



(Image Source: Studio Lerche)

The Anime We Can't Stop Talking About

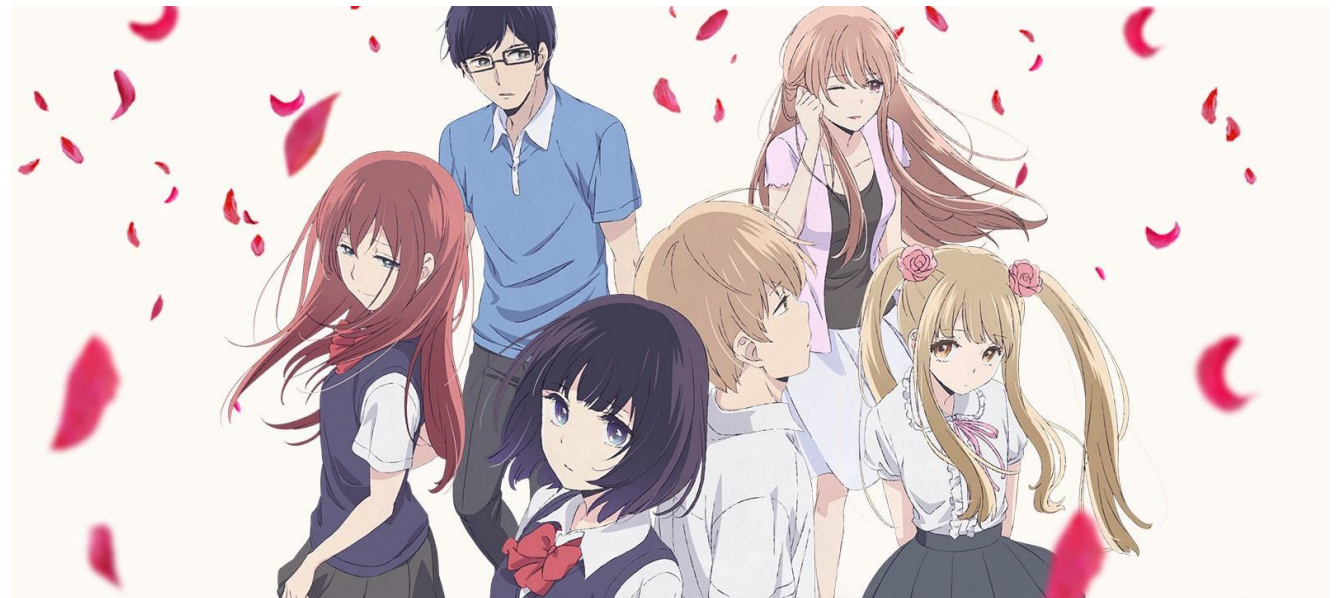
By Kaitlin Meaney

No, seriously, we can't. Myself and the other admins of the Trent Anime Society have been obsessing over this show for the whole of this winter's anime season. I hope you're willing to check it out as well because it is well worth the watch. I'm only going to be telling you my thoughts so far since the first season hasn't ended yet. By the time I am writing this article, we are up to episode eight.

Scum's Wish (Kuzu no Honkai) has a very simple premise. Two students, Hanabi and Mugi, are both in love with people they can't have. Hanabi is in love with a teacher at her school, Narumi, who has been a friend of her family since she was very young. Narumi in turn is in love with the music teacher at the school, Akane, whom coincidentally is the person Mugi feels unrequited love for. Mugi and Hanabi bond over this and pretend to date in order to have intimate relations with one another while pretending the other is the person they are in love with. As the story goes on we find out that there are two more characters, who feel unrequited love for Hanabi and Mugi respectively. Ebato is Hanabi's best friend who is in love with her and Noriko (aka Moka) is Mugi's childhood friend and is in love with him as well. What we deal with here is a love sexagon (because six people are involved). That's pretty ironic since there is quite a bit of *sexual* things in this show (I'm so funny I know).

I'll say it once: this show is *heavy*. Seriously, I don't think I've ever watched an episode of an anime and thought about how much I needed to take a break, but yet still yearned to see more. It's emotionally draining because these characters are so relatable in their struggles in high school, and adulthood, dealing with unrequited love and the recklessness that comes along with it. It is very emotionally intimate and I found myself pitying these characters for what they were putting themselves through. It's very relatable in its subject matter.

This leads me to explain about the sexual parts of this show. They are not explicit though they will make you feel uncomfortable. This is shown in the way that the mood is set between any two characters that engage in sexual acts in this show. There is a sense of uneasiness and insecurity instead of fluffy intimacy. It doesn't feel like a loving atmosphere, it feels like two people having sex just because they can, not because they love each other, which is something they must learn along the way.



(from the left: Ebato, Kanai, Hanabi, Mugi, Akane and Noriko. Image source: Studio Lerche)

I will also say this about the characters: you will either love them or hate them, there is no in-between. There are many reasons to like most of them but you might find that, much like one of our Anime Society admins, you hate them all. No character is exempt from mistakes and flaws in their personality that they in turn hate about themselves. There is a reason this show is called *Scum's Wish*; these characters all think of themselves as scum. The bottom line here is no character is perfect and all are to blame for some issue or another based around their thoughts or personalities. That's very refreshing in an anime in my opinion. Each character gets just enough attention that's needed to understand their motivations and feelings towards the events happening in the show and the people they love. It sheds a new light on each character than the one we see in the very beginning and it works for this show and its characters. The characters get deeper and we see more of who they are. Hanabi hates herself, Ebato is self destructive in her love for Hanabi, Akane longs to be loved, Narumi is thick as a brick, Noriko believes she can be with Mugi but knows it's not meant to be. These characters might do bad things but they are not bad

people. The show has a very serious tone to it and everything contributes to it. The colours are somber blues and greys, the music is subtle. It creates the perfect mood for a show like this.

I also loved how they included a homosexual character without beating the audience on the head that they are homosexual. Ebato is unique in this way. The over arching tone of this show is too complex to bring in any kind of mention of the taboo of homosexuality and I think it works for the show to use it as just another relationship in the show.

The sexuality in this show is treated with a certain kind of delicacy. Its used between Hanabi and Mugi as a way for them to take advantage of the relationship they have agreed on, using each other as a place holder for their unrequited love. On the surface, it feels very weird since they have agreed to use each other for sex, but there's a lot more to it than that. They are finding a way to act on their desires towards other people that they can't have. Performing sexual acts while imagining the person is someone else is not something one would normally be proud of doing. This relationship is a very unhealthy one and it is clear from the get go. I admittedly "shipped" Hanabi and Mugi (hoped they would be romantically together) despite the clearly bad setting. The show gave them good enough chemistry in their moping over crushes. I hoped that if they couldn't be happy with them, they could be happy with each other. I hope for these characters to find happiness in their own lives, whether it be with their object of affection, together, or learning from the experiences they have. The two characters find this part of themselves shameful, but the show doesn't actively shame them for it.

I also love how the relationship between Mugi and Hanabi isn't the focus of the show, it's the characters themselves. We see more than just the two in the back stories and character development of the side characters. I love how the side characters re just as important as the main ones. It really makes the show feel like a whole with every character connected in one way or another.

I will issue a content warning for this show and state that this show is not for everyone. It can be pretty NSFW so I wouldn't recommend watching this in a highly public place but I do recommend you watch it, that's the point of this review after all. I hope you do check it out and enjoy it just as me and my Anime Society admins have this season.