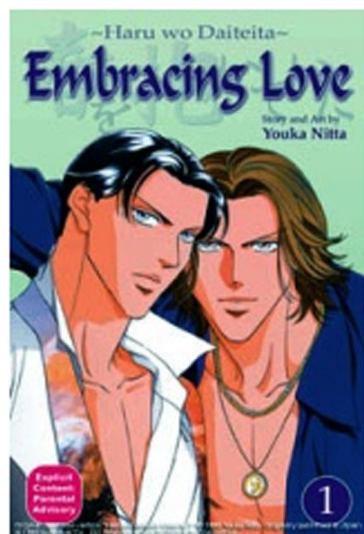


## Manga Review: Embracing Love

Posted by: activeadmin on Monday, November 07, 2005 - 07:00 AM



### Embracing Love

*Haru wo Daiteita*

- Art/Author: Youka Nitta
- Publisher: Be Beautiful
- Pages: 216
- US Publication Date: 9/5/2005
- Reviewed By: Jennifer Davenport

- **FORMAT** – Unflipped.
- **PRESENTATION** – SFX translated and laid next to original Japanese SFX. Some pages include newspaper clippings, all of which are translated into English.
- **AGE RATING** – For mature, 18+ readers. (Naturally.)

#### OFFICIAL DESCRIPTION:

Life Reflects Art for Iwaki and Katou, two hugely famous adult film stars who are considering retirement from their steamy careers. However, when they're invited to audition for a new erotic film, they realize that this may be their last chance to achieve mainstream success. Unfortunately, things sour quickly when the director asks them to make love... with each other... to determine who will get the coveted lead role. What follows next is a roller coaster ride of romance, longing, and passionate sex that will alter their careers... and their lives... forever!

Also includes an erotic bonus story!



## REVIEW:

Embracing Love opens like no yaoi manga has dared open before: a guy has sex with a woman on camera - with a bored look on his face of course! Setting a yaoi manga in the gay porn industry right away should tip you off that Youka Nitta's manga is as explicit as they come. What isn't immediately obvious however is her skill at weaving a story that charts the growth of a relationship in a setting that leaves plenty of space to maneuver.

Embracing Love is interesting in the same way that titles like the gritty shoujo "Banana Fish" are interesting. Banana Fish centers on a fictional New York of the 1980s that is rife with crime and drugs. The setting is like something out of a pulpy TV show, and depicts a dark underworld that has no place for women but is voyeuristically appealing to them as readers. The setting is so consistent in its world-building that it is reasonable for the reader to suspend disbelief and get pulled into the story. Embracing Love is much the same in that it presents a fictionalized version of a realm most women will never be a part of - the gay adult film industry. It's not totally realistic of course, as Youka Nitta pokes some fun at the vain actor stereotypes, but on the whole Embracing Love's setting is believable enough to draw you in. All the plot conflicts and motivations of the characters match the confines of the setting. (Similar techniques and choice of male-dominated setting are employed in the manga-influenced yaoi comic "Pinned!" that was set in the world of professional wrestling.)

Iwaki and Katou's behavior in Embracing Love match this well. The two rival porn stars hope to make it big in "legitimate" acting. The men have their own outlooks and insecurities about their job, but also a competitive attitude (that plays out in the bedroom!) and swarms of adoring media, stalkers, and managers. Movie deals, press conferences, and tabloids are a daily part of these stars' life, as is experimental research sex and rehearsal sex! I have to give Youka Nitta a big thumbs-up for constructing the most plausible, fun reason for a manga to have copious amounts of gay sex in it.

The manga artist shows great use of the human form, while her own stylistic idiosyncrasies are her characters' enlarged, prominent necks and facial features. All the men are masculine, and no effeminate, wispy bishonens are in sight. (Though younger men do appear.) Her men are shaped like Calvin Klein underwear models, which makes me wonder if she studied similar photos and advertisements during her research stage.

Volume 1 of this manga also includes one side-story that is semi-related to the main plot, and one unrelated short story about two high jumpers in high school. There is also an autobiographical mini-comic as Youka Nitta talks about fan mail and her thought process while creating the comic. (She chooses to represent herself as a chibi amorphous blob.)

Embracing Love joins Kizuna as Be Beautiful's two best titles to date, by far. Going beyond the generic with a well-constructed setting, Youka Nitta adds a voyeuristic edge to the fictional man's world of adult film. The plot conflict that is thankfully more complex than "boy meets boy and after initial confrontation they get it on" is well received. With characters that have a charm capable of carrying a series beyond just a one-volume story, readers will be dying to know what happens next.

