Life

'Steel Ball Run' debuts on Netflix



Snap shot from the new Netflix series "Steel Ball Run". JoJo's Bizarre Adventure's first episode released on Netflix on March 19.

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by Max Muller
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
HE/THEY
jyv24001@uconn.edu

If someone tried to get me to watch anime a few years ago, I probably would've laughed in their face, but over spring break my favorite animated show, "Jojo's Bizarre Adventure," released a 47-minute special episode promoting the upcoming season. The new episode is full of energy that will keep viewers engaged, and doesn't end on a cliffhanger, meaning it can be enjoyed by itself before the rest of the season gets released.

"Jojo's Bizarre Adventure" is a unique series because each season starts with a new cast and a fresh storytelling style. For example, the series begins in 1880's England with a vampire-hunter plotline, but its sixth part takes place almost entirely in a Floridian prison.

While I do recommend watching the previous six parts of "Jojo's Bizarre Adventure," it isn't required because the story of "Steel Ball Run" takes place separately from the rest of the series. In fact, the storyline runs parallel to the first part of the original continuity, meaning that new viewers might have an even better viewing experience than long-time fans.

"Steel Ball Run" starts in the Wild West of 1890's San Diego and is inspired by other stories of the same genre. The director, Yasuhiro Kimura, said in an interview that he "watched the Red Dead Redemption 2 trailer over and over again." The inspiration shines through during a duel where the series' iconic color shift takes on the color palette of the game's poster to emphasize the violent Wild West theming in the scene.

The story of "Steel Ball Run" is focused on five main characters and their progression in the fittingly named "Steel Ball Run," a cross-country horse race directed by promoter Steven Steel. The special takes time before the race to introduce three main characters including Sandman, a disgraced Native American who seeking to redeem himself to his tribe by winning the race on foot, Johnny Joestar, a former racer who is bound to a wheelchair until meeting another lead character, Gyro Zeppeli.

Johnny watches as Gyro duels another man in the street, using a mysterious power to fight with steel balls instead of a gun. Johnny catches up with Gyro, and upon touching the steel balls, Johnny is momentarily able to stand up from his wheelchair. Johnny spends the rest of the episode preparing for the race to prove he is worthy of learning more about the man's power.

The best character in the show, Poco Loco, is only introduced halfway into the race portion of the episode, when he wakes up late and realizes he missed the start. Luckily, Poco Loco's special ability is extreme luck, and even when other riders are specifically targeting him, he is able to push through and secure a spot in the first five racers.

While the special seeks to cover a large chunk of the source material, it has a great pace that accelerates into the final scene cleanly, leaving viewers with a satisfying finish to the episode rather than ending on a cliffhanger.

After the first week of being released, "Steel Ball Run" has earned a 9.8 out of ten rating on IMDb. The high rating is maintained even after fans of similar shows review-bombed the episode.

This is especially impressive because the original manga tops almost any chart that it's counted separately from the rest of the series, meaning that a lot of fans of the series, myself included, came into the special with high expectations.

Unfortunately details on exactly when the rest of the series will be released are still vague, and when asked about the release of more episodes, the show's director Kimura said "I want to see it soon, too! When will it be? I don't know."



A poster for the new series "Steel Ball Run" on Netflix. "Steel Ball Run" is part of the "Jojo's Bizarre Adventure" universe though it can be watched independently.

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