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Looking Back on 15 Years of Ouran High School Host Club

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"Kiss, kiss, fall in love!" If you just got hit with a wave of nostalgia after hearing those lyrics play in your head, welcome to the *Ouran High School Host Club* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/ouran-high-school-host-club/) (*ba dum tss*).

With a lovable cast, unforgettable opening and ending theme songs, laugh-out-loud humor, and heartfelt moments, we're celebrating this iconic romantic comedy for its 15th anniversary. That's right; it's been 15 years since the anime first premiered back in 2006! *Feel old, yet?*

Since its debut, *Ouran High School Host Club* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/ouran-high-school-host-club/) has secured a comfortable spot on the revered list of classic anime. Despite being a satire on shoujo manga stereotypes and clichés, as well as otaku culture, most of the show's jokes and commentary still hold up to this day.

RELATED: *Anime to Watch When Your Partner Loves Rom-Coms and You Don't* ❤️ (https://www.funimation.com/blog/2020/08/11/anime-to-watch-when-your-partner-loves-rom-coms-and-you-dont/)

That said, the anime isn't without scrutiny for how it manages LGBTQ+ identities and relationships. As much as the show takes steps forward in having a protagonist who is non-binary, the supporting characters still call and view them as a girl and make them dress up like one.

These shortcomings don't negate the fact that *Ouran High School Host Club* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/ouran-high-school-host-club/) is beloved by many—myself included, and is a show worth celebrating. Let's dig in.

A brief history



(https://www.funimation.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ouran-High-School-FF-1-1024x500.jpg)

Created by Bisco Hatori, the *Ouran High School Host Club* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/ouran-high-school-host-club/) manga series was serialized in Japan by Haksensha in 2002 and later picked up by VIZ Media for an English release. The manga ended in 2010, four years after the anime broadcast in Japan.

The anime adaptation was directed by Takuya Igarashi and produced by Bones (*My Hero Academia* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/my-hero-academia/iwaku-midoriya-origin/), *Mob Psycho 100* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/mob-psycho-100/)) for a total of 26 episodes. A TV drama series and live-action movie adaptation shortly followed the manga's completion, and in between the manga and anime runs, character songs and a visual novel for the PlayStation 2 and Nintendo DS were released exclusively in Japan.

If you don't know what *Ouran High School Host Club* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/ouran-high-school-host-club/) is about but you are familiar with Japanese host clubs, you might question the legality of high school students working at a host club based on the title alone. It's not what you think; this "host club" is basically a group of rich students who entertain their "clients," but without the alcohol.

Representation



(https://www.funimation.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ouran-High-School-FF-2-1024x500.jpg)

An absurd amount of money is involved on protagonist Haruhi Fujioka's end, after they accidentally knock over an expensive vase while trying to find a quiet place to study and end up joining the host club to repay the debt.

Haruhi is biologically female, but feels more comfortable wearing and donning a male appearance, hence why the host club recruits them as one of its members. The host club's clients are mostly—if not all—young women, and seeing how amicably Haruhi interacts with them, the members decide to keep Haruhi's biological gender a secret.

The story focuses on relationships on different levels: platonic, romantic, familial, etc. It also addresses classism, as Haruhi isn't rich like the others and only got admitted to Ouran Academy through a scholarship.

RELATED: *Positive LGBTQ+ Messages Anime Has Taught Me* (https://www.funimation.com/blog/2020/06/18/positive-lgbtq-messages-anime-has-taught-me/)

When *Ouran High School Host Club* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/ouran-high-school-host-club/) isn't busy trying to make viewers' sides hurt from laughing, it flips to character moments and interactions that are more serious.

Ouran High School Host Club (https://www.funimation.com/shows/ouran-high-school-host-club/) opens the door for conversations that usually aren't brought up in other romantic comedies. While not handled perfectly, topics like gender identity, cross-dressing and queer relationships are far from subtle in the show.

It helped me understand later on, after reading and listening to other fans' perspectives, particularly those from the LGBTQ+ community, that *Ouran High School Host Club* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/ouran-high-school-host-club/) is nowhere near perfect, and that's to be expected for any work of fiction. But that doesn't mean it can slip under the radar from potential criticism.

An intro to identity



(https://www.funimation.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ouran-High-School-FF-3-1024x500.jpg)

Growing up in an Asian household, I didn't have a good grasp on queer identities and relationships. My parents weren't exactly conservative, but they also didn't understand the LGBTQ+ community because they weren't a part of it, so they couldn't educate me.

I also didn't meet anyone who was openly gay until college. So when I watched *Ouran High School Host Club* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/ouran-high-school-host-club/) for the first time during middle school, I was introduced to LGBTQ+ terminology like homosexuality, transgender and genderqueer. The show isn't supposed to be a point of reference when learning about and understanding the queer community, but it was the first one I came across.

In retrospect, I think that's why *Ouran High School Host Club* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/ouran-high-school-host-club/) stands out among the anime I've watched over the years—it taught me new terminology and identities that I would later understand better from my friends who identified as queer. It also played a key role in my otome game obsession, but that's a discussion for another day.

And if you love the anime, may I suggest checking out the manga to spend some more time with the characters of *Ouran High School Host Club* (https://www.funimation.com/shows/ouran-high-school-host-club/)?

Until then, cue the guitar riff of the ending theme song, "Shissou."

UP NEXT: *Funimation Flashback: A Look Back at Ouran High School Host Club* (https://www.funimation.com/blog/2020/09/23/funimation-flashback-a-look-back-at-ouran-high-school-host-club/)



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