

**Godannar Vol. 1****Publisher: ADV Films****US Distribution: ADV Films**

One of the staples of anime is the giant robot show, an idea that has been done in every way imaginable—from the bleak, existential tale in Neon Genesis Evangelion, to the downright goofy Martian Successor Nadesico. Love it or hate it, it is a sub-genre of the medium that has been around forever and will probably continue for as long as animation is coming out of Japan. That said, people's reaction to Godannar will probably place them into one of two camps. One group will no doubt throw Godannar in the "just another giant robot title" category and not give it a chance. The other group is made up of the hardcore giant robot fans that are really particular about their "mecha-action." Godannar definitely has the potential to appeal to both of these groups. For the hardcore robot fans, Godannar sports a bevy of beautiful mechs, as well as some spectacular action scenes. The animation is top-notch and stays consistent throughout this volume. For fans that are not as crazy about giant robots, the first batch of episodes also introduces a slew of characters, all of whom are rich, three-dimensional individuals with interesting back-stories. While we only get a taste of them in the first volume, I'm looking forward to these characters getting fleshed out further in future episodes. And speaking of flesh, teenage boys will be glad to know that Godannar also sports copious amounts of fan-service. All in all, the fantastic quality of the animation, paired with the interesting interplay between characters, makes Godannar a series that is likely to appeal to casual as well as hardcore anime fans. (J T-N)

**Bleach****Publisher: Studio Pierrot****US Distribution: Fansub (as of press time)**

Ichigo Kurosaki is a 15-year-old boy who sees ghosts. Mostly these spirits are harmless, until Ichigo encounters a Hollow. Much more destructive than your average undead, Hollows are malevolent spirits that can possess the living, formed from dead people still trapped on earth. Ichigo is injured during the Hollow's attack, and Rukia Kuchiki, the Shinigami (death god) sent to destroy the Hollow, transfers her own mystical powers to Ichigo to save his life. Ichigo ends up destroying the Hollow himself, but is unable to transfer the powers back to Rukia. Now Ichigo has to learn to control his death-god powers, hunt down Hollows, and deal with the worst adversary of them all—the rigid bureaucracy of the afterlife. Bleach depicts an intricate world, especially the world that exists after death. Instead of assuming that death equals peace, Bleach shows viewers that human nature doesn't change just because people die. The spirits of the dead have set up Soul Society, an organization which purifies "good" spirits and destroys "evil" spirits. Of course, the Soul Society is the entity that decides which spirits are good and evil. So while Ichigo is learning to be a death god, Rukia is learning how to think for herself and make decisions about morals and ethics, instead of blindly following the edicts of Soul Society. Fans of cool fighting scenes and amateur philosophers alike will find things to enjoy about this series. (CM)



# manga reviews



**Death Note**  
**Viz**  
**Story: Tsugumi Ohba**  
**Art: Takeshi Obata**  
**Web: www.viz.com**

Ryuk, a shinigami (god of death), is tired of his listless existence. To humor himself, he decides to "accidentally" drop his Death Note into the human world. The Death Note is an artifact that possess the ability to kill anyone who's name is written into it within 40 seconds. This powerful object falls into the hands of Light Yagami, an incredibly smart high school student who reads the notebook's instructions and decides to reshape the world into his own "paradise." What better way to start than to kill off the criminals? However, the governments of the world start to take notice that so many felons are mysteriously dying and enlist the aid of master detective "L." So begins the cat-and-mouse chase between Light, who believes himself righteous, and "L," who is unwavering in his pursuit.

Death Note is a guilty, vicarious pleasure. Who has never wished that murder was this easy? Hate your boss? Write their name in the Death Note. No more worries. Thankfully, Ohba decided against crafting a story about a boy writing in a book all day. The art by Obata, who is more well-known for drawing fresh young faces in *Hikaru no Go!*, complements the tale perfectly with heavy lines and copious use of shadows and darks.

A psychological thriller with supernatural tones, *Death Note* has me hooked. From the fascinating basis of a killer notebook to the moral ambiguity of its "hero," *Death Note* will keep you thinking well after you're done reading. (PP)

**Dramacon Vol. 1**  
**Tokyopop**  
**Story and art: Svetlana Chmakova**  
**Web: www.tokyopop.com**

Not only is it your trusty reviewer Christie's first-ever anime con, it's also her first time in an artist alley, promoting the self-published comic she wrote and her boyfriend Derek drew. She's nervous and a little scared, and unfortunately Derek seems more interested in flirting with cute cosplayers than he is in selling his comic or spending time with his girlfriend. At first, Christie accepts his behavior, but that's before she makes new friends at the con like Matt—a cute, shy, cosplayer who's also helping a friend out in the artist alley.

That's when she discovered *Dramacon*. Because Chmakova is both the writer and the artist, the words and art complement each other and combine seamlessly to tell the story. Chmakova actually uses chibis as an effective storytelling device rather than just throwing them in as a cute gag. Despite *Dramacon's* lighthearted tone, Chmakova comments on serious issues that young women have to face in relationships (like being disrespected by your partner).

Anyone who has ever been to an anime convention needs to read this manga. Anyone who has ever worked in artist alley needs to buy this manga, then buy copies for all of their friends. Chmakova absolutely nails the crazy, exciting atmosphere of an anime convention—stuff like the gigantic dealer's room, crushing portfolio reviews, creepy tentacle hentai, incredible costumes, and all the pocky (or, according to this book, "pawky") you can ingest. (CM)



## dramacon