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<div align="center">Doki Doki Manga Genres Critique</div>

Visual novels are notorious for often being risque dating simulators full of manga and anime tropes. Doki Doki Manga Genres is a visual novel that takes a different approach to the tropes that are present in Japanese drawn media. As the name suggests[1], this game is a satirical piece on the different genres in manga, anime, and visual novels. The authors seemed to embrace the tropes of each category of manga and incorporate them into the design for comedic effect. While the comedic value of the visual novel is subjective, those acquainted with manga or anime are sure to recognize the different tropes because of how the work is centered around them.

The plot revolves around becoming friends with the four main characters who each represent their own category of manga: Shonen, Shoujo, Seinen, and Josei. The routes for each character are filled with common tropes from that respective category and each contains its own unique plot and compelling story with multiple possible endings.

The tropes are clearly highlighted and exaggerated where possible and this seems to be to make a commentary on some of the more trope heavy categories in a satirical way. The routes where these tropes are the most evident are the Shonen and Shoujo routes. In the Shoujo route, we see a very standard Shoujo drama unfold with all sorts of tropes such as the main character in that route tripping into the arms of her love interest. In the Shonen route, we are given a slightly

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[1] The name *Doki Doki Manga Genres* is a play on one of the most prominent visual novels *Doki Doki Literature Club*.

aloof main character with incredible energy and athletic ability following a hero's journey. When the stories are described in this way, it may seem like they are just generic stories, but in the game, they are executed in a manner that shows intention behind the decisions and creates a sense of irony.

The artistic choice to use cats as the base for all of the main character sprites is also interesting and unique. Not only is it an original idea that makes the game stand out, but it is also an excellent way to display the Japanese Visual Language (JVL) that is present in manga and anime. There are specific instances throughout the game in which a character needs to have a certain expression, and that emotion is conveyed through the use of JVL that stands out on the characters because of the difference between the manga or anime art style of the expression juxtaposed with the photo base of the sprite. This has the effect of making the JVL more prominent and making the player notice its use. This continues to play into the idea of this game being a commentary on tropes in manga and anime because different genres often use slightly different JVL and that is reflected in the design and expressions of the characters as well. The Shonen character has a very cartoonish art style with iconic big eyes and bright colors. The Shoujo character has an excessively dramatized design with fluffy white fur and huge sparkly eyes. At the same time, the Seinen and Josei characters are more photo-realistic. These distinctions are also easier to see when the characters are cats and the differences are so prominent in the design.

There are a few areas in which the game could be improved, that is, it could have taken better use of the medium. It is clear that the creators of the game are amateur game developers because the interactive elements were somewhat lacking and there was little variety in the sprites. There were several instances where more sprites and sprite expressions could have

assisted the storytelling, that said, it is understood that the game was completed in a very short time frame relative to game development, and creating sprites and sprite expressions is quite time-consuming. In terms of interactive elements, there were a few notable examples, for instance, choosing routes was a very clear decision that has its positive and negative implications. While it makes it easier for the player to decide on which of the main characters they want to interact with, it is more standard for the route to be decided by several smaller decisions about how the player interacts with the main characters. While Doki Doki Manga Genres allows the player to directly pick which route they want to take, it is arguable that the standard approach is more immersive and draws the player into the game more. That said, this visual novel took a new approach to decide the route which the player would take, and that speaks for the boldness of the creators and their confidence in their artistic decisions. Another area where interactivity could be improved is the game's use of minigames. The only notable example of this was the Haiku section of the Josei route. It would have been nice to see more of these instances where the player is asked to do something other than making a decision. It also could be said that this unorthodox approach is due to the specificity of the target audience. As explained previously, it seems that the target audience is people who may not have experience in playing visual novels, rather it is those who are familiar with manga and anime and the tropes of their genres.

Although there are a few points where there could be an improvement to the game, overall, the game's strength is its unique approach, use of the tropes and JVL, and its value as a satirical piece. These strengths outweigh the flaws and make it rather enjoyable.