

Ryuko Volume 1 Review

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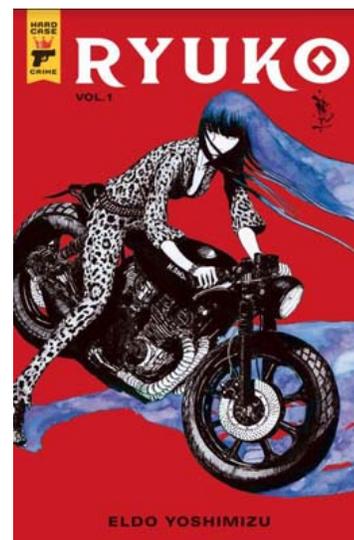

It's 2019 and manga is where it's at. While the North American comic book industry continues to disappoint, manga is more popular than ever.

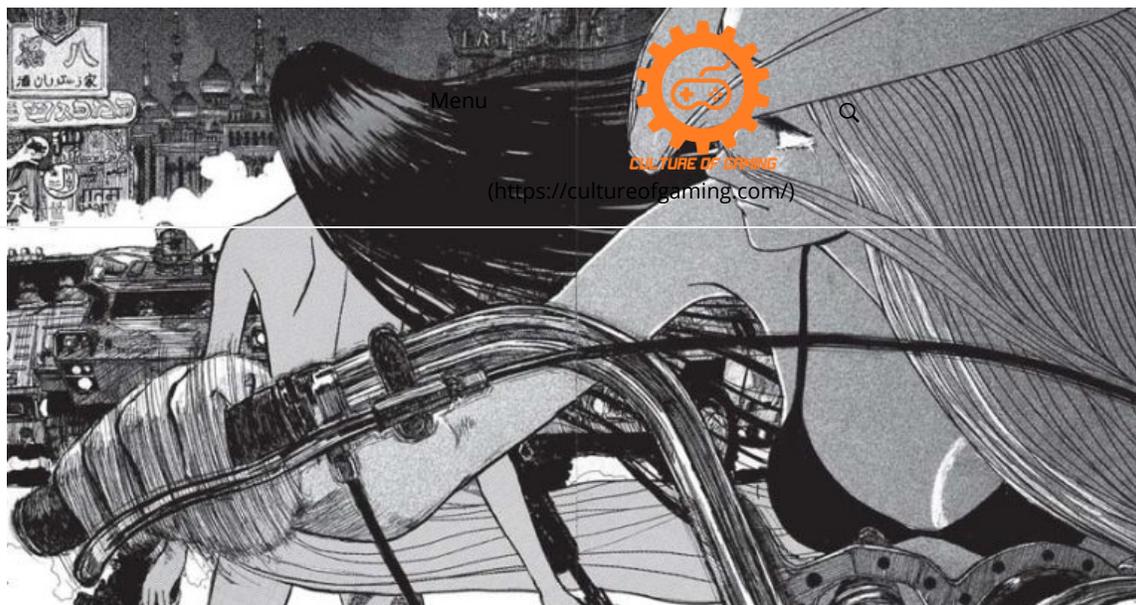
Franchises like *One Piece*, *The Promised Neverland*, *Kingdom*, *Attack on Titan*, and *My Hero Academia* continue to lead sales in Japan and North America alike. In fact, *One Piece* is so popular that it has sold 380 million copies in Japan and 70 million abroad. In contrast, DC's *Batman* has sold 474 million issues to date. If *One Piece* continues selling as it has, it won't be long before it overtakes the Caped Crusader.

Why is manga surging ahead? For many it's because of the quality of the artwork, the humour, the epic storylines, the uncensored action — you get more bang for your buck, and manga is free of the political issues which dominate American comics these days.

While **Marvel** desperately looks to capitalize on manga's popularity with *Aero* and *Sword Master*, which just come off as really bad anime, UK's **Titan Comics** (<https://titan-comics.com/c/1447-ryuko/>) is bringing the authentic manga experience to those outside the Land of the Rising Sun.

Eldo Yoshimizu's celebrated *Ryuko* is joining **Titan's** Hard Case Crime line on August 6th, but was originally released in 2011 in Japan. **Titan** has faithfully translated the series for its first ever appearance in English.





A Yakuza Family

A true manga tour de force, the two-part series follows the bloody and chaotic life of Ryuko, the head of a Yakuza crime family. Ryuko rules with an iron fist and with her ever-faithful sword at her side.

Ryuko's only weakness it seems is for Valera, an orphan she raised as her own daughter. Ryuko brought up Valera in secret for fear of what her gangster father would do if he discovered the truth. Raising her also meant training her to become a member of a bloodstained Yakuza family. Ryuko also takes in another orphan named Sasori who quickly becomes sisters with Valera as enemies circle around the family and their past comes back to haunt them.

Yoshimizu's Style

Ryuko is a true work of art. Eldo Yoshimizu, a sculptor and artist whose work and exhibitions have been featured in Japan, Europe, and North America. He actually created the character in his sculptures and art long before the manga became a reality.

Violence can be beautiful. Watch any scene with Bruce Lee, Jet Li, or Michelle Yeoh jumping, dodging, punching, kicking, and blocking and you'll see that their martial arts mastery is as intricate and as graceful as any performance by The National Ballet of Canada. So too is Yoshimizu's art work in *Ryuko*. *Ryuko's* art style duplicates the true nature of violence — it is furious and savage. There are scenes where it's hard to make out everything that's going on in detail, but the images, the lines, and shading impart an authentic feeling and tone even if the art itself is mystifying.

Ryuko is a thought-provoking puzzle to wrap your head around as it has so many moving parts. The main characters and their motivations are not as simple as they might appear. Sometimes there is a fine line between heroism and villainy, and Yoshimizu's character walk that tightrope.

Unlike most American comics nowadays, Yoshimizu celebrates the female form in *Ryuko*. Yoshimizu recognizes that women can

simultaneously be smart, sexy, and strong. Characters in comics or manga are like movie stars, they are idealized depictions, nothing more, nothing less. *Ryuko* will probably rattle a few cages, although it really shouldn't. Every artist is entitled to their vision and their voice, no matter



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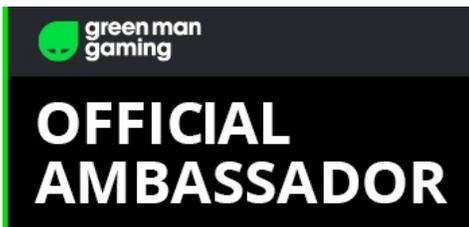
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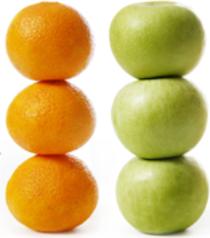
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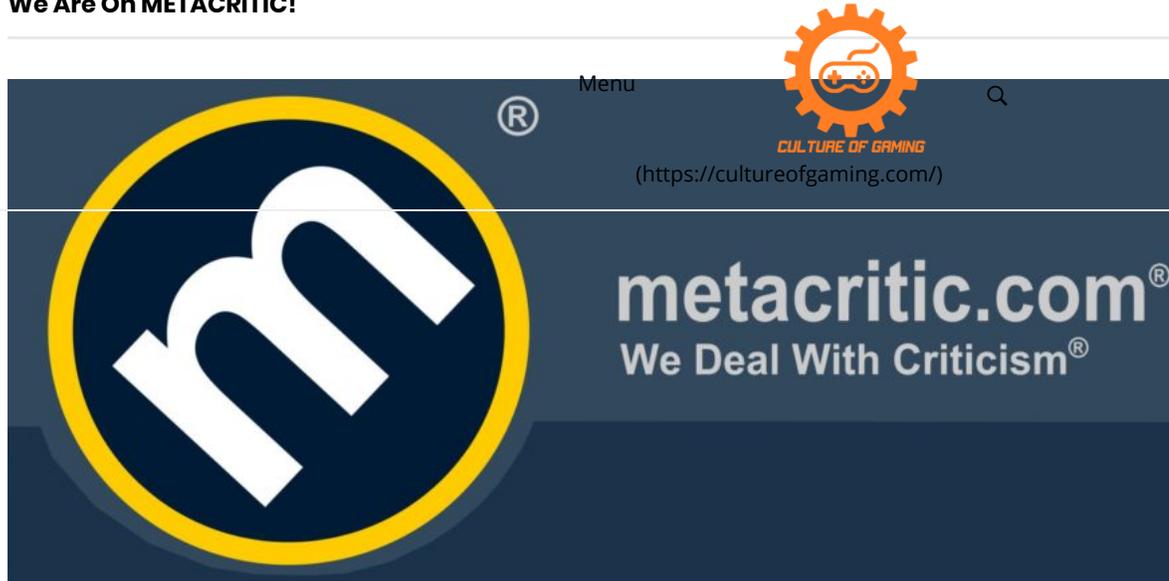
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