing people in your designs?

Gashikon: I am really happy seeing people wearing these clothes. Seeing people come to the booth wearing the clothing brings me a lot of happiness. It is not just seeing the clothing that makes me happy, but seeing the combinations or ways in which they are worn – this gives me new ideas. Often I will design something with a vision of how people will wear it and then I see people actually wearing it and realize that it is a completely different way of wearing it that I didn't think of. You could coordinate it one way or another – I didn't anticipate seeing that. I really enjoy seeing my designs being worn and reinterpreted like that.



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Photo Retrospective - Sakura-Con 2013



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レストランのレビュー

Restaurant Review



By Klaudina Pasko



"In Japan today there is a popular term, *my boom* that means, 'the thing I am currently obsessed with.' Our *my boom* is Japanese cuisine, and we are grateful to you for letting us create our food for you."

With dishes made from fresh ingredients that are featured in their authentic Japanese recipes or inspired by trends found in today's Tokyo, Boom Noodle has a lot to offer Seattleites. With three locations to choose from, anyone can easily drop by to sample their Asian cuisine. The atmosphere is welcoming with plenty of seating, though depending on the time of day, making reservations may not be a bad idea.

During my visit, I could not help myself and had to try one of my favorite Japanese dishes, *okonomiyaki*, or Japanese pancake. Boom Noodle's *okonomiyaki* follows the recipe most commonly referred to as Osaka Style, which I had not yet tried before eating at Boom Noodle. The pork, cabbage, green onion, and tempura batter with aioli, *tonkatsu* sauce, pickled ginger, jalapenos and *bonito* flakes that make up the pancake was like a zesty dance in my mouth that made me practically inhale the *okonomiyaki* on my plate.



After finishing my *okonomiyaki*, I couldn't help but also order the *yaki udon* that combines melt-in-your-mouth *udon* noodles with marinated chicken, fresh mushrooms, cabbage, green onions, red chili, and *bonito* flakes. The dish was delicious with a tempting combination of flavors and textures.

Boom Noodle does a wonderful job of serving a variety of dishes that will satisfy the appetites of anyone that walks through their doors. For those that still have room after their meal, the selection of desserts may also be too tempting to resist.



ごちそうさまでした! Gochisousamadeshita. Thank you for the meal.

Capitol Hill: 1121 E Pike Street 98122 • 206.701.9130 / Bellevue Square: 504 Bellevue Sq 98004 • 425.453.6094
University Village: 2675 NE Village Lane 98105 • 206.525.2675

<http://www.boomnoodle.com/v2/index.html>

For more information about ANCEA/Sakura-Con
e-mail: info@sakuracon.org
visit our site: www.sakuracon.org
find us on our [official facebook page](#)

Mascot Contest Winners for Sakura-Con 2014



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and thank you to all Sakura-Con
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