

A COMMUNITY OF

PASSION

“A fan is someone who likes to check something out with purpose.”

APRIL LAM, SENIOR



“Miraculous Ladybug”
by Ivy Lee

How fan culture and shared passions can provide purpose and bring people together

A young girl eagerly waiting for her favorite idol to get on stage, an elderly person watching their favorite sports team approach the field or a community excited for the next episode of a TV show: fan culture can be seen exhibited by all types of people everywhere.

“Being a fan is just being passionate,” senior Noah Boyarsky said. “For me, being a fan means thinking about a piece of media often and interacting with a community of other fans [or] hyper fixating on something that [is] my passion. It often means that I see the world through the lens of that TV show.”

However, there is a difference between being a fan and simply seeking out subjects due to curiosity.

“I think a fan is someone who likes to check something out with purpose,” senior April Lam said. “If you find that you are going back to a specific material and reviewing it several times, it goes past simple curiosity or something that just pops up on your feed. I think at that point you’re interested [in it].”

For Boyarsky, he showcases his place as a fan of the TV show “Community” by actively engaging with the fandom. “I like to browse fan works,” Boyarsky said. “Lately I’ve been creating some fanart as well as some really in-depth analyses of Community.”

Through the internet, Boyarsky is able to connect



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with other fans.

“It’s easy to use social media to find people you have shared interests with because it’s essentially organized to facilitate that,” Boyarsky said.

As fans, people have found that they were able to get closer to other people and belong to a community.

“It’s a very good experience,” sophomore Charlie Chen said. “You [get] to learn about different cultures.”

Fan culture can also bring a sense of escapism and protection for many.

“It gives, especially for adolescents and young adults, a sort of safe space because you put aside all of your differences and you’re just following this one thing,” Lam said. “And so I think it gives a lot of people a community that they might not be able to find in other places.”

Despite the comfort and community fandoms can bring to members, there are negatives within the culture.

“Any online community can very easily become an echo chamber,” Boyarsky said. “The internet is a place that facilitates misunderstanding and extremism, and when people are interacting on a baseline of being incredibly passionate about whatever topic they’re discussing, all these problems are easily exacerbated.”

In addition to the toxicity within a fandom, there can also be a

lot of ridicule and stereotyping about a certain fandom by people looking in from the outside.

“A lot of [the] time I get some pretty negative comments,” Chen said. “A lot of the stereotypes about anime enjoyers are really harmful.”

There exists a plethora of common stereotypes, especially regarding Asian media, which are sometimes used to put down people who consume that media.

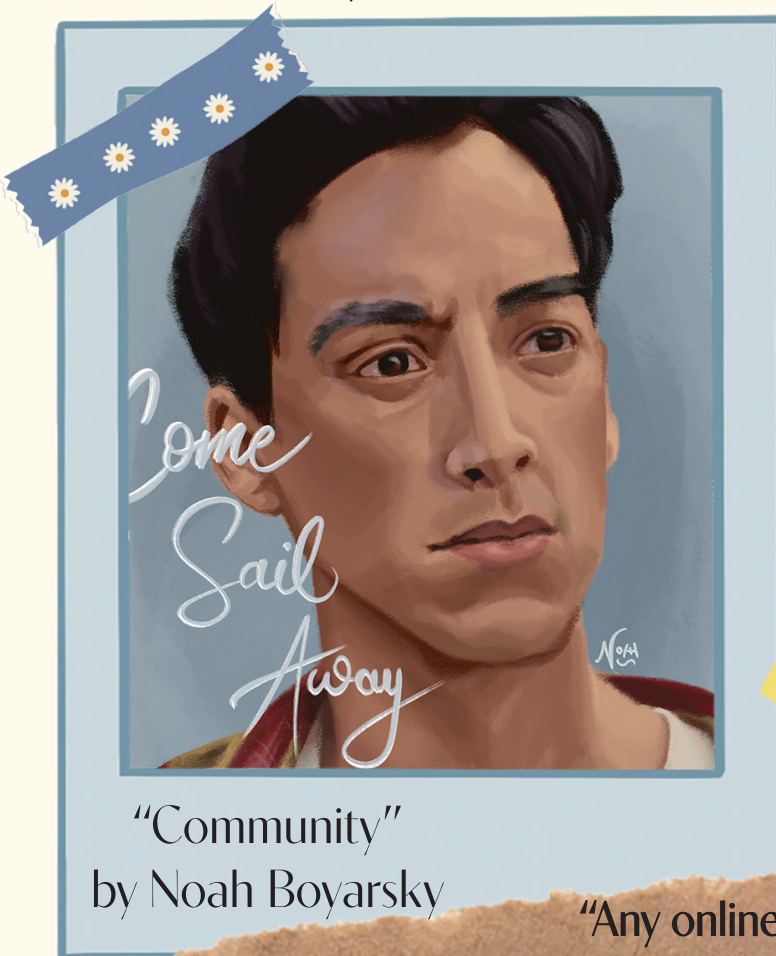
“The stigma [from Western culture] is a lot less now than it was before,” Lam said. “We’re seeing this influx of Asian culture being introduced to the west such as K-pop, K-drama or anime, whereas beforehand people might have looked down on you for being a fan of such things.”

Learning to accept what others love is crucial to respect the subjects others are fans of.

“There is nothing wrong with liking [some fandoms], but the internet has broadly voted to consider liking them as cringe or gross, especially for adults, LGBTQ+ people, disabled people and neurodivergent/autistic people,” Boyarsky said. “The stigma is unfair. Every fan community has toxic traits, and dragging certain communities over others is not new or helpful.”

While fan communities can have their downsides, people believe that being confident about your true authentic self is an important part of being a fan.

“It takes a lot of courage and a lot of dedication to just be yourself,” Chen said. “I hope we could just have more acceptance of that.”



“Community”
by Noah Boyarsky



“NCT127” by Stephanie Yang

**NOAH
BOYARSKY,
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