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### *Dragon Voice #3*

by [Kat Avila](#)

*Reviews may contain information that could be considered 'spoilers'. Readers should proceed at their own risk.*

#### **Publisher**

**TOKYOPOP**

<http://www.tokyopop.com>

#### **Credits**

Writer: Yuriko Nishiyama

Artist: Yuriko Nishiyama

Distributor:

Translator: Mike Keifl

ISBN: 1-59532-121-7

#### **Grade: 9**

In *Dragon Voice*, vol. 1, Rin Amami knew he was just wasting time helping his friend sell idol photos in the streets of Shibuya, imitating idol dance routines. But his dream of becoming a great singer like his mother is stymied by a bullfrog voice that makes babies cry (Rin's speech is typeset in an irregular font to accentuate its gruffness). A chance encounter with the singing group Beatmen revived his impossible dream.

Egged on by Beatmen's perceptive leader Shino Kasuga, Rin joined the idol group as its fifth member over the objections of sexy lion Goh Iwaki, debonair gentleman Toshio Tamura, and cool child pro Yuhgo Etoh, the other Beatmen. The boss of the Red Shoes talent agency (thus also Beatmen's boss)

believes Rin's voice may be the Dragon Voice he has been seeking, described as "a fabled voice with the strength and personality of a demon and the beauty of an angel."

Beatmen's rivals are the threesome Privee, represented by Japan's no. 1 production studio S-Field. Both boy groups debuted at the same time, but Privee rocketed ahead due to S-Field's dirty tricks. At the end of vol. 2, Red Shoes was bankrupt and the Beatmen were already has-beens.

In ***Dragon Voice***, vol. 3, the Beatmen are unenthusiastically working as costumed amusement park staff at Izu Miracle Land to pay off their boss's bills. In their free time, they are in the hands of their boss's former mentor and vocal coach Rolan Suzuki. Rolan is an equal-opportunity dirty old man, but has a deep understanding of the voice for performance.

Almost too smugly, Rolan sells the Beatmen to the abusive director Jun Natake who needs actors for the *Supersonic Voice Rangers* TV show pilot he is filming. Voice training has never been so tough or dangerous.

To date, the ***Dragon Voice*** series has held my interest due to its innovatively designed volumes; distinct character designs; strongly defined personalities; and its hopeful, humorous, inspiring main storyline. Each volume ends with a hilarious bonus summary called *Dragon Trek* lightly spoofing *Star Trek*.

The first three gorgeous covers feature Beatmen Rin Amami, Yuhgo Etoh, and Shino Kasuga respectively, and the opening splashes show the featured Beatmen in additional poses with fellow Beatmen in silhouette. For example in vol. 3, Shino strikes a come-hither cover pose with hands clasped behind his head; he is wearing red tigerskin stagewear with an angel-wing harness, his stomach is exposed. The opening splash shows Shino again, this time casually standing in street clothes in front of a "WANTED" poster composed of the shadowed headshots of the four other Beatmen. Then, there is a full shot of Shino on the contents page, and on page 106 we have an information pull-out devoted to Shino Kasuga.

It gives me goosebumps to see how beautifully Yuriko Nishiyama is able to capture the energy and physicality of human movement on a page, whether it is boy idols dancing

on stage or action stars in the middle of a filmed battle. I am looking forward to sampling her previous street basketball series *Harlem Beat*, and its continuation *Rebound*, for this reason. I highly recommend *Dragon Voice* to anyone who is interested in voice and performance, and to anyone who enjoys well-researched and well-crafted manga.

Written: February 23, 2005

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