



- RELEASED BY: Be Beautiful
- ASPECT RATIO: 1:33:1
- AUDIO: Japanese Dolby Digital 2.0
- RUNNING TIME: 30 minutes
- RATING: NR
- RELEASE DATE: 8/9/2005
- REVIEW DATE: 9/2/2005
- REVIEWED BY: Jennifer Davenport

Kizuna Volume 1

OFFICIAL DESCRIPTION:

Ranmaru and Kei have a strong and passionate relationship built on years of trust, sacrifice and love. But when the mysterious son of a Yakuza boss begins to pursue Ranmaru's affection, tempers flare, and hidden emotions rise to the surface. Will Ranmaru and Kei's love survive this difficult test, or will the emotional conflict finally come to a head?

REVIEW:

Even in this relatively prosperous age of Japanese animation, where there are more series on the air in Japan (and America!) than ever before, yaoi anime - and any anime aimed at older female audiences - is a rare sight. Try counting all the new anime series out with a primary audience of females over 13. I'm betting you won't be counting long, much less need two hands.

Granted, there is more selection now than in 1994. Kizuna was one of the first yaoi OVA series to be created in Japan. Following their release of Kazuma Kodaka's original manga, CPM's Be Beautiful imprint has re-released this 1994 series on DVD.



To explain the franchise, there are 3 Kizuna OVAs. The first 1994 OVA series has two episodes, while a third OVA episode was released in 2001. This is the first episode in the first OVA series to the Kizuna animated OVA series. The first two Kizuna OVAs were released on VHS and DVD (by another company), but are re-released by Be Beautiful on DVD again. As well as Be Beautiful re-release of the first 2 Kizuna OVA episodes (with an improved transfer and subtitles), the third OVA episode has been released by Kitty Media.

The BB release is simple, but greatly improved over the original release's poor transfer. Unfortunately, this DVD still has no English dub and includes only one 30 minute episode per DVD. However, Kizuna is unlikely to appeal to viewers outside a core audience of yaoi fans and fans of the original manga, so this pared down format makes sense to me anyway.

The DVD cover art is a good indication of what the content of Kizuna Volume 1 will be. Despite its age, Kodaka's character designs still work and the anime look is faithful to Kodaka's original style. Most scenes in this episode are a port of manga scenes. There are a few new scenes thrown in for continuity's sake, but most of the episode consists of animated re-creations of the classic panels Kizuna fans love. The episode jumps back and forth between back stories and the present frequently, leaving some plot points and character histories unexplained. Viewers will probably be confused if they have not yet read the original manga. The voice actors capture the personality and interplay of Kodaka's original much loved characters, and I think all Kizuna manga fans will be pleased with how this anime series turned out. (Except for its short length!)

EXTRAS:

The coolest thing about this disc has got to be Be Beautiful's manga previews. For all of their BB manga titles, this disc includes an "animated" trailer consisting of art and panels from the various manga series arranged to music, much like an manga music video of sorts. Think flash animation and coolly manipulated manga art. Each manga spot is about 30 seconds long.

BB are not the first company to do this (I believe ADV and Tokyopop have made a few), but BB are the first publisher I have seen to make these promo spots not overt commercials with "buy it now!" voiceovers, but instead spiffy extra that let the art speak for itself in a creative, mixed-media manner.

Fans of Be Beautiful manga titles will certainly want to see these really nifty animation videos for all their favorite series, short and simple as they are.

III SUMMARY:

Except for the unfortunate split of two episodes onto two DVDs, Be Beautiful's DVD release of Kizuna is a much needed improvement and format for yaoi and Kizuna manga fans. No lover of the original manga should be without this release. Fans of yaoi manga should also watch out for BB's clever "animated" manga previews on the disc.

