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***Kizuna: Kazuma Kodaka Signature Edition***by [Kat Avila](#)

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

**Studio****Be Beautiful**<http://www.bebeautifulmanga.com/>**Credits**

Director: Rin Hiroo

English Director: Rin Hiroo

Distributor: Be Beautiful

Translator:

**Grade: 8**

*NOTE: This is a review of **Be Beautiful's** release of **Kizuna: Kazuma Kodaka Signature Edition** containing OAVs #1 & #2. There are two older releases: **Culture Q Connection's** English-subtitled video (no dub, OAVs #1 & #2 together), © 2001, and **Be Beautiful's** two English-subtitled videos (no dub, OAVs #1 & #2 released separately), © 2005.*

The cover art for the non-dubbed **Be Beautiful Kizuna** OAVs has been recycled for the signature edition, so buyer be alert and look for the phrasing "Kazuma Kodaka Signature Edition; Contains episodes 1 & 2" to distinguish between the dubbed and non-dubbed releases.

Having previously reviewed **Be Beautiful's** non-dubbed release of OAV #1, I won't go into great detail about it. OAV

#1 loosely follows the events in volume 1 of the classic yaoi manga. Ranmaru Samejima almost loses his life in a hit-and-run meant to take out his lover Kei Enjyoji, the illegitimate but eldest son of a powerful yakuza boss. Despite a good recovery, Ranmaru is unable to return to championship form as a kendo swordsman. But he stays busy with his college studies and has a part-time job assisting Professor Fumio Sakada, who later wants more from Ranmaru than a little data entry.

OAV #2 focuses on, one segment after another, the close ties Ranmaru Samejima and Kei's half-brother Kai Sagano have to their respective families. For Ranmaru, there is his younger sister Yuki; for Kai, there is his yakuza bodyguard Masanori Araki, though Kai seems to be clueless as to the true depth of affection Masa has for his master.

The collector's value of ***Kizuna: Kazuma Kodaka Signature Edition*** lies in the English-language dub (Japanese also available with English subtitles) and the bonus features providing information not only about creator Kazuma Kodaka but the entertainment medium of yaoi itself.

I kind of dreaded listening to the English dub, almost cringing just hearing English dialogue. A little irritating to hear Kei's last name, Enjyoji, voiced as four distinct syllables, instead of three, but after awhile I got over it.

Ranmaru Samejima is voiced by Jamie McGonnigal. He is an excellent voice actor based on his work in this video, but his voice quality is the wrong choice. It's the voice of an educated friend, not a "manly" romantic partner. Thus, the video loses some of its yaoi-ness or romantic subtext; my thought, right or wrong, was this Ranmaru would appeal more to a gay guy than a straight woman.

Dan Green's voice is wonderful for Kei Enjyoji. Yet, I was left with the nagging impression that Dan was not fully comfortable with the role. Great execution on the comedic bits; the dramatic parts don't always display the same strength or believability.

When I'm watching an adult animated drama, I don't want the voices to remind me of Saturday morning kiddie cartoons. Sometimes various characters sounded hollow and

artificial or tired, though it didn't happen a lot.

The voice actor who did the dirty old professor was right on target and made watching OAV #1 very enjoyable. Unfortunately, I couldn't find a credit for that role. In OAV #2, Kelly Ray's voice for Yuki was easy on the ears.

In the end, I was able to get through the English dub without feeling too strong a need to switch to Japanese.

Extras on the Kazuma Kodaka Signature Edition include Kazuma Kodaka's reproduced autograph on the DVD sleeve and disk, a commentary about *Kizuna* and yaoi, an interview with Kazuma Kodaka by Japanese National Film Center assistant and yaoi researcher Akiko Mizoguchi, an edited Q & A at the Japan Society in New York City following the May 2005 premiere of *Kizuna*, and a taping of the autograph session held the day after at Rockefeller Center's Kinokuniya Bookstore.

In the interview, Akiko Mizoguchi reviews a timeline of yaoi that starts with a 1961 novel and includes bishounen manga in the 1970s, June and doujinshi in 1980s, boy's love manga in the 1990s. *Kizuna: Bonds of Love* began as a doujinshi using characters from a *Weekly Shounen Champion* magazine story. First published in 1992, the manga continues today. Initially, Kodaka-sensei had wondered if *Kizuna: Bonds of Love* could succeed in the U.S., where comics are viewed as being primarily for kids and are consumed mainly as superhero comics or cartoon strips.

If you are interested in Kazuma Kodaka and her work, or enjoy the related manga *Kizuna: Bonds of Love*, or want to learn more about boy's love or yaoi in Japan and in the U.S., then *Kizuna: Kazuma Kodaka Signature Edition* is an indispensable DVD to have.

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