

# Theorizing TV Sound: Listening to TV Sound Now and Later

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Like other forms of television and film media, Japanese anime has seen a recent increase in the trend of remakes and reboots of older, beloved franchises. Arguably this began with a desire to reboot anime based on ongoing manga (comics) once the manga finished, and the anime was able to follow its ending rather than coming up with its own. The success of series like *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* (2009-2011) and the second *Hunter x Hunter* (2011-2014) paved the way for more of these, such as *Sailor Moon Crystal* (2014-2016) and *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* (2012-). These series have emphasized fan desire for faithfulness to their source material, often to the point of reflecting the visual aesthetics of manga (especially in the cases of *Sailor Moon* or *Jojo's*). However, this trend has diversified and branched out to allow more creative reboots, often from auteur directors, of longstanding franchises.

The two most notable of these include recent anime television series of the *Lupin III* franchise, and Go Nagai's frequently adapted *Devilman* manga series. These are the 2011 anime series *Lupin III: The Woman Called Fujiko Mine* and the 2018 *Devilman Crybaby*. Both are reboots that make textual (or closer-to-textual) subtextual themes about gender and sexuality in the earlier works, as well as more complicated examinations of moralities. Both are the works of relatively singular directorial voices, with unique relationships to these ideas as well as visual and sonic aesthetics. *Fujiko Mine* was directed by Sayo Yamamoto, most recently of the smash hit figure skating anime *Yuri!!! on Ice* (2016), and featured music production from Shinichiro Watanabe, director of *Cowboy Bebop* (1998) and *Samurai Champloo* (2004). *Crybaby* was directed by Masaaki Yuasa, director of *Ping-Pong* (2014) and *The Tatami Galaxy* (2010), renowned by animation fans around the world for his unusual, anime-atypical visual style.

Both of these series uniquely utilize the television format in order to tell their stories: in particular, the ability to play with viewer expectations that comes from the longer, and more separated-out, runtime of a television series compared to a film. (This is despite the fact that *Devilman Crybaby* was produced for Netflix and thus, all of its episodes were released at once.) Each series challenges viewers to stick around toward the end, because of the twists and turns in both plot and thematic content. Both are also thematically and aesthetically in dialogue with earlier parts of their respective franchises. *Devilman Crybaby* is a twisted, darker, and more critical re-telling of earlier stories. *The Woman Called Fujiko Mine* is a prequel to the first *Lupin III* series, focusing on Lupin's love interest, the titular femme fatale Fujiko Mine.

The use of sound is particularly important to how these series build expectations and, particularly in the case of *Fujiko Mine*, "create dialogue" between themselves and their

franchises. For example, *Devilman Crybaby* uses a group of rapping teenagers as a sort of "Greek chorus" throughout the story, and different genres of music for different social situations and groups. This aids in the series' social commentary about how society sees these groups, and the way those divisions widen throughout the series. *Fujiko Mine* specifically uses jazz as an extensive part of the series' soundtrack, and particularly the free, often atonal jazz that was prominent in the time period in which it is set, the 1960s. The jazz soundtrack helps to set that specific historical scene. It also ties it to the larger franchise; *Lupin III* is known for its use of jazz, albeit typically different, more accessible subgenres. The free jazz also symbolizes Fujiko's freespirted attitude; Watanabe has said of his anime *Cowboy Bebop* that he associates the improvisation of jazz with people who live very "free" lives, and Fujiko is presented as a woman who does what she wants, without expectations. The show complicates this narrative, but I argue that the soundtrack provides a clue for where the message of the story ultimately ends—while the story seems to mislead the viewer in other directions. Both series use genre for a thematic purpose and to play with viewer expectations.

While feature film also uses music to foreshadow and emotionally manipulate the viewer, the serialized nature of television allows one to take this even further. With it easier for the viewer to stop or take breaks at any point—even with streaming series released in Netflix's all-at-once model—the importance of music in sound in maintaining continuity and setting up/defying expectation is even more crucial. In the case of the "remake/reboot" it can also be a way of tying it aesthetically to earlier franchise works. Both *The Woman Called Fujiko Mine* and *Devilman Crybaby* illustrate the potential and limitations of this practice.