

オタク/オタク Asylum MAGAZINE

PASSION TO PROFIT

Fira x Wear and Senpai Squad
share how they turned fandom into
thriving businesses.



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OCTOBER **2024**

OTAKU ASYLUM MAGAZINE



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SPECIAL THANKS

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Miriam the Goddess	TGIKendra
Katrina Storm	ChelseaBytes
Haevyn Reyhne	AlexNorimaki
Animonday 365	Stellara Nebula
Dejavu Dejanae	Kia Sangria
Venture Bros	Trey
Chocolate Cheri'e	Hayami Angel
Delight	Penny Doodles
Vincent & Jasmine from	Pixipui
FiraXWear	BettyNixx
Kim with Senpai Squad	IkoSystemic
Chris Evans	LanieLoveee
Gio Savage	JermainePlays
ChaiBooskie	AsieyBarbie

**OTAKU ASYLUM MAGAZINE WOULD NOT BE WHAT IT IS WITHOUT
THE ENERGY, CREATIVITY, AND PASSION OF EVERYONE WHO
CONTRIBUTED. THANK YOU FOR MAKING THIS DREAM
POSSIBLE!**

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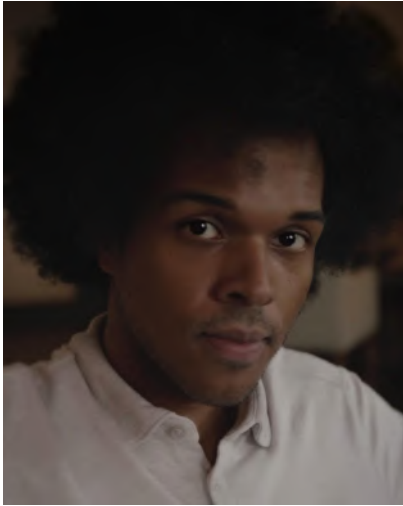
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SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION

Top Anime and Manga Picks You Need to Watch Now: Recommendations from AniMonday365



Creating anime content has been one of the most fulfilling experiences as a content creator. Each new anime season introduces a plethora of remarkable manga and anime titles. My name is **Amin**, and on my channel **AniMonday365**, I recommend and review a wide range of anime and manga. My channel is dedicated to anime news, bold takes, and podcasting content. Today, I want to share some anime and manga recommendations that you should check out right now.

Exploring Korean and Chinese Animation

If you're looking to expand your anime horizons, I highly recommend exploring Hanguk Aeni and Dongwha. Hanguk Aeni refers to Korean animation, while Dongwha refers to Chinese animation. Both are vibrant alternatives to traditional anime, representing their respective countries' unique storytelling styles.



One of my favorite Dongwha is **Link Click**. This series is reminiscent of anime like *Erased*, *Summertime Rendering*, and *Tokyo Revengers*. It creatively combines the time travel genre with photography, as the protagonists solve crimes and unravel mysteries by traveling into the past for various clients. The story takes a darker turn when they realize they're not the only ones with this power. With stunning visuals, thrilling martial arts action, and numerous twists, *Link Click* is a must-watch.



On the Hanguk Aeni front, **Solo Leveling** has gained immense popularity. This series, based on a popular webtoon, brings the webtoon to life with its dynamic animation. The story follows Sung Jin-Woo, who encounters a mysterious dungeon that nearly costs him his life. This event triggers a transformation, granting him a video game-like menu that only he can see. The action in *Solo Leveling* is akin to anime like *Reincarnated as a Slime* or *One Punch Man*, where the protagonist starts from humble beginnings and evolves into a powerhouse through hard work or supernatural means.

New Anime Recommendations

Among the latest titles, **The Elusive Samurai** and **Wistoria: Wand and Sword** stand out.

The Elusive Samurai offers a compelling mix of action and comedy, focusing on a young lord who specializes in fleeing from battles. Despite its lighter moments, the series transitions effectively into more serious themes of death and loss. The animation is exquisite, with vibrant colors that enhance each scene. The protagonist, Hojo Tokoyuki, demonstrates a unique combat style reminiscent of Goku's Ultra Instinct from *Dragon Ball Super*. If you're looking for a blend of action, humor, and impressive fights, this anime won't disappoint.



Wistoria: Wand and Sword shares similarities with *Mashle* and *Black Clover*. It follows Will Serfort, who aims to become a Magia Vander—a high-level sorcerer—despite lacking magical abilities. Instead, he possesses super strength. This trope of a powerful main character facing adversity is a staple in anime, and Will's journey to prove his doubters wrong and connect with someone he loves adds a layer of romance. With its unique presentation and cinematic visuals, this anime offers a fresh take on the sorcerer genre, distinguishing itself from *Mashle* and *Black Clover*.



Manga Recommendation

For manga enthusiasts, **Dandadan** is a standout title. This series combines romance, spirits, mecha, and fan service into one action-packed experience. Although Netflix couldn't prevent the anime leak, the manga itself remains engaging and worth reading before the anime gains widespread popularity. The story revolves around a male and female protagonist with opposing beliefs—one in spirits and the other in aliens. The manga's portrayal of spirits protecting Earth from aliens will remind you of *Gantz*. However, there's a twist I won't spoil. Trust me, *Dandadan* is incredibly addictive; I stayed up all night reading it and even created review videos. If you're looking for a new manga, *Dandadan* might be the perfect choice.



Thank you for reading my article! Don't forget to follow AniMonday365 on all social media platforms. I regularly upload content related to the recommendations you've heard today. If you're new to anime, feel free to explore my brief analyses and reach out for more suggestions. I believe that once you find the right genre, you'll be

hooked on anime for life.

Happy AniMonday365!

Writer: Amin Abraham-Quiles, **AniMonday365**

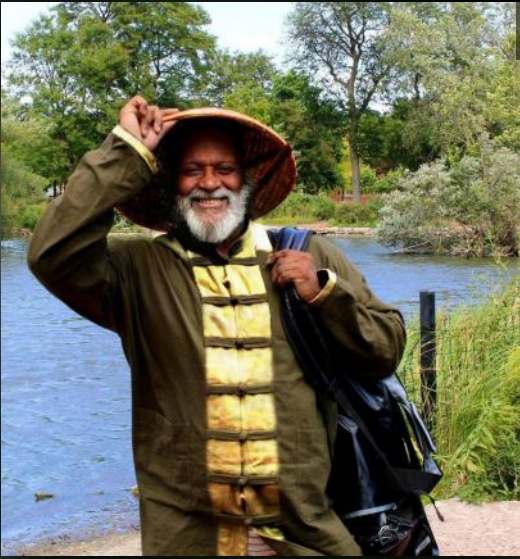
COSPLAYER SPOTLIGHT



CHOCOLATE CHERI'E DELIGHT @chocolatecheriedelight

Chocolate Cheri'e Delight is a 18x published cosplayer and 2x published author from Memphis, TN. Cheri'e also recently won Female Cosplayer of the Year at the Memphis Elegance Awards. She has been professionally cosplaying for 3 years, although her love for dressing up began long before the term "cosplay" became as mainstream as it is now. Overcoming childhood trauma and anxiety through years of therapy, she found inspiration in cosplayers like Hellspawned and CutiePieSensei. Now, she uses her platform to promote inclusivity in cosplay, encouraging creativity regardless of shape, size, color, age, or gender. Cheri'e also collaborates with other cosplayers in Memphis to build a supportive community for like-minded individuals.

COSPLAYER SPOTLIGHT



VENTURE BROS COSPLAY

@venture__bros

Michael Allen, also known as Venture Bros Cosplay, is an award-winning cosplayer and military veteran originally from Chicago, Illinois, now based in Houston, Texas. He is recognized for his exceptional craftsmanship and creativity in cosplay. Beyond the world of cosplay, Michael is also a champion powerlifter, having won the Midwest Open in 2019. His diverse background in the military, fitness, and cosplay has made him a multifaceted figure in the nerd community, inspiring others through his talents and dedication. With a passion for crafting and performance, he has earned recognition at various conventions and cosplay competitions. Michael continues to inspire with his skillful craftsmanship and dedication to the art, connecting with fellow fans and creators through social media and live appearances.

COSPLAYER SPOTLIGHT

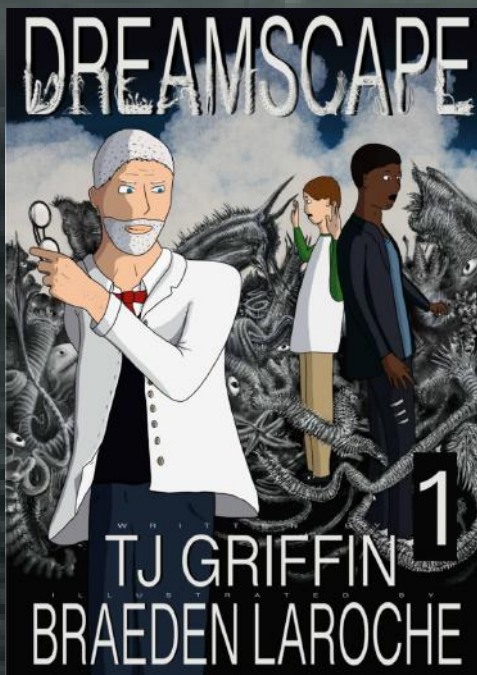


DEJAVU DEJANAE

@dejavu_dejanae

Dejavu Dejanae is a rising figure in the cosplay community, admired for her bold and creative costume designs. With a strong presence on social media, she showcases her unique takes on popular characters, blending style and authenticity. Dejanae's passion for cosplay and dedication to her craft have helped her build a following, where she connects with fans and fellow creators. Her vibrant energy and commitment to representation in the cosplay scene continue to inspire and influence others.

What if you could enter someone's dreams and alter their mind?

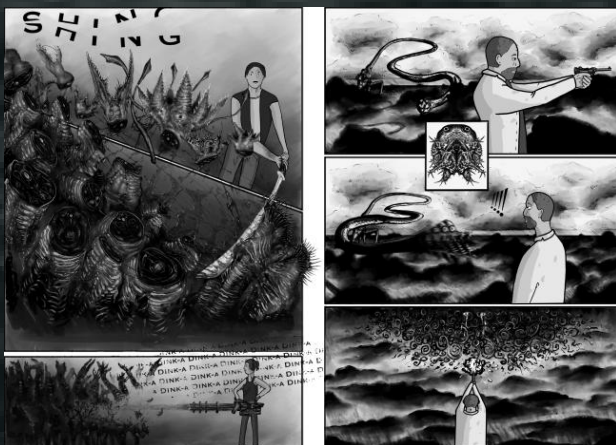


Years ago,
South Carolina Psychologist Dr. Miller
discovered a way to enter the dreams
of his clients for his therapy.
And now, a pioneer of revolutionary
technology is now relegated to
operating in the shadows.

How?

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Eric and Milo will run into going into
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MIRIAM

THE

Goddess

14 | OCTOBER 2024

In a world where creativity knows no bounds, few individuals seamlessly merge multiple art forms into a unique tapestry of self-expression. Enter Miriam Price, better known as Miriam the Goddess—a dynamic cosplayer, recording artist, and entrepreneur. Miriam's work resonates across a multitude of fandoms, from her vibrant cosplay of iconic characters to her powerful music that speaks to the soul. Her journey reflects a deep passion for the arts and a commitment to lifting up her community, making her a true force of inspiration. In this exclusive interview, Miriam shares insights into her creative process, her path to building The Galaxy Pirates community, and how she juggles being a cosplayer and musician with such grace.

Can you tell us about your journey into music, modeling, and cosplay? What inspired you to pursue these diverse fields?

Growing up, my mother would always play music around my brother and I whether that was riding around in the car, or watching the latest music videos on 106 & Park. I loved her taste in music, and the music that was out while I was growing up which was late 90-2000s Rap, R&B, and Hip-Hop. So, the music, artists, and videos at the time really inspired me. I didn't even know I had an actual talent for singing until I was around 7 years old, singing karaoke with my Uncle John. If anyone knows us Filipinos, we will sing anywhere, even in the living room, so it was just another regular day to me. But after singing this day, he told me I could really sing, and that I should go somewhere with it someday. That's when the dream of becoming a singer came into vision for me. So throughout my schooling in elementary through high school, I would always try and join the school choir, even land some solos for some songs that we would perform, talent shows, even took guitar class my senior year to learn how to write and perform my own songs. Not only that, but I also competed in the town's local singing contest called "AquaFest" in Lake Stevens. It wasn't until around 2016 where I really learned how to create my own music, and make my own beats. I ended up releasing my first mixtape, and called it "Mango" EP. I made sure to put it on all of my social media, and people really started to enjoy it, and vibe! So since then, it has opened doors for me, like being able to perform at festivals, and to create fantastic music with artists around the world.

As far as Modeling goes, it was always a dream of mine to become a Model. When I was little, I truly enjoyed all the cute clothes, and being in front of the camera. So, I believe that the feeling of being beautiful, and wanting to show off amazing clothes that I was wearing became something that I wanted to do, and be. I would always gather friends, and we would get cute, put outfits together, and take photos anywhere we went and post them on Instagram. Before "Content Creating" was even content creating, I was unknowingly already doing it when I was a teenager. It wasn't until one year, my best friend Sierra created her first online jewelry business store which is now called "Sierra's Collections" and asked me to be the first brand ambassador for her brand to model and take promotion pics and videos for. She basically taught me what stores look for when you create content for them, and that's when I started getting exposure from promotions, and other brands wanted me to create for them. Through these online brand partnerships, and collaborations, I have been able to become a model, do fashion shows, and style a lot of different companies in my own way.

Something about Cosplaying to me, has always been a total fantasy of mine. I was in love with how beautiful anime characters were, and the way you could look just like someone you truly adore and admire. When cosplaying became super popular online especially in the anime community, that's when I truly knew that I wanted to start my cosplaying journey. I started doing some "closet cosplay" characters like the Sailor Scouts from Sailor Moon, Boa Hancock from One Piece, Rukia from Bleach, and Diane from Seven Deadly Sins, on TikTok and Instagram, and people would love it, and tell me that I needed to start cosplaying. Actually planning the first anime convention to go to, which was "DreamCon" is what brought my full cosplaying dream into fruition. I was able to cosplay some beautiful characters such as Boa Hancock from One Piece, Orihime from Bleach, and Suma from Demon Slayer, and attended my first cosplay meet ups with my friends! Cosplaying is now something that honestly, I see myself doing for a long time.

How do you balance your time and creativity between being a singer, model, and cosplayer? Do you find that these passions influence each other?

Honestly, what I love the most about being a singer is that all my passions resonate with another. I find myself being able to tie in all of my creativity into all aspects of my arts, since they all go hand in hand with another. So when it comes time to even write the lyrics, I tend to think about the anime characters that inspire me in that mood of song that I am writing, then plan to cosplay that character when it comes to the music video portion, or even wearing the character with one of the anime brands that I model for and using my song or lyrics as promotion for the modeling, it all goes so well together. I always like to think, and plan ahead, on how I can use my music and other arts together. So that way, no matter what I do, I am always staying true to my number one passion which is music, but also, everything else that I love to do, with my own flair and style.

When cosplaying, what draws you to a particular character? Do you find any similarities between the characters you choose to embody and yourself?

One thing about me is, I am VERY into cosplaying the anime characters that I find very beautiful, has an outstanding outfit, and that is like me in some sense. Especially if they give that "goddess" vibe. I typically like to cosplay anime characters that have very long, beautiful hair, either a dress, or very sexy or unique style of clothing, and if she can fight? THAT'S A PLUS TOO! Love a girl that can fight and give that total heroine vibe. So with the first cosplay I did "Boa Hancock". I chose to do her for One Piece Day, and I picked her because I totally see myself in her. Not only are we both Hopeless Romantics, and in love with a main character, but she is a Pirate Empress like I am a Captain to my Galaxy Pirates, and don't even get me started on her OUTFITS! I had to do the iconic purple skulls dress, and her snake earrings are so me as well, because earrings are my trademark for sure. So to me, it's totally fun bringing these characters to life, even when you feel like you are just like the character!

Has your experience as a singer influenced your approach to cosplay, particularly in terms of performance and stage presence?

Oh I most definitely believe that my experience as a singer, has influenced me as a cosplayer in those terms. With being a singer, it's basically like a light that you have to turn on, perform as the entertainer that you desire to be in front of others. It is the same thing with cosplaying, you have to turn on that light to be the character you want to be. So while I cosplay, whether I am simply talking, performing on stage as that character, during an interview, at the group cosplay meet up, or even creating content, I am in full character mode. I love being able to act as the character I am cosplaying, because when I am out there creating even as the character online, everyone truly enjoys it.



As a model, how do you express your personal style and identity through fashion? Do you find it parallels your approach to cosplaying?

Usually with my style it truly does parallel anything that I get to wear, either in my everyday outfits, or when I create. If I have to showcase one of the items from one of my Anime Brands, I model for like "Dark Crow Sales" or "After Love" I like to base my outfit around that whole item. I study what anime it is that I am showcasing, choose some makeup, accessories, and clothes that match the aesthetics of that anime. Also, I usually tie in my fashion taste which is very "Y2K" or "Street Wear" with the whole outfit. It ends up being an outfit that looks good enough as a cosplay, and I believe that's where a lot of my followers, and the brands that I work with, love what I do with the content that I create for them. That's how it genuinely becomes a natural parallel with my fashion and cosplaying. I just love being able to know what looks, and styles, go with the outfit I vision in my head, whether that is adding anime to my everyday fashion style, or putting together a cosplay.

What challenges have you faced in balancing these careers, and how have you overcome them? Could you share a moment of triumph that stands out?

- The most challenging thing with trying to find the balance between everything that I do would definitely be finding the time to create everything that I have to do for the brands that I work with. Sometimes, with the brands that I work with, they want to send me things, and post it right away, or have me on a deadline. The deadlines stress me out the most because I will already be working on content that I have to work on for one company, but then another company is requesting for me to get it done basically at the same time. What I do though, is I try and reach out to the companies that I am working with, and express to them the situation that I am in, and suggest a longer time frame to realistically get everything done. I find honesty with companies that I work with is how I gain trust from them, to at least assure them that I am going to make the content, it will just take some time. So reaching out to the companies I work with is very important to me, because I want to make sure that I am in good standing with them, and we can work together for a long time. The companies I work with are always so understanding, and appreciate me reaching out and communicating the way that I do.

Can you walk us through your creative process when preparing for a new cosplay or music project? How do you ensure each project reflects your unique artistic vision?

When I Cosplay, I like to usually do a character I have been wanting to do, or plan around the anime convention that I am going to, and the anime group cosplay meet up that I want to attend. After I figure out what cosplay I want to do, or what group cosplay I want to attend I go on the app "AliExpress" and look up to see if they have any good deals on the anime character I want to cosplay as. I usually like to find everything on there so that includes the wig, the cosplay itself, and the accessories. If I can't find everything, I need on there I usually go on "Amazon" and try to find the rest on there. With a music project the process is way different for me. With what song I choose to do a music video for, I like to keep in mind the vision I see for it when I listen to the song. It is usually something very magical, so I like to find multiple outfits for different scenes, that I see in my head. I'll go to an online store like "SHEIN" or go to the mall, and try to find outfits that match what I see in my vision. I also like to book out studios such as "FD Photo Studios" here in Los Angeles, where you bring all your own equipment, and rent out a beautiful room with different aesthetics, that I imagined for the video. I feel like having a dream & executing exactly the visions that I see in my head for everything, is the best way to go about bringing these ideas to life. All I ever do is look for things that match what I see perfectly, and go with it. What I desire for my art, is what is most important to me!

Who or what are your biggest influences in music, modeling, and cosplay? How have they shaped your approach to each field?

My biggest influence in music is the late princess of R&B Aaliyah. She was everything to me growing up honestly. Whether her music videos were playing on television, or her music was blasting on the radios, I loved everything about her. She had me infatuated with her sweet smooth voice, and falsettos, but also her electrifying dance moves, out of the box music videos, and totally fabulous fashion sense. She was just so elegant, and sultry, it made me want to be a woman like her, who could make incredible music, and execute amazing music videos and performances. The way I sound, and write, is a genuine sound that I developed by loving her music. I would have to say another influence of mine for music that I have to acknowledge is Nicki Minaj. She really is the reason why, I can write so easily nowadays, because the way she writes when she is in her writing mode is incredible. I adapted the way that she writes after watching her write a song in a studio session from a YouTube video. The way she basically free-styled the medley, then wrote lyrics on top of that amazed me.

She really helped me with writing that way, and it became easier for me to write music after that. I just love her, how talented she is, and how many doors she's opened for so many women in this industry, and to be unapologetically themselves.

My modeling Influence definitely came from all the women I grew up loving in the artist world because they had such a beauty to them that I loved like Aaliyah, and Ashanti. But let's real, it was like that for me with all the video vixens in the music videos! I just aspired to be just like that with my fashion sense, and clothes. Selena was another one, I fell in love with her fashion sense after I started watching the movie "Selena" and watching her music videos and performances. I saw the beauty all these women had, and truly just wanted to aspire to be like the women I would see in the media with the cool clothes, beautiful makeup, and fashionable hairstyles.

The most incredible and inspiring Manny Moon, definitely holds that biggest influence spot in my heart for cosplayers. Ever since I discovered Moon on social media, I was just so inspired and infatuated by them honestly. When I saw their "Zenitsu" cosplay I think that's when it all started for me. I was just like wow this is someone who looks kinda like me, and is a black cosplayer, that can execute cosplays wonderfully. I was even more inspired last year when Moon came to DreamCon in their handmade "Sango" cosplay that was truly magnificent. I told myself I would aspire to be huge cosplayer like them someday, that can hopefully make my own cosplays too. When I got to actually meet Moon last year, and experience how genuinely kind they are, and befriend them, it made it all the better to be inspired by such an incredible cosplayer that I look up to.

You've built an incredible community called The Galaxy Pirates. Can you share the story behind its creation and what inspired you to bring this community together?

-The Galaxy Pirates basically came about with my love for "One Piece" because at the time, it was the anime that I was binging, and it made me long for a crew of friendships, like the Straw Hats had. It started with me tweeting "Who wants to be in a pirate crew? like this tweet" and the people who liked the tweet ended up being in a "iMessage Chat" that we started and that's how we became established. Some people also invited like their close friends and thought that they would fit the vibe of the crew. Also, some pirates came from our Instagram page that we have for our crew, and loved the vibe on our page, and asked if they could join. Usually some people had to go through some "requirements" to also join the crew, and if you passed, you were officially one of the pirates. A lot of the pirates got to meet for the first time last year at DreamCon 2023, it was so exciting for all of us! A big group of us got together, shared and AirBNB, and had the time of our lives last year, and made a new for ourselves in the public eye. So you could imagine the thrill it was for us all, having so many of the pirates together in one place, we all felt like we have known each other forever.

How does The Galaxy Pirates reflect your values and passions? What does being a part of this community mean to you and your fans?

When it comes to values, The Galaxy Pirates actually stand on a lot of views that I believe in. Which most importantly starts with to follow your dreams. Along with being an anime watcher as one of the important requirements, we also require for people who have dreams and aspirations. I love being around people that are in this lifetime fighting for what they want to do with their life, or what they are passionate about. That's one thing I loved so much about the Straw Hats as well, was that all of the members have a dream that they are all striving for, so I wanted the Galaxy Pirates to be the same way. I wanted the members of TGP (the galaxy pirates) to also value the power of friendship. I believed that we could all be the friends that we desired to have growing up, and to be the type of people that could depend on each other. So we are all like a big family, because we make sure that we are all comfortable with each other, and that everyone has someone they can talk to, and rely on, if they ever need anything. Our passions really just comes with all of our dreams, and how we can all help each other achieve our goals.

Being a part of The Galaxy Pirates means something so important to me, they are truly to me the friends that I have always wanted growing up. You don't really get the chance to connect with others that have the exact same interests as you when you go to high school and stuff. So to have found my own crew, that relies on me, and looks up to me, and appreciates having each other in our lives, is truly the biggest blessing I could ever ask for. What it means for the fans though, is a totally different thing. We hope all of our fans, friends, and followers, are truly ready for such huge things to happen that they can be involved with in the future. TGP plans to host our own panel someday at an anime convention, have a ball for those who didn't get to experience prom, our own music project, and merch, manga, ALL OF THAT! So those who are rocking with us, are definitely in for a treat in the future!



How do you engage with members of The Galaxy Pirates, and what role do they play in your creative journey? Have there been any standout moments or interactions with the community that have deeply impacted you?

- The way it is set up with The Galaxy Pirates and I, is I am the Captain of our ship "Tsuki" (which is moon in Japanese, and my birth planet) and so I usually reach out in our "iMessage" chat by saying things like good morning, and I wish them a grand day ahead. That's how usually all the pirates would start out their day, or we usually send each other our posts or memes in our Instagram chat. We also like to have either game nights, movie nights, or just chopping it up together on Group FaceTime. The type of role that TGP plays in my creative journey is definitely motivation to get this crew in the cosplaying and anime world as one of the most talented groups out there. With all the dreams and visions I have with my pirates, they play such a big role in what I want in the future for us all. One of the biggest dreams that I want with this group is for us to have our own anime created about our crew, and for us to voice act, and cosplay them ourselves. Probably one of the most amazing standout moments with my crew was being at Dreamcon last year with my "Krew", and someone recognizing us as a crew and saying "The Galaxy Pirates, right?". That moment just stood out to me the most because to me it meant that the momentum my crew and I were putting in at that convention was getting somewhere and we were being noticed. It was an amazing feeling, and felt like we were on the right path.

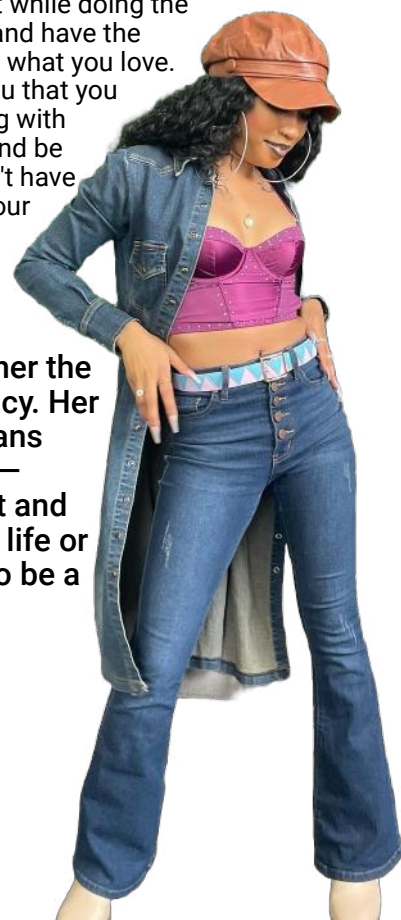
What can we expect next from "Miriam the Goddess"? Are there any upcoming projects or collaborations you're particularly excited about?

What I am most excited about is that I am actually working on my first studio album. It's going to be a dream, that's for sure! I am going to have some of that real authentic R&B Y2K vibe, with more music and lyrics inspired by some of my favorite anime. With that I will be going on tour, bringing in brand deals with some major companies, also partnering with a huge makeup brand, getting my own merch, and so much more! I will also be featured in a manga with my pirates called "Royal Dyce" with our friends who are the creators called the "Dyceboiiz". You will also be able to catch me at more anime conventions, also doing anime interviews as well. I cannot wait to share more of what is to come with you all!

What advice would you give to aspiring singers, models, and cosplayers who look up to you and wish to follow a similar path?

- All I could really say to you all, with my whole heart, while quoting my latest single, is to tell you all to "NEVER GIVE UP" like my hokage Naruto said right? I live my life on this statement alone, simply because it's striving for your happiness, and your dreams that should fuel you. Don't ever catch yourself doing stuff that doesn't make you happy. For in this lifetime, all we know so far is that we have one life to live. So live it while doing the things that make you so happy, surround yourself with people that are like-minded, and have the same goals. Life can't ever steer you in the wrong direction as long as you are doing what you love. Yeah, there will be times where it's tough, there will be people that will literally tell you that you can't do it, or to be realistic. That's where you come in and you prove everyone wrong with your own happiness. Not many people thought I could strive to follow my dreams, and be successful at it, or didn't believe in me. I never once listened to them, because I didn't have to nor need to. So you build your own empire, you hold the keys and the visions to your own dreams. Use every bit of the talent you were blessed with, and you will be so rewarded.

Miriam embodies the essence of boundless creativity, weaving together the threads of cosplay, music, and community building into a vibrant legacy. Her work, both on stage and in front of the camera, continues to inspire fans across the globe. As Miriam looks ahead, her goal remains steadfast—creating a space where every individual can embrace their inner artist and connect with like-minded souls. Whether she's bringing characters to life or captivating listeners with her music, Miriam the Goddess continues to be a shining light in the world of fandom and artistry, reminding us all that creativity has no limits.





FROM PASSION TO PROFIT: STARTING A BUSINESS IN THE OTAKU REALM



Launching a business in the nerd space is about more than just following trends—it's about tapping into passion, building community, and navigating the challenges of an ever-evolving fandom landscape. Senpai Squad and FiraXWear are two brands that exemplify this journey. Both started from the founders' deep personal interests—anime, gaming, automotive culture, and fashion—and have grown into successful ventures by staying true to their roots while facing the hurdles that come with being niche businesses.

Senpai Squad began as a group of car enthusiasts and transformed into a lifestyle brand blending anime, music, nightlife, and automotive culture. On the other hand, FiraXWear found its footing by merging anime aesthetics with streetwear and swimwear, creating subtle, high-quality designs for both fans and casual wearers.

In this article, we explore how both brands navigated the unique challenges of starting businesses in the nerd space, from managing licensing hurdles to balancing full-time jobs, content creation, and community engagement. Through interviews with their founders, we uncover the strategies, missteps, and lessons learned in their quests to make passion-driven ideas into sustainable brands.

Whether you're an aspiring entrepreneur or just curious about how to turn fandom into a business, this article offers insights into the realities—and rewards—of creating something meaningful in the nerd community.



FiraXWear is a dynamic brand that merges anime aesthetics with streetwear and swimwear, offering bold, fashion-forward designs for fans of pop culture. Born from a desire to blend fandom with lifestyle, the brand takes inspiration from 'beach episodes' in anime, making swimwear that's both stylish and nerd-culture-inspired. FiraXWear also offers sleek streetwear pieces for those who want to showcase their passions in everyday settings. Whether you're at a convention, lounging poolside, or walking the streets, FiraXWear provides premium, high-quality apparel that allows fans to express themselves confidently while staying ahead of fashion trends.

What inspired you to start FiraXWear?

The idea for Fira X Wear™ was sparked on a pandemic walk in the park between founders Vincent and Jasmine. When they wanted to get away on a vacation to Mexico, Vincent thought it would be a great idea to mix cosplay with swimwear. Jasmine made 'beach episode' designs of her favorite characters to test the appeal on social media. After trolls online commented on how swimwear couldn't be cosplay, the two decided to build a brand based on the idea to prove the naysayers wrong while keeping ethical working conditions and sustainability in mind. While the designs can be utilized for cosplay, the main focus was to create a Premium Pop Culture brand.

What problem were you aiming to solve by offer what you sell?

We wanted to provide subtle, high-quality designs that would appeal to those in the nerd space as well as people who just want fashionable clothing choices. We wanted to make fashion, not white-labeled merchandise. We've been happy to say that we've had many customers purchase and love our designs that are not necessarily fans of the pop-culture inspiration. Our ultimate hope is to bring more fans into the nerd space via fashion through cute, ethical, high-quality fashion!

What challenges were you not prepared for?

Marketing, marketing, marketing! Seriously, even with one of our co-founder's, Cutiepiesensei, having a large following, that doesn't necessarily translate to paying customers or supporters. We also both have full time jobs which makes content creation, marketing, and time management very difficult. We are so happy that people are resonating with our brand, but over the next few years our goal is to scale our business so that we can make Fira X Wear a full time effort.

How did you get the seed money to begin?

We fully funded our business with our savings. We are a fully bootstrapped business and hope to avoid any loans or outside funding for as long as we possibly can. Our hope is to grow and scale as a bootstrapped business.

What are the challenges in the nerd space that have made starting this business unique versus if it was outside of the nerd niche?

Licensing. In order to be legitimate in the nerd space and not produce items that are considered bootleg by the industry, you must obtain and pay for a license with an owner of Intellectual Property. We are so excited to announce we've just signed our first licensing contract and look forward to launching a new collection that will be blessed, approved, and embraced by the owner and distributor of major nerdy IP!

What has been the coolest sale or interaction with your brand?

To be honest, it has been just the warm, positive reception to our design and customer service! Especially in person at conventions when people 'get' our vision. We've had customers who are creators and makers themselves who mention how our quality is unheard of at our price point. Impressing cosplayers who are masters at their craft is a huge compliment to us! Also, we love when someone purchases a design and has no idea what inspired it. This was our vision from the beginning and we hope to use cute fashion as a gateway to bring more subtle nerds into the fold!



Senpai Squad is a groundbreaking lifestyle brand that bridges the worlds of anime, automotive culture, gaming, and nightlife. Founded by a group of car enthusiasts with a passion for all things nerdy, the brand has evolved into a community-driven powerhouse known for its eclectic events, after-parties, and exclusive merchandise. From hosting anime-inspired car meets to organizing energetic raves at major conventions, Senpai Squad offers fans a unique space to celebrate their passions. At the heart of the brand lies a mission to create an inclusive and exciting environment where fans can connect, have fun, and embrace their identities unapologetically.

How did Senpai Squad come into existence, and what inspired you to create this unique blend of anime, automotive culture, and gaming?

Senpai Squad started as a group of friends who bonded over their shared love of Audi vehicles. From there, we realized there was a big opportunity to combine our passions for anime, cars, gaming, and events into something bigger. We felt there was a need for a brand that connected these fandoms, and that's how Senpai Squad was born.

Can you tell us more about the transition from a group of Audi enthusiasts to a widely recognized brand?

The transition was pretty organic. We all sat down and agreed that Kim, who was already deeply involved with the community, would be the best person to lead the brand forward. There was so much potential, and having one person take the reins allowed us to grow and evolve into what we are today.

What has been your most memorable event to date, and why?

We've done close to a thousand events, so picking just one is tough. But recently, we've really enjoyed going back to the events we attended six years ago and reconnecting with our roots. Seeing how far we've come alongside our fans has been a very special experience.

How do you go about planning and organizing your raves and meetups?

It's all about the logistics. We've learned to plan ahead and streamline the process by hosting most of our after-parties in partnership with conventions. This way, we can tap into the resources already available and use them to run the after-parties effectively.

Juggling everything—like selling at events, curating car shows, and hosting after-parties on the same day—can be a challenge, but we've built a strong, reliable team that helps make it all possible.

What role does the community play in shaping Senpai Squad's activities and events?

Community feedback is crucial to us. We always want to ensure that people are having a great time while staying true to our brand's identity and values.

How important is cosplay to the identity of Senpai Squad events?

Cosplay has been a huge part of our brand since the beginning. Before Senpai Squad, we used to make cosplay music videos, and many of our friends who cosplayed helped model our merchandise. It's still a big part of our events today, and we love incorporating cosplayers wherever we can.

Do you have any standout cosplay moments or stories from your events that you'd like to share?

Our "Weeb Stop" community events attract between 3,000 and 5,000 attendees, and we always use these as opportunities for cosplayers to showcase their creativity. We love seeing the range of costumes, from detailed armor to extravagant dresses—even pets get involved!

How do you curate the DJ lineups and musical experiences for your raves?

We host around 12 to 16 raves a year, so keeping things fresh can be a challenge. We have a formula where 75% of the lineup includes returning talent that we know will excite the crowd, and 25% is new or local talent. We believe in giving people opportunities—that's how we've discovered some of our most talented DJs.

What kind of atmosphere do you aim to create at your events, and how do you achieve it?

Our number one goal is to create a fun, welcoming, and safe environment. We want everyone to be engaged and enjoying the moment, not staring at their phones out of boredom. Our staff is always out there partying with the crowd while keeping an eye on safety, so there's always a good vibe.

What challenges have you faced in growing Senpai Squad, and how have you overcome them?

Growth came quickly, and we didn't take the time to restructure until 2023. We scaled back the number of events to focus on developing better systems to handle logistics, inventory, and staffing for the 50-plus events we aim to do each year. Planning ahead and creating structure has been essential.

How has the brand evolved since its inception, and what are your future plans?

It's evolved beautifully, and we couldn't be happier. We've solidified our place in both the community and industry, working with big names while staying connected to our fans. Looking forward, we plan to keep building on that, working with more major companies, and expanding our own events like TsumiCon and Weeb Stop.

Can you tell us more about your merchandise, and what makes it unique to Senpai Squad?

Our merchandise is more than just apparel—it's a way for fans to connect with the lifestyle and the brand. We live what we sell, and that's why you'll see us offering hoodies year-round, regardless of the weather!

Have you collaborated with other brands or influencers in the anime and gaming communities? If so, can you share some details?

We've collaborated with a number of notable brands and companies, including Spencer's, Hot Topic, VShojo, and Xpress Skins. We've also partnered with conventions like LVL Up Expo, Anime NYC, and MomoCon.

As someone who has experienced being ostracized for your interests, what message do you have for others who might be going through similar situations?

No matter what anyone says, always believe in yourself and stay true to who you are. Eventually, you'll find the community where you belong.

What personal passions and interests do you bring into Senpai Squad, and how do they influence the brand?

Senpai Squad is pretty much my life. Everything we represent—anime, gaming, cars, nightlife—those are my passions. It's more than just a brand; it's a lifestyle for me.



Where do you see Senpai Squad in the next five years?

We're already working with conventions and companies that we admire, but we hope to continue growing these partnerships. We also have plans to grow TsumiCon and Weeb Stop into larger events, maybe even renting out a convention center one day. Another big goal is to open a Senpai Squad warehouse or storefront.

Are there any upcoming projects or events that you're particularly excited about?

2024 was a year of building and restructuring, and in 2025, we're ready to hit the ground running. We have so many events planned, and we're excited to see everything come together.

What advice would you give to someone looking to start their own community or brand within the anime, automotive, or gaming spheres?

Start now. The hardest part is getting going, but your future self will thank you. Don't be afraid to make mistakes early on—that's how you learn and grow.

Is there anything else you would like our readers to know about Senpai Squad?

Stay true to yourself and work hard. If you give it your all, you'll never have regrets about what happens next.

“THE MERC” CHRIS EVANS



Photo Credit: Chuck Ford Photography
Nick Clark
(@PhoenixPhoto901 on IG)

NICKNAME(S):

BIG MERC, MEMPHIS SPLX KYNG

HOMETOWN: MEMPHIS, TN**HEIGHT AND WEIGHT:** 6'2 AND 260 LBS**DEBUT:** FEB 2013 AT VCA WRESTLING

PROMOTIONS: VCA, 901WRESTLING, NOCW, TWX, TIWF, REDEEMED PRO WRESTLING, EPW, COMMITTED TO WRESTLING, SPWA, PRO WRESTLING ADRENALINE, USA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

SIGNATURE MOVES:

SOS (SUCCESSION OF SUPLEXES, WHICH IS A TRIO OF SUPLEXES),
MERC DRIVER (PEDIGREE),
GET MERC'D (LAST RIDE POWERBOMB)

CHAMPIONSHIPS:

901WRESTLING 1819 CHAMPION,
TIWF HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION,
VCA HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION,
CO VCA JUNIORVATIVE CHAMPION,
2X VCA TAG TEAM CHAMPION



His Inspiration: As a kid, I always gravitated to The Rock. Just his presence, swagger, and charisma always had me in awe. I always also a fan of Chris Benoit due to his in ring intensity. It's a bit of a wrestling taboo it seems to say so, but despite the tragedy, man was an excellent worker.

About his In-Ring Persona: I started the moniker "Memphis SPLX KYNG" when I started to notice how often I was utilizing suplexes and how effective they were in matches. Once I started using more various suplexes, I noticed nobody in Memphis was using them like I was, then came the name.

Favorite Match: My favorite match thus far has been against my cousin, Adonis Staples. We have a Falls Count Anywhere main event match that was complete chaos. I tore Black Lodge down! We fought from the ring, to the crowd. From the merch area, to the bar, hell even to the bathroom. I enjoy those hard hitting matches that leave me sore in the morning.

Toughest opponent: I'd say my toughest opponent has been Walker Hayes. Were both big ass man that hit hard and can throw you around, and can move, so putting both of us together is like putting Kane and Undertaker in the ring.

Pre Match Routine: Pre matches, I'm usually stretching and making sure I'm fully hydrated. Once I put my entrance mask on, I'm a whole different person. The Merc is then let loose when that happens.

Advice for aspiring wrestlers: For any new and aspiring wrestlers, I'd say to always, ALWAYS listen to good advice and keep your ears open, be ready to put the work in and pay dues. If there's wrestling where you live, go to the shows. Get to know the promoters. Volunteer on the show, but at the same time, don't get taken advantage of. Most importantly, don't let promoters/bookers tell you that you can't wrestle at other places. You will always want to get as much experience as possible.

NICKNAME(S): THE ENEMY OF AVERAGE

HOMETOWN: CHARLESTON, MS

HEIGHT AND WEIGHT: 6'1 240LBS

DEBUT: NOVEMBER 2018 FOR MAXIMUM CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

SIGNATURE MOVE: TORNADO KICK AND FIREMAN JACKHAMMER

GIMMICK: THE INSTANT CLASSIC, THE TOTAL PACKAGE, THE ENEMY OF AVERAGE! IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, COME TO A SHOW TO FIND OUT!

CHAMPIONSHIPS:

NORTH DELTA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING'S UNITED STATES CHAMPION, ALL PRO WRESTLING'S HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION, BATTLEZONE'S CAPITOL CITY HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION, BATTLEZONE'S TAG TEAM CHAMPION, BATTLEZONE'S WILLIAMSON CUP WINNER, PRO WRESTLING ASSOCIATION'S HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION MIDSOUTH CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING'S LEGACY CHAMPION

PROMOTIONS:

MEMPHIS WRESTLING (MEMPHIS, TN), MIDSOUTH CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING (OSCEOLA, AR), ALL PRO WRESTLING (MARIANNA, AR), SOUTHERN EXTREME WRESTLING (FOREST CITY, AR), BAYOU INDEPENDENT WRESTLING (BROOKHAVEN, MS), LEGACY CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING (MS), NORTH DELTA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING (CLARKSDALE, MS), COMBAT SPORTS PRO WRESTLING (FT. WALTON BEACH, FL)



What inspired your current in-ring persona? As far as the clothing colors, black and yellow are my hometown colors so I always try to make my hometown proud. Secondly, my persona is me turned up x10. That's how I was taught to be in wrestling training. Anything extra is just shades from Dwayne "the Rock" Johnson, Nic Nemeth, Macho Man Randy Savage, Shelton Benjamin, etc.

What inspired the shoulder roll getting over? It was really an accident. I actually injured my shoulder wrestling. After a few months off, before the match would start I would rotate my shoulder to make sure I wouldn't feel pain. It became a normal thing and then I saw kids doing it. Then I started doing it a little more and boom! I became known for the shoulder roll.

Which match in your career stands out as your favorite, and why? I haven't had it yet. I'm my own worst critic when it comes to my matches. I've had some bangers but there's always some small little thing that grinds my gears.

Who has been your toughest opponent so far? There have been plenty of matches where I've met some tough people. The absolute toughest that I've wrestled that can take a beating and can give one is Nightmare Jeremiah. For instance, I literally jumped from the top rope and stomped on his face. He shrugs it off, continues the match, and gives me a small package tombstone.

What's your pre-match routine to get into the zone? Prayer! Before I hit the curtain, I literally pray asking for protection and pray that the fans leave entertained and have gotten their money's worth.

Any advice for aspiring wrestlers trying to break into the industry? Being humble, willing, and ready will take you a long way. Listen to everything but take some with a grain of salt. Wrestling is subjective. Never be afraid to do what hasn't been done before.

“THE ENEMY OF AVERAGE”

GIO SAVAGE



Sprinkle Some Magic Why Black Women are Needed in the Wrestling Business



When you think of wrestling, you think of its longevity, where two things meet. Theatrical storytelling and physicality. From years and years ago, people would go to a place to watch the spectacle that is sports entertainment, captivated by what they will see in person and/or on screen. As much as we, the fans, have been entertained, there was something that took years to include in some capacity and that was representation. Representation that broadens the scope of perspectives and stories. But, representation also were the roles that meant championships, avoiding stereotypes and showcasing women outside the box. Especially Black women.

I can remember watching wrestling when I was about six years old or so. My grandmother was a huge wrestling fan. She loved Macho Man Randy Savage. He was one of her favorites. I would sit with her and my twin, and we would watch the entertaining aspects while she yelled at the TV about the shenanigans we saw.

The first time I saw Shawn Michaels on my screen, I was in awe of how cool he seemed. He was larger than life. A spectacle by himself. As a child, I was smitten. My love for wrestling started here, and would get more intense as I started to see the wrestlers of the Attitude Era. The Rock, Stone Cold, The Hardy Boys just to name a few. As much as I was a fan of some of the women back then, it was rare to see a black woman on the grand stage, but before I get into that, let's look at some history and context.

From a Historical Standpoint:

In the US, many Americans didn't seem entertained by my wrestling and, in turn, matches being "faked" or outcomes being "fixed" became the norm to create a spectacle for the audience. In carnivals, sometimes a visitor can pay a fee to fight a wrestler for a match and if they win, they'll get a prize. Etc. There were many moments of "kayfabe" to basically dupe the fans into thinking about certain things in wrestling.

In general, the entertainment industry has struggled with diversity throughout history. And even more importantly, black women had even smaller roles, were underrepresented or had some kind of negative stereotype attached to them. Sports entertainment wrestling was no different. The wrestling space can seem big, but it is also small in the context that when you watched on your TV you knew what kind of wrestler you'd see on the screen. You knew what wrestlers would get the championships, who'd have amazing storylines, and who would be able to thrive in that space.

Currently:

In general, women, especially black women, are part of a rich tapestry of wrestling. But, when you have one or two Black women, you can easily see how limited we were on the screen. As a child, I was able to see Jacqueline Moore and, as I got a little older, there was Jazz. But that's two black women, a far cry from what could've been included if they were allowed to really shine.

Black women in spaces are crucial. Period. We can offer a unique look at things and also show how damn remarkable and amazing we are. In the wrestling aspect, women and little girls benefit from seeing any type of athlete that looks like them. I think Bianca Belair as being one of the reasons so many black little girls started to watch wrestling. I think of how big of a deal it was to see Sasha and Bianca in the main event at WrestleMania. I think about how we got to see Naomi/Trinity Fatu with her beautiful natural hair and athleticism or Jade, who looks like a comic book character come to life. All of these things fit into multiple boxes and should be celebrated. It should be seen. It should be showcased.

In the Media Aspect:

I'm pretty new in the media and wrestling broadcasting world. As I said earlier, I was a fan for years. A fan who didn't see many who looked like me. In 2020, that changed though, as I found myself thrown into this space not knowing where I would go, what I could do, what I would accomplish etc. While I have been extremely grateful to be doing this, I can't help but notice that black women are few in space. There are plenty of black women who love wrestling, but not so many in a press room, a media call, or even in the broadcasting aspect, which is a shame.

Unfortunately, I've seen both the good and bad of being involved in wrestling. Those who genuinely like what I do, like my thoughts etc. However, on the flip side, I have been questioned about what I know, assumed I got in a spot for a ridiculous reason, and been on the receiving end of some disrespectful and racist things.

In 2022, I created a panel called Behind the Magic: WOC in Wrestling to showcase the many roles that WOC have in wrestling and the obstacles and challenges they may face. But in the same space, as much my heart wants black women, especially to get to tables and doors we haven't been able to do previously. We are told to work three times as hard for crumbs and then told we should be satisfied with the little given.

Going Forward:

Sure, plenty of people talk about wanting more diverse representation. Tweets, think-pieces, etc. But very few walk the walk, making sure Black women are seen, heard and are able to succeed and thrive in the wrestling industry. In all respects, whether that means on an actual television screen, behind the scenes, backstage or online. Make sure Black women are included in those essential roles. Make sure Black women are not only a box to check off. Make sure Black women aren't being told to suck it up, tone it down, be less vocal, be less imposing or take less space. We will do all of that and more because, baby, we are absolute magic. Make sure to heavily season Black women in this space, no matter the role. We aren't going anywhere.

As wrestling continues to evolve and grow, let's hope that, with that growth, more opportunities in all aspects of professional wrestling that allow for new narratives, perspectives and innovations to flourish.

Until next time, it's Katrina signing off.



Cassandra Golden

Athena Palmer

Nyxx The Goddess

Bianca Belair

Katrina, also known as Katrina Storm in the wrestling world, is a New York-based mom, writer, podcaster, wrestling broadcaster, and media correspondent. With degrees in legal studies and developmental psychology, she transitioned into ghostwriting and writing for various wrestling and horror websites. In 2017, she founded Bookish Brown Girls to promote WOC authors and writes romance and YA fiction under the pen name Kay Blake. Katrina launched her YouTube channel, "In Kat We Trust," in 2020, focusing on anime, movies, and wrestling. She also created the "Behind the Magic: WOC in Wrestling" panel, which has been featured at major conventions like New York Comic Con and Twitch Con.

Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and Threads: @inkatw3trust
Website: <https://linktr.ee/inkatwetrust>

STREAMER SPOTLIGHT

CHAIBOOSKIE

Meet **ChaiBooskie**, a multi-talented Twitch streamer and cosplayer originally from Chicago, now based in Atlanta. Known for her vibrant streams that blend gaming, cosplay, and engaging conversation, ChaiBooskie has quickly become a fan favorite in the streaming community. With over 1,200 followers on Twitch, she continues to grow her audience by offering a unique blend of entertaining content.

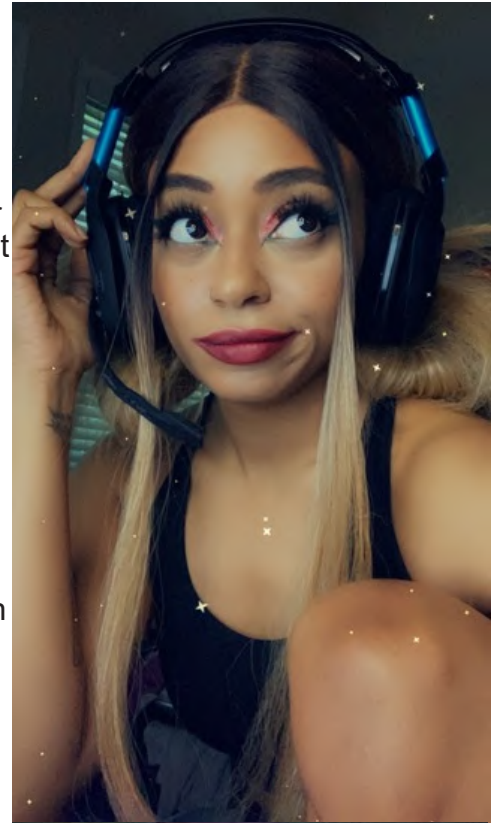
ChaiBooskie's name has an interesting origin. "Chai comes from a mix of my childhood nickname (Chay, pronounced Shay) and Chi, like Chicago. Which is why I don't mind either when pronouncing it. The 'Booskie' portion was an add-on back in grammar school, and it's stuck ever since." As for tea? "Fun fact: I'm actually not a big fan of tea, so I found out about that later in life."

Her streams showcase her love for gaming, with her favorite titles including Overwatch, Dead By Daylight, Lethal Company, Fortnite, and Sons of the Forest. Whether she's diving into intense matches in Overwatch or surviving in Sons of the Forest, ChaiBooskie's personality shines through in her gameplay, always keeping her audience engaged.

"I love making people laugh, and gaming is a way to bring people together," she says. "Whether it's through cosplay or just hanging out during streams, I want to build a community where everyone feels welcome." This commitment to creating a positive space has made her streams feel like a home for her growing community of fans.

In addition to gaming, ChaiBooskie's cosplay adds another dynamic to her brand. Whether she's portraying beloved characters or chatting about her next project, her creativity is ever-present, making her a force in both the cosplay and streaming worlds.

Catch her live on Twitch, where you can experience her unique blend of gaming, storytelling, and community-building. You might find yourself staying longer than planned!



STREAMER SPOTLIGHT

BLACKSNACKZ

Meet **BlackSnackz**, also known as Snackz—a part-time Twitch streamer and avid cosplayer who's carving out a unique space in the gaming community. His journey as a gamer began with his very first console, the Sega Genesis, and since then, his passion for games has only grown. Now based in Atlanta, BlackSnackz is known for his interactive streams, infectious energy, and his dedication to building an inclusive community.

In his own words: "My streaming content spans a diverse range of games, from the latest AAA titles and indie gems to classic favorites I missed out on earlier. I have a particular passion for horror games, cause they make ya FEEL something." Some of the games he regularly streams include Overwatch (soon to be Marvel Rivals), Fortnite, Monster Hunter, Predecessor, and Jackbox Party Pack. He also has a soft spot for now-discontinued games like Knockout City and Rumbleverse

Beyond streaming, BlackSnackz organizes community events that bring together members of the "SnackPack" for fun game nights, fostering a welcoming environment where everyone can connect and collaborate. "I strive to maintain a welcoming and inclusive chat environment where everyone can enjoy gaming together," he shares.

When he's not streaming, you can often find him hiking, working out at the gym, catching up on anime, or relaxing with some games. His presence extends beyond Twitch to platforms like Instagram and Discord, where he regularly updates fans on upcoming streams and community events.

With a following of over 1,400 on Twitch, BlackSnackz continues to grow his reach, entertaining audiences with his unique mix of gaming and cosplay content. Be sure to catch him live on Twitch, and join the SnackPack for a good time and great games!



INSIGHTS FOR CREATORS



In today's fast-paced digital world, content creators face a unique set of challenges, balancing audience expectations, personal boundaries, and mental health. While content creation can be an enriching and rewarding experience, it often comes with the pressure to remain constantly available and transparent with one's audience. This pressure can blur the lines between a creator's public persona and private life, making it increasingly difficult to maintain healthy boundaries. In this article, licensed mental health counselor and content creator, LanieLoveee, shares invaluable insights into how creators can safeguard their mental well-being, set clear boundaries, and thrive in their online communities without sacrificing their personal lives.

How do you define healthy boundaries for someone in the content creation space?

In content creation, I would define a healthy boundary as one that maintains the safety and comfortability for both the creator and their audience. We all have seen plenty of stories of both creators and audience members falling victim to each other due to poor boundaries and inconsistent communication. If either of those factors becomes compromised, it can create issues in all areas. For example, if the content creator doesn't feel safe, it will be difficult for them to provide content or create an authentic connection with their audience. If the audience members don't feel comfortable, they will avoid supporting or interacting with the creator and their content, even if they haven't outright unfollowed or unsubscribed.

What are some warning signs that a content creator is pushing their boundaries too far?

There are plenty but they could look different for each person. Some examples of warning signs could be burnout (from content or interacting with their audience), feeling overwhelmed, pressured, stressed, more irritable, avoiding playing certain games or changing stream days to avoid certain community members, feeling resentment towards their audience, etc. You can appreciate and care about your community but it shouldn't be to the point of stressing yourself out. There's a difference between wondering how you can improve engagement with your audience and farming daily Discord nights just to convince people to like you. If you are coordinating events with your community, it shouldn't feel like a job. If it begins to feel like a chore just to coordinate events or interact with your audience, something's off. You need to step back and maybe figure out what's causing that discomfort because it will come across in your interactions with them. While the content creator-audience relationship is a more casual iteration of a professional relationship, no one deserves to be lashed out at or feel unappreciated.

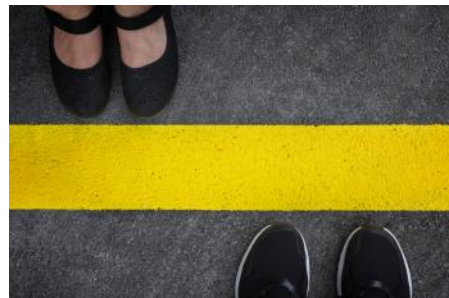
How can content creators avoid feeling guilty or anxious about setting limits with their audience?

It can be anxiety-inducing when you are learning how to set boundaries for the first time, particularly as a content creator. However, boundaries are especially critical when either first starting content creation or when you eventually decide to rebrand or restructure your community. I will always encourage people to make decisions that they feel the most comfortable with and allow your audience to make that decision to respect the boundaries you place. You will have members of your community who may not understand why these boundaries are being placed and if they want to leave because of it, they weren't meant to remain part of your community long-term. You can have that appreciation for your community without compromising your comfort in the space you created. As you begin to set boundaries and reinforce them, you will see members of your community come and go, it's only natural. You will feel guilty and anxious about it but know that you will feel more comfortable in the long run with the community as a whole. If they can't respect the boundaries you set, why would you even want them in your community to begin with?

What mental health practices can help creators maintain their well-being while engaging regularly with their community?

We all need time to regroup, to figure things out, and this is especially important in this space where people want a lot from you with little you receive in return whether it's emotionally, financially, etc. When that stream turns off, when those lights dim, it's just you and everything you have going on. You need to take those moments of downtime to check in with yourself. In terms of mental health practices, different things work for different folks. I could recommend basic things like daily meditation, adult coloring apps/books, reading books, deep breathing when feeling anxious, working out, etc. but someone would have to figure out what works for them specifically. After my streams, I like to

decompress by listening to rain sounds and playing simulation games like SimCity, Supermarket Simulator, and Powerwash Simulator for an hour. It helps me regulate myself and get ready for bed since I stream at night after an eight-hour work shift. I don't immediately engage with my community or check socials after.



How can content creators balance maintaining personal privacy with the need for transparency and authenticity online?

Share only what you are comfortable with people repeating. If you don't want people outside of your community to know certain things about you, you shouldn't be sharing that with your community at all.

Please remember that you are interacting with other human beings, not just usernames on a screen.

Whatever you share about yourself, you risk someone latching onto you and potentially creating a parasocial relationship. This sounds scary but it's not all that bad as long as you are clear with the boundaries that you set. You should note this as you grow, as you enter different spaces, network with other creators and are introduced to their audiences, etc. You can be honest with your community about things but a little privacy will always be healthy to have, even in your relationships offline. I've had interactions with newer audience members where they've said, "I've only been here for a week but I feel like I know you!" To which I politely replied, "I can appreciate the sentiment but you don't actually know me and that's okay!" For people who are prone to developing parasocial relationships quickly, this has been a quick jolt back to reality for them.

Creators also need to be mindful of oversharing. For example, rather than vent in your Discord about every little detail of how awful your day went that led to a stream cancellation, you can instead try this, "Hey everyone, today was a rougher day than I would've liked. I'm going to take today to reset and get some rest but I'll see you all tomorrow for stream instead." It lets your community know three things: today was not a great day for you, you are going to rest and recuperate, and they can expect to see you tomorrow. A statement like this gives your community a glimpse into what's going on with you without revealing too much and more importantly, reminds them that you are a content creator, not their friend. It's only natural that you will develop friendships with your moderators, regular viewers, etc. but you should always keep in mind that if you don't know every little detail about those individuals, you don't need to share every little detail about you.

For better privacy, think about who has access to you. Use a Discord ticket bot for community members to ask your moderation team for assistance rather than DM you directly. It shows your audience that you have a team of mods that can support them in your absence with immediate needs. If you do not know them well or need to speak privately, they shouldn't have immediate access to you. It is imperative that you communicate why you make choices like this as well, even if it's something as simple as becoming friends on Steam. If someone randomly joins the stream and asks to play with you, "Oh hey, thanks for stopping in. I do play with the community but only on designated days. You can keep up with announcements on my Twitter or in Discord to know when that happens." Or if you don't add random people, "Hey, thanks for stopping by. I prefer to keep my friends list with people I'm familiar with, so I can't add you. If you stick around and I get to know you better in the future, that could change one day."

Let the authenticity show in the content you create. Allow your talent and charisma to speak for itself. More importantly, never compromise your comfort for strangers on the internet.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

OCTOBER **2024**

OTAKU ASYLUM MAGAZINE

Dear Otaku Asylum Magazine Readers,

As we wrap up this second issue of Otaku Asylum Magazine, I want to thank each and every one of you for sticking with us on this journey. This issue has been a labor of love, filled with stories that celebrate the many ways our passions—whether for anime, gaming, cosplay, wrestling, or streaming—bring us together.

Through these pages, we've explored not just fandoms but the heart and hustle that go into turning those passions into meaningful projects. From our deep dive into content creation boundaries to "Passion to Profit," the goal has been to inspire and reflect the diverse communities we belong to.

This magazine is more than just ink and paper—it's a space for connection. We hope it's sparked new ideas, validated your experiences, or simply reminded you that whatever corner of fandom you inhabit, you belong here.

We're grateful to those who contributed to this issue, from cosplayers and creators to wrestlers and artists. Thank you to our readers who engage with us, offer feedback, and keep us motivated to grow and evolve. Your energy pushes us forward, and we're already planning for the next issue with even more exciting features and collaborations.

Until then, keep being bold, keep creating, and stay true to what you love. The asylum will always be here, ready to welcome you back.

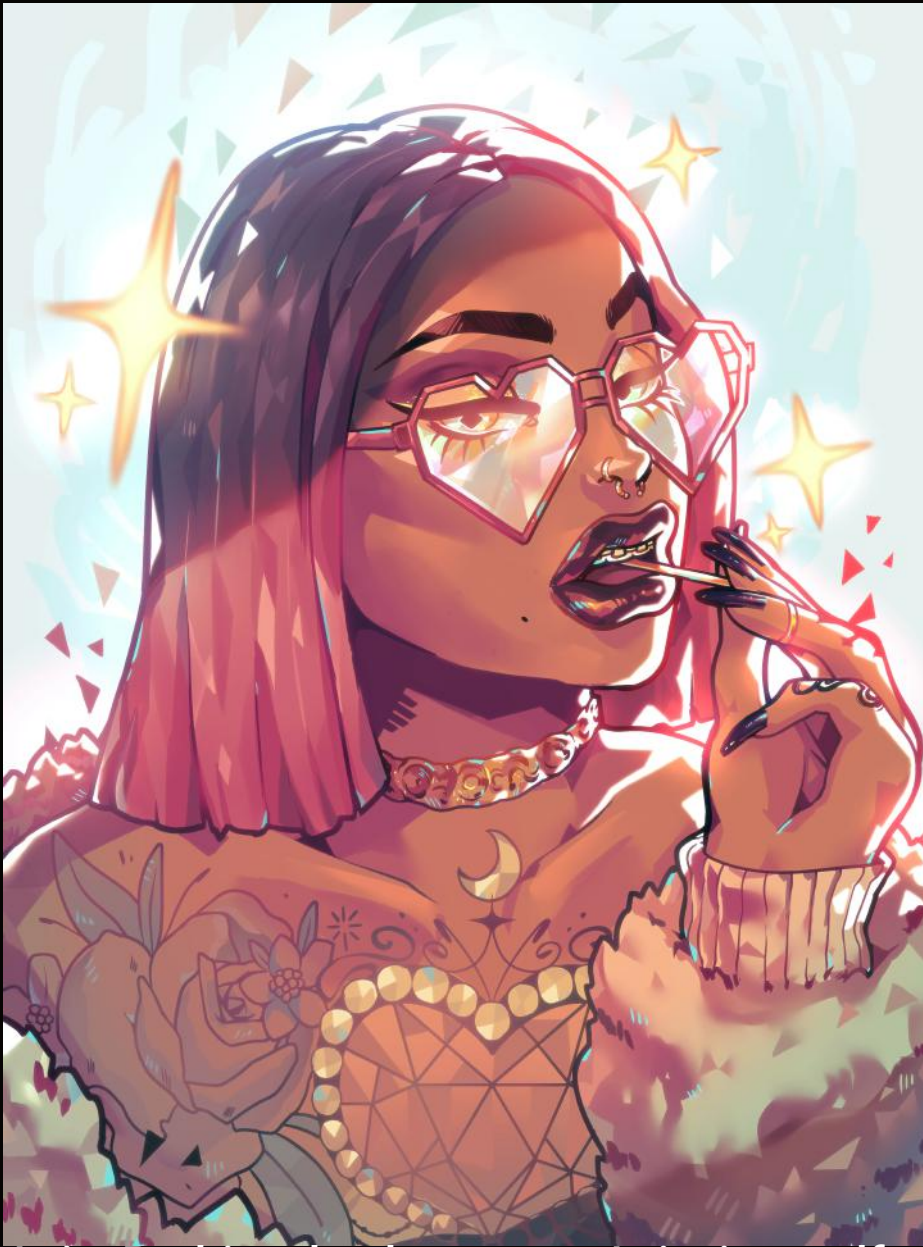
Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

See you next time,

Omar, TheOtakuSauce
Editor-in-Chief
Otaku Asylum Magazine



ARTIST FEATURE



AsieyBarbie, also known as Asia, is a self-taught digital artist specializing in concept and character art. Known for her bold, anime-inspired style, she uses Adobe Photoshop CC and Clip Studio Paint to bring her visions to life. Her work spans character design, development, and fan art, attracting high-profile clients such as Megan Thee Stallion, Nicki Minaj, Sony Music, and DC Comics. With collaborations across entertainment, comics, and music industries, AsieyBarbie continues to make her mark in both pop culture and visual storytelling.

asiey
BARBIE

