

URUSEI YATSURA

GENERAL NOTES

Introduction to the Liner Notes Cards

Each DVD in the Urusei Yatsura set contains a number of liner notes cards. Some of them contain specific information about the episodes on the DVD they come with, and the rest contain general information about the series (including song lyrics).

The cards are designed to be kept in a small recipe-card box for ease of reference.

About the Title: “Urusei Yatsura”

The series title is a pun, with a couple of layers to it. First, the word “urusei” is a very crude way of pronouncing “urusai,” which is Japanese for “loud or obnoxious.” But the way the series' creator, Takahashi Rumiko, writes it, it takes on a different meaning. For the “sei” portion of “urusei,” she uses the kanji “hoshi,” which has an alternate reading of “sei,” and which is how it is read in this instance. This kanji means “star” or “planet,” and thus gives the phrase its extraterrestrial significance: A bunch of noisy Alien People.

Notes About Names

The Japanese, like most Asians, put their family name first. They also often refer to people by their family names; this is considered to be more polite. Use of a given name implies a certain level of familiarity and intimacy. In addition, the Japanese often use “terms of reference” such as “big-brother,” “little-sister,” “Aunt,” and so on, both alone, as a suffix, and even in a friendly way to refer to people they are not related to, but who, if they were, would fit into that category.

For example, children will often call young women “Onee-san,” which means “Big Sister.” These young women dread the day the children start calling them “Oba-san,” or “Auntie.”

On top of all this, suffixes are tacked on to names to add inflections of politeness, and to specify the position the person holds. Thus, if Mr. Suzuki were a company president, he would often be referred to as “Sukuzi Shachoo,” “Mr. Company President Suzuki.”

How to appropriately deal with all of these terms in a natural manner is the recurring nightmare of Japanese translators. We also had to deal with the problem that many of the characters call each other by their last names. English speakers would not do this, but if we changed the subtitle to read “what the person would say if they were speaking in English,” you would read one name and hear another. Since some people find this dissonant, we have decided to subtitle what they say, except that we translate terms of reference to the appropriate name where it would be awkward to use them in English.

Furthermore, in subtitling a character's name, we have to deal with vocal patterns that are common in Japanese, but rarely (if ever) used in English. Of these, the most common is the long vowel, especially terminal long vowels. The problem is that they look strange to the eye, and so make the subtitles harder to read. Our solution is to eliminate or modify the spelling of the names so as to promote read-ability and try to convey a good approximation of the real pronunciation. In

addition, where a generally accepted romanization of a Japanese name exists, we use it, especially with respect to modern place-names. Thus, “Mendoo Shuutaroo” becomes “Mendou Shutaro,” “Tookyoo” becomes Tokyo, etc.

Since many of these terms of reference and suffix combinations are either rarely used or nonexistent in English, it is inevitable that some of the flavor of the original Japanese dialogue is lost when it is translated into English. The following brief guide to the most common terms should help you notice some of the finer nuances.

Suffixes: suffixes are added to names to denote different levels of politeness or intimacy between the speaker and the person being mentioned. There are 4 basic suffixes.

-san the basic neutral polite suffix, equivalent to “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Miss” or “Ms.” in English.

-sama denotes someone in a higher social position than the speaker, or whom the speaker holds in great esteem.

-kun is the standard suffix added to the names of boys and young men. It is also used by older men in reference to younger men, especially subordinates in a business situation. “kun” is also more intimate than “san.”

-chan is the equivalent of “kun” for babies and girls, but it is also used when an intimate friendship or other relationship exists between the speaker and the person being referred to. While “chan” is rarely applied to adult men, in situations where two men have had a long and close relationship, they will often be “chan” to each other. “chan” also pops up in the mass media a lot, because of its intimations of intimacy; perhaps the strangest example of this is that in Japan, Arnold Schwarzenegger is often called “Shuuwaa-chan.”

In Urusei Yatsura, Lum is almost always referred to as “Lum-chan,” although Mendou uses the more polite “-san.”

In addition to the top 4, there are many suffixes that denote job relationships, such as the above-mentioned “Shachoo.” Of these, the most commonly heard is “-sensei,” or “teacher,” which is applied not only to teachers, but also to doctors, masters of particular art-forms and business mentors. Recently, due to all the people sucking up to other people by calling them “sensei,” real sense have been complaining about “sensei-inflation” reducing the prestige of the term.

Terms of Reference: The most common terms of reference are:

otou-san someone's father.

chichi my father (very polite).

okaa-san someone's mother.

haha my mother (very polite).

onii-san older brother.

onee-san older sister.

otooto my younger brother.
otooto-san someone else's younger brother.
imooto younger sister.
imooto-san someone else's younger sister.
oji-san uncle.
oba-san aunt.
ojii-san grandfather.
obaa-san grandmother.
anata "you." "Anata" is particularly used by Japanese women to refer to their husbands or lovers when talking to them. Depending on the tone, it can range in inference from sweet to caustic, though the usual meaning translates to "dear."
omae lit. "in front of me." A less polite way of saying "you."
kimi a very sweet way of saying "you." More polite than "omae," but less polite than "anata."
sempai "someone above me in a heirarchy."
kohai "someone below me in a heirarchy."

Episodes and Stories

Early episodes in the series (Episodes 1-23) each contained 2 complete stories. Episodes after episode 23 contain 1 longer story per episode. In addition, a 1-hour special was shown between Episodes 21 and 22; this is referred to as "Special Part 1" and "Special Part 2."

The Dappya Kaijuu (The "Dappya" Monster)

The Dappya Kaijuu is the fish-man in the environmental suit who appears from time to time, and gets his (or sometimes their) name from their habit of ending all their sentences in the original Japanese with "Dappya!" Turns out that they first appeared in Takahashi Rumiko's first published manga, "Kattena Yatsura" (Selfish Bastards), which won her a prize in Shoogakkan's Second New Comic Writers' Contest, in 1978, and is currently available in Vol. 2 of Rumic World, her three-volume short story collection. Our thanks to Tonghyun Kim for pointing this out.

Characters

Moroboshi Ataru is the least lucky and most lecherous lout in the Universe. Bar none. Deep down, he has a good soul, but he tries to hide it, and usually succeeds. Alas, it's about all he ever succeeds in!

Lum is the princess of the Oni, a race of very strange aliens who inspired Japan's demon legends during a previous visit. When they come back to take over the Earth, they give us one chance to save our planet; a champion, chosen at random, must defeat Lum in a game of Tag (their national sport, and "the game of the Oni" in Japanese). Unfortunately for Earth, Ataru is

picked as champion.

Miyake Shinobu is Ataru's long-suffering semi-girlfriend. When all seems lost, she promises that she'll marry Ataru if he beats Lum. Inspired to new lows of deviousness by the prospect of finally getting lucky, Ataru manages to beat Lum, but his victorious cry of "Now I can be married" is misinterpreted by Lum as a wedding proposal, which she accepts.

After more misadventures, Lum is living in Ataru's closet, and Shinobu is wondering if she's been jilted or saved from a life of misery. Ataru, for his part, can't bring himself to settle down with Lum: "so many women, so little time." Unfortunately for him, Lum has a high-voltage way of expressing her ire.

Mendou Shutaro is the scion of the richest family in the world. Their private army is bigger than Japan's, for example. Like most men, Mendou has the hots for Lum, and can't deal with Lum's infatuation with Ataru. By the time period of "Only You," Shinobu is starting to give up on Ataru and become interested in Mendou.

Lum's Stormtroopers are her self-appointed guardians, and they are always getting on Ataru's case for some Lum-related misdeed.

Ten is Lum's little cousin. He breathes fire and is always setting Ataru up for a fall.

Ataru's Father reads the newspaper and tries to ignore the chaos. His **Mother** bemoans her fate and loudly wishes she'd never given birth to Ataru.

Cherry (a.k.a **Sakurambo**) is a demented Buddhist monk whose mission it is to destroy evil spirits. Cleansing Ataru of his bad luck would be his crowning achievement, not to mention he figures it to be a life-long meal ticket.

Sakura is Cherry's niece, a Shinto sorceress who has taken the job of School Nurse for reasons unknown. All the boys have the hots for her.

Benten is a rooting-tooting intergalactic biker-babe, and one of Lum's best friends. She totes a big gun, and is notoriously inaccurate.

Oyuki is the cultured and refined princess of Neptune. To say that she is a "cool character" is putting it mildly.

Rei is Lum's ex-fiance. He looks like a god, is as dumb as a post, and has the bad habit of becoming a giant "Tiger-cow" when he gets upset.

Princess Kurama is the princess of the crow goblins, another race of aliens. She is fated to marry the man who awakened her with a kiss; alas, due to an error by a drunken crow goblin, it was Ataru. Needless to say, she'll do anything to escape her destiny!

Ran is one of Lum's childhood friends. Don't let the cute airhead demeanor fool you -- she's not a nice person, and she's out to get Lum for a variety of alleged slights and misdeeds.