

Ragtag misfits battle Stalin's fanclub, examine subculture

by Justin Harrison

Some years ago, an anonymous poster on a fairly popular game review website said that RPGs (Role Playing Games) were only for "people whose mommy wouldn't buy them *Hitman*." If that poster still holds that belief, then they are missing out on two things: *Final Fantasy XIII*, which is an excellent game, and more unfortunately, a community full of interesting, engaging people.

XIII, the most recent entry into the world-famous *Final Fantasy* series, could best be described as a game that pays homage to its predecessors while taking some surprising chances. The setting, a futuristic nation called Cocoon, is something of a return for the series, which ventured into a Japanese/South Asian hybrid culture for its tenth entry and European fantasy for its eleventh and twelfth outings. Cocoon, with its neon lights and industrial atmosphere, recalls the setting of the series' debatably most famous entry, *Final Fantasy VII*. Both feature a world built around what Caity Reaburn describes as "a mix of magic

and machinery" that is controlled by a repressive government that relies on charismatic leaders to remain in power. Both groups of player characters come to oppose the government, and both are lead by someone who used

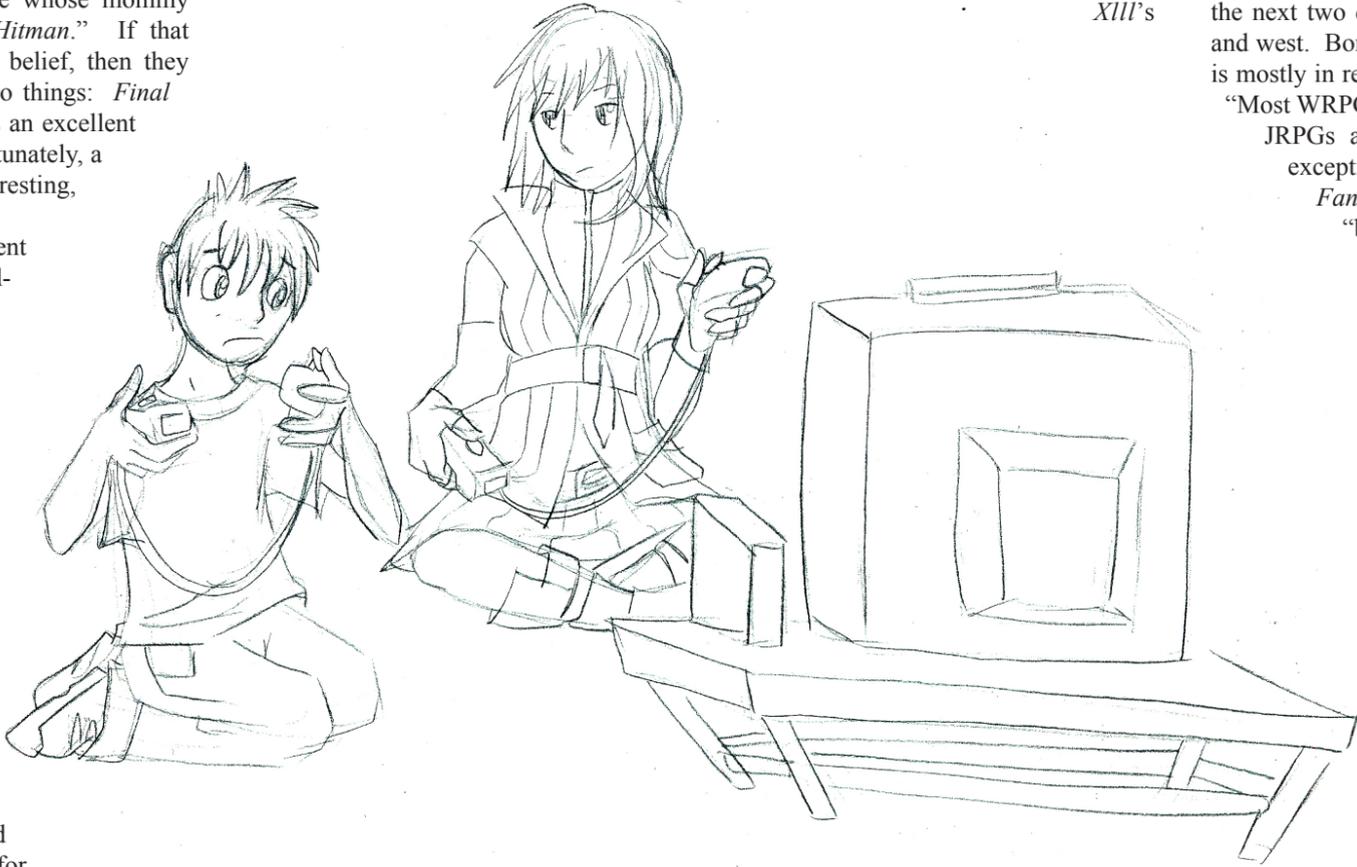
have time to give each focus over the course of the story, an interesting if well traveled tale of misfits banding together to bring down a Stalinist regime and save the people they love. The standout member of this band is Lightning; *XIII's*

up with her future brother-in-law. The other five are equally interesting; Sazh Katzroy, for instance, constantly finds himself in situations he realizes are utterly ridiculous, but keeps diving into them to reunite with his son.

Under the overall umbrella of RPGs, the next two divisions are between east and west. Boris Night says that the split is mostly in regards to the battle system.

"Most WRPGs use real-time, and many JRPGs are turn-based," there are exceptions he says, citing *Final Fantasy XII* as an example, "but for the most part the boundary stands." As a game, *XIII* is very much an eastern RPG, albeit more willing to play with the form's conventions. The battle system is indeed turned based, but now revolves around a mechanic new to the franchise called the Paradigm system. Earlier entries in the series gave players the option to change a character's job outside of a battle, or allowed for characters with different abilities to swap in and out of a battle depending on what skills were needed, but *XIII* marks the first time that job changing has been a part of the battle system itself. At any time during a battle, the player may initiate a "Paradigm shift," swapping one

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Lightning confronts the RPG bashing poster in a far more civil manner than his own methods.

picture by Emma Godfrey

to serve the government.

XIII's cast is by far its strongest element. With just six core characters, the writers

overall protagonist, an ex-soldier who has vowed to bring down the government even if she has to team

any time during a battle, the player may initiate a "Paradigm shift," swapping one

Examining the effects of the media on teen pregnancy

by Rachel Holly

Tuesday nights at 10 PM EST viewers can turn on MTV and tune into the lives of girls like Maci, Catelynn, Nikkole and Farrah, all stars of MTV's new hit program *16 and Pregnant*. The show examines the lives leading up to and after the birth of their children, a 1 1

occurring at some stage within their sixteenth birthday. The show is set documentary style, catching moments from the heartwarming-Nikkole and bratty boyfriend Josh finally reconciling and coming to tears upon the birth of their son Lyle- to the heartbreaking-Catelynn and boyfriend Tyler handing over their newborn baby girl Carly to her adoptive family moments after delivery. Now shows like

Secret Life of the American Teenager, *16 and Pregnant* and its spin-off, *Teen Mom*, are exposing the far-too common epidemic of teen pregnancy. One begs to wonder if it is shifting what is the norm for teenagers in America.

Here at Parkland High School, one wonders if the student body is immune to the media barrage fueled by movies like *Juno*, celebrities like Jamie Lynn Spears and the first increase in teen pregnancy rates since the 1990's.

"I think [the shows] affect students by making them less aware of the severity and responsibility that comes along with any pregnancy, especially a teen pregnancy," said sophomore Payton Sherry.

The statistics surrounding teen pregnancy are startling. It is said that just under one-third of all females in the United States will get pregnant between the ages of 13-18 and of those teen mothers, two-thirds of them will not go on to graduate high school.

In 2008, a high school in Gloucester, Massachusetts was the center of a media firestorm surrounding a "pregnancy pact" made by 18 female students, vowing to conceive children and raise them together. Many adults were baffled by the decision, however nobody was more interested in the media. This particular story alone became the basis for episodes of popular television shows *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* and *Bones*, even going so far as inspiring a documentary

"The Gloucester 18" and a Lifetime Network movie *The Pregnancy Pact*.

"The main reason for teen pregnancy is not shows like *16 & Pregnant* or *Teen Mom*, it is that many adults think that abstinence is the only form of birth control. Teens need to be educated about birth control and STDs since the media does not necessarily affect teen pregnancy trends, only the teens themselves do," said sophomore Anna Martin.

With most of the publicized programs surrounding this trend, the focus is on the role of the

Bleeker (played by Michael Cera) in *Juno* or Ben Stone (played by Seth Rogen) in *Knocked Up*. The gender gap is not as wide as it seems, though.

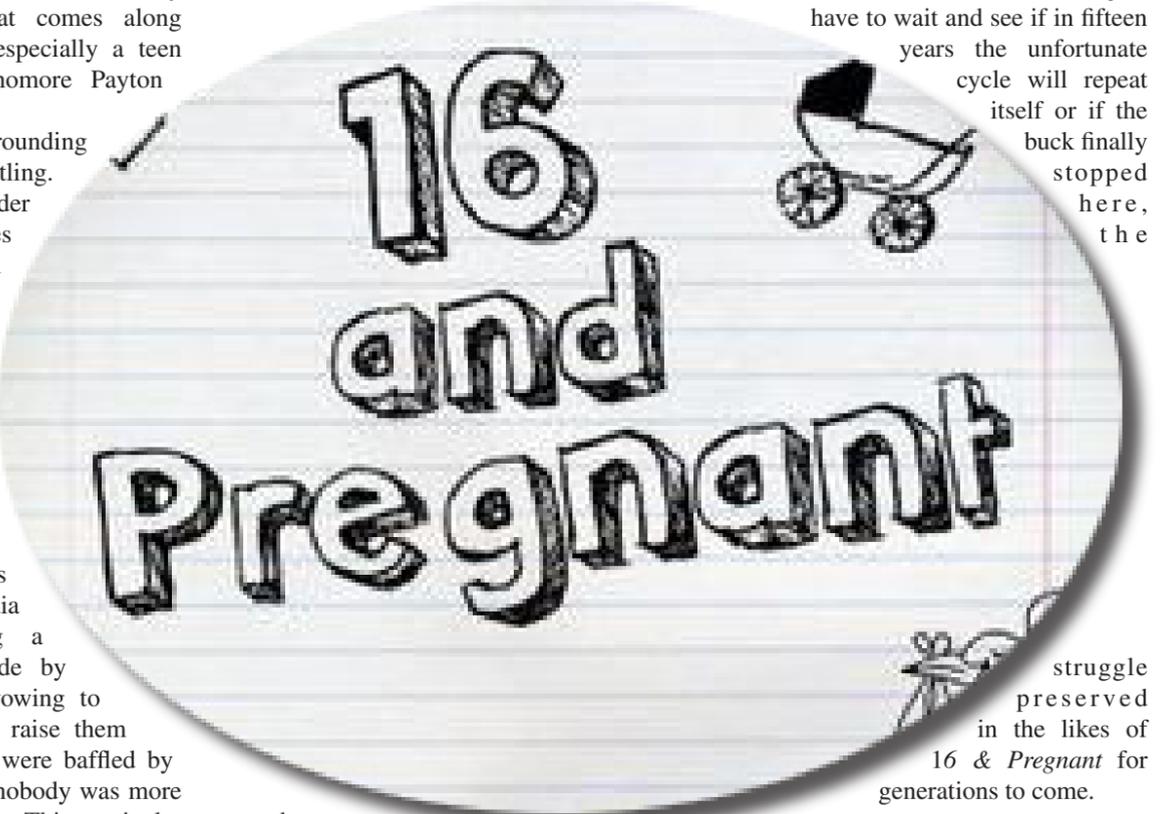
"Seeing shows like these actually makes guys more willing to use protection, knowing the consequences and seeing them," said sophomore Kyle Duffield.

Regardless of the numbers and the ratings, there is going to be a whole new generation born in the wake of this frenzy who will be able to watch themselves being born on MTV to parents who were still children themselves. The viewers just

have to wait and see if in fifteen years the unfortunate cycle will repeat itself or if the buck finally stopped here, the

struggle preserved in the likes of *16 & Pregnant* for generations to come.

pictures courtesy of MTV and Paramount Films



mother. The viewer gets small glimpses through the eyes of the father, usually overshadowed or completely irrelevant, such as Paulie