Life

DAKOTA JOHNSON HOSTS BIRTHDAY EPISODE FOR WEEK 2 OF 'SNL 52'

by Lillian Norcia
CONTRIBUTER
SHE/HER/HERS
wvk24002@uconn.edu

Dakota Johnson took the NBC stage as the second host of Saturday Night Live 52 on Saturday, Oct. 3, with musical guest Turnstile.

The actress began the night with the traditional monologue, promoting her upcoming film "Verity." Johnson poked fun at her own tendency to date musicians and her recent breakups with Coldplay's Chris Martin and singer-songwriter Role Model.

To the audience's surprise, Taylor Swift then joined her on stage. The pair, who recently starred in Swift's new music video "Patient Zero," joked that Swift served as Johnson's makeshift therapist after her breakups. Swift also returned during the "goodnights" with a birthday cake for Johnson, who turned 37 years old at midnight during the show.

Her third time hosting SNL, Johnson shone most in the sketch "Mean, Scary Girlfriend." The writers expertly utilized her iconic dry sense of humor in the parody advertisement for a brutally honest partner.

Rock band Turnstile performed its song "Birds," as well as a medley of "I Care" and "Dull;" all from their 2025 album "Never Enough." The band's set was energetic and unique, despite this being its first SNL performance. "Birds" opened with a 40-second solo from drummer Daniel Fang, which perfectly set the mood for their lively performance.

"Weekend Update" was notably long this week, with three segments visiting the desk. First were Mikey Day and Marcello Hernández, a particularly underrated SNL duo. After their viral collaboration last season as emojis "Red Heart" and "Aerial Tramway," the two returned as another unlikely pair: Jason and Link, characters from the upcoming video games "Grand Theft Auto VI" and "The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time." Despite many breaks and a prop malfunction, Day and Hernández are two players who can use hiccups to make a sketch even better with their improvisation skills and excellent comedic chemistry.

Next at the desk was Kam Patterson to discuss his take on the upcoming "Glee" reboot. While many fans found Patterson's start at SNL quite rocky, I believe he really found his footing at the "Weekend Update" desk. As usual, he and Michael Che have excellent banter, joking that white writers pitched him the sketch idea despite him never having seen an episode of "Glee."

After Patterson was Sarah Sherman as matchmaker, Debbie Mush, who tried to help Che find a date. Sherman is a frequent "Weekend Update" guest and can always be relied on for great character work and excellent chemistry with either host.

Once again, Jeremy Culhane led the best sketch of the night in "Hospital Gossip." Culhane, as "Eric from legal," attempted to gossip with a group of nurses, but instead only revealed sad details of his own life.

In another unsurprisingly hilarious performance, Ashley Padilla was terrific as Sherri, a contestant on "Press Your Luck," who continuously gambled away millions. Despite this only being Padilla's third season on the show, she has quickly become not only a fan favorite but an essential member of the cast.

Fans can tune in again next week on Saturday, Oct. 10, to see comedian Shane Gillis host with musical guest Rosalía. The season will then go on a three-week break until its Halloween episode hosted by Inde Navarrette.



Taylor Swift joins Dakota Johnson during her monologue on the SNL stage. The episode aired on Oct. 3 on NBC.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @NBLSNL ON INSTAGRAM

FUTURE TENSE: 'FIRE PUNCH'

by Logan De la Rosa
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
HE/HIM/HIS
logan.de_la_rosa@uconn.edu

Released between 2016 and 2018, "Fire Punch" is a manga series written by Tatsuki Fujimoto, a Japanese author most well-known for his later work "Chainsaw Man."

Taking place in the far future during a post-apocalyptic ice age, the story initially follows a young boy named Agni and his little sister Luna as they struggle to support their community of survivors. Both belong to a group of humans that possess supernatural abilities known as the "Blessed," with them specifically having regenerative powers.

Just as Agni's community begins to become stable, military force sent from the last known city of Behemdorg suddenly visits. Among this force is Doma, a Blessed soldier with the ability to produce fire that only stops burning once it has turned everything it touches into ash. After a confrontation, Doma sets fire to Angi's entire village, killing everyone including his sister. Agni alone survives the attack because of his stronger regenerative powers.

Now cursed to wander Earth perpetually on fire, Agni's life is guided by a singular goal: finding and killing Doma.

While it starts with a simple revenge story premise, the narrative of "Fire Punch" is quickly complicated by the arrival of new characters, revelations about the history of its world and general craziness that should be expected by those familiar with "Chainsaw Man" or any of Fujimoto's other work.

I admit that I am reaching a bit by covering "Fire Punch" in this science fiction column, as there are arguments to be made that it belongs much in the dark fantasy category. The biggest argument in favor of the fantasy classification would have to come from the inclusion of the Blessed, which effectively introduces superpowers into the setting.

However, I would argue in favor of an overall sci-fi classification for the narrative primarily due to its aesthetic choices and some of the world-building Fujimoto tackles throughout the series' run.

For starters, a lot of sci-fi and fantasy elements are indistinguishable from a broader view. For instance, take the inclusion of non-human characters in a narrative. For a fantasy series like "Lord of the Rings," these characters might be justified in universe as being "magical" races like orcs or elves.

Now let's say that you want to add non-human characters to a science fiction story like "Star Wars;" since it's sci-fi, we'll simply justify their inclusion by calling them aliens instead. Functionally, they can serve the same narrative role as the fantasy magical races, but they are different solely because of the lore justifying their addition to the narrative.

With this in mind, looking at the world-building present in "Fire Punch," it seems that Fujimoto was definitely leaning harder into a sci-fi angle than a fantasy one. For example, the story takes place in the far future, there's advanced technology like battle armor and even the Blessed are explained in universe as potentially having an extraterrestrial origin.

Yet this is where "Fire Punch" becomes a bit wobbly, both in terms of its classification as sci-fi and its enjoyability, as well as in terms of the extent to which it devotes itself to world-building.

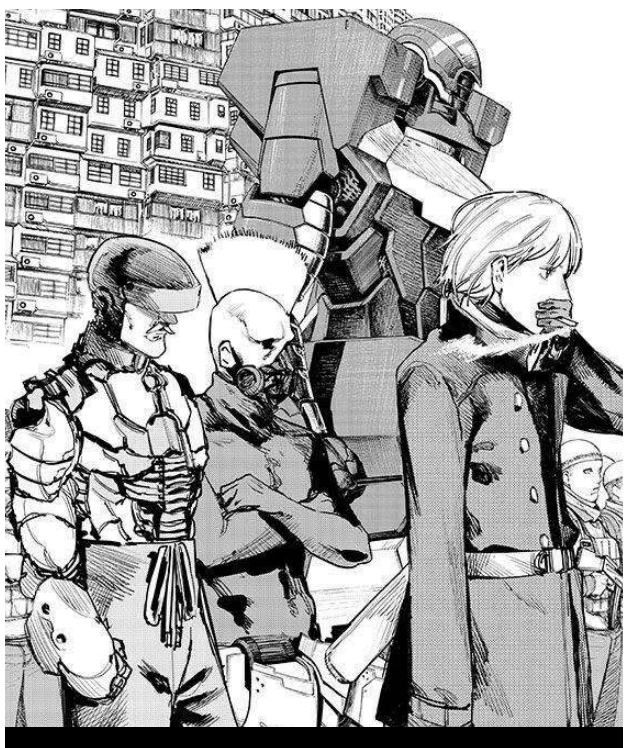
To explain, "Fire Punch" is an example of a narrative that cares much more about its emotional impact than its plot. Like "Chainsaw Man," reading "Fire Punch" feels a lot like riding a rollercoaster. There are constant plot twists, character betrayals, sudden developments and many plot lines are introduced only to be discarded within the same chapter. Whenever possible, Fujimoto values shocking and emotional reactions over explaining the setting.

For some, this can be incredibly annoying, as it makes the narrative harder to follow and makes the world-building very underdeveloped. However, when you approach "Fire Punch" as a roller coaster ride and choose to let its story take you where it wants to go, you open yourself up more of what Fujimoto was trying to convey.

Moreover, while a lot of the story feels designed to catch the reader off-guard, the vast majority of it doesn't feel like it was included purely for shock value. Instead, most of the shocking moments feel deliberately placed to trigger emotions from the reader. Okay, maybe not the scene with the dogs, but most scenes.

Of course, your mileage may vary, but isn't that just the beauty of storytelling?

If what I've described sounds interesting, or if you're a fan of Fujimoto's other work like "Chainsaw Man", I'd recommend checking "Fire Punch" out.



A page from Volume 3 of "Fire Punch" by Tatsuki Fujimoto. The manga series was released between 2016 and 2018.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VIZ MEDIA ON FACEBOOK

SUBOG Weekly Events:

October 5th - October 11th

SUBOG x USG Q&A – 10.6 @ 6 pm in the Student Union Theater

Sunset Fest – 10.8 @ 6:30 pm on the SU Mall

Any questions? Email subog@uconn.edu and check out @subogatuconn on Instagram for updates on our events!