

Episodes 10-12 - The Final Gamble; Cheers and Sighs; Heaven's Fall, Man's Fall

These three episodes are a mini-arc on their own, and their main focus is on Sakazaki who's extremely passionate and religious, which is evidenced even further by the OP. We once again see characters praying to God in desperate times and Sakazaki's complete and utter "endless ejaculation" might be the most visually intensive breakdown we've had yet. The Super Saiyan auras upped the intensity even further. How he pisses himself and falls back with great force afterwards is the icing on the cake. You could take his pissing to be comedic, and Kaiji reacting to his daughter Mikoko's look is funny but also adds to the unnerving atmosphere. There's even chanted "Usa"s (憂さ; gloom; melancholy). That scene emphasizes Sakazaki's perhaps reckless dedication to his daughter and makes his failure all the more heartbreaking. He shouldn't have bet the last ¥10,000,000 but as he signified to Kaiji before, he feels like he has no choice at all. The bridge analogy we get here is another one that brings us back to the wasteland scene also used in the first metaphor of the series (where Kaiji jumps over the chasm).



From Kaiji's perspective, he again describes the odds of winning but this time there are chronologically-ordered phases and Kaiji's explanation builds with each stage. He even summarises the odds by going through the numbers he divided by at each point. What I also found endearing was how he was crying at Sakazaki's struggle, being the emotional character that he is. I thought that nothing being shown below the beer can was some animation mistake, but it turns out that there really was nothing there because the casino was using brass balls.



The new villain, Seiya Ichijou, is voiced by Daisuke Namikawa who also voiced Rokurou Okajima (Black Lagoon), Jellal (Fairy Tail), Hisoka (Hunter x Hunter 2011) and Squealer (Shinsekai yori). His voice fits perfectly and his nose isn't down-pointed like some other characters. I enjoyed his attempt to get Sakazaki to use up the rest of his money and Kaiji showing his determination by ripping Ichijou's business card up. Like the #2 said, he can't write off Kaiji so easily. He also presents his first analogy of Sakazaki moving like a runaway truck without breaks.

One issue that presents itself is that the gamble isn't against other people but against a machine. I don't think the scenario is as gripping as previous gambles but I'll see how I think of it later. People say that the pacing is a problem but I don't think it is so far.



Episodes 13-17 - The Clue to Beating the Bog; Summary; All-in Bluff; Prelude to the Showdown; Fruitless Achievement

I sense that even the narrator is now cheering for Kaiji! The narrator and the 45s are powerless to do anything but they are glued to the action. It's Kaiji and co. versus Ichijou and Hyoudou, whose face close-ups both transition into the Bog. The Bog can show a man's nature and Ichijou and Hyoudou are reflected in it. It's also the group versus the entire despairing atmosphere that surrounds them, as shown by the mist that metaphorically pervades Kaiji and Endou's monetary negotiation in the restaurant.

Sakazaki's divinations did not come to fruition in the horse race, and his prayers before smashing the Bog weren't honest. I'm not sure if I'd sense passion in him either. Nonetheless it was an entertaining and great bluff. It took Ichijou a while to realise it. I don't think he's stupid, but he's careless. We do see his worried and selfish side when the #2 calls him. His expressions were refreshing and amusing and it's fun to see him shitting his pants, especially when he fails to expose Kaiji. Hyoudou on the other hand is making others shit their pants as he crazily licks the wine bowl. This is emphasized with his audible "Moshu"s, the Toon World teeth and his childish clapping. He probably got even madder because some time has passed since the end of the first season. What's important about his reappearance is that it reminds us of what had happened before and that he must still be defeated. Kaiji's reaction to his portrait in the casino is still a fearful one.



I don't particularly fancy us not knowing what Kaiji is thinking at first, especially since we've dived deep into his psyche a lot and we were shown the full planning process against Hyoudou in the raffle. It sometimes feels like we are Kaiji ourselves making our way through hell, but this storytelling method makes us feel more distant. I think the close relationship facilitates us being endeared to Kaiji. Ichijou makes some deductions about the plan and most of them appear to be correct. He's full of glee as he thinks Kaiji is completely cornered, and it's starting to feel like he's right. The possibility I'm thinking of is that Kaiji wants to

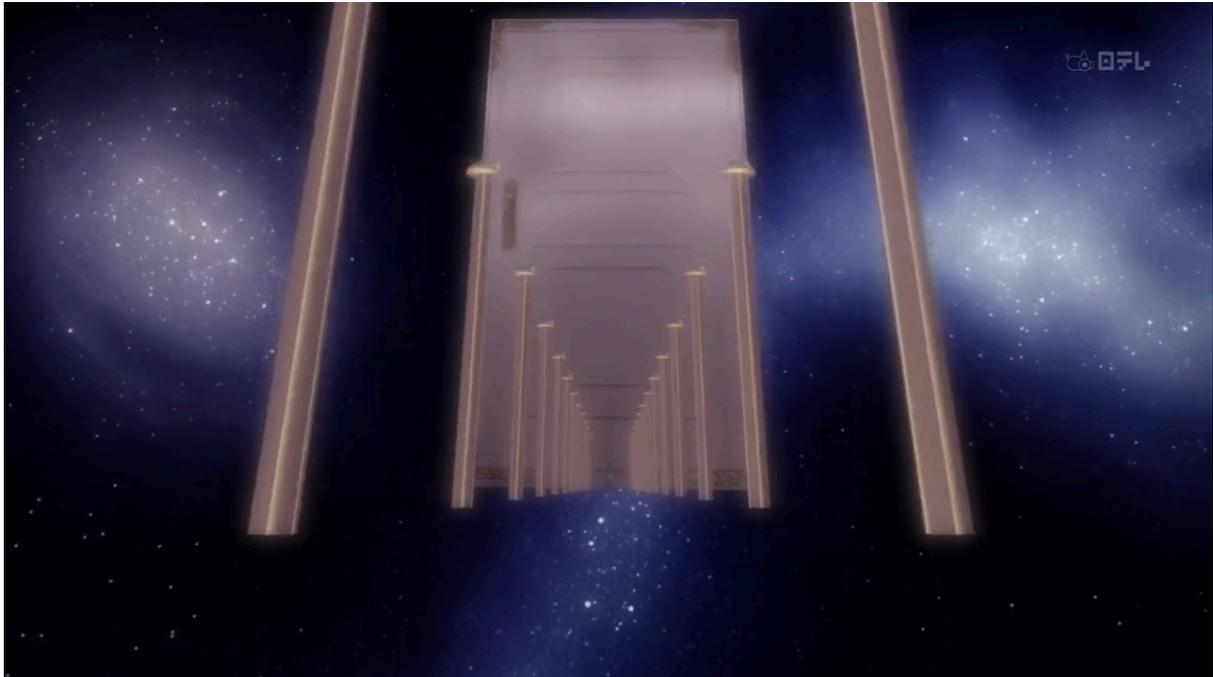
physically wear out the blocker to break it. Kaiji does say that he was going to beat it by force, and one of the dramatic 3D CG sequences ends when one of the balls hits it. As the #2 says, you shouldn't underestimate Kaiji! Ichijou is not just under extreme pressure from Teiai but he actively fears and hates being made fun of by Kaiji. He doesn't want to be lower than scum. Even Endou needs Kaiji's help, which is karmic. Karma is playing more of a role in this season.

Kaiji must deal with the wind and keep pounding on the door. His bloody manicure must have been extremely painful. I luckily knew about it beforehand and didn't clench my fists the whole way through. The blood under his nails represents not just his failed attempt, but also the toils of his manual underground work, the efforts of the other underground people, and the blood that has been lost in all the gambles so far. You could also say that Ichijou and Hyoudou drinking red wine is them being pleased by the suffering. The hands that keep reaching for the end of the tunnel bear enormous weight.



I appreciate that the music was generally being played for longer. There is also a more hip-hop style music track that plays a couple of times. Another thing worth mentioning is how the narrator is repeating words more often, and repetition as a literary device is proved effective once again in heightening emotion. Speaking of emotion, I feel like the recap of episode 14 was unfortunately placed after the buildup to Sakazaki about to enter the building, which would considerably disrupt the flow. However, I knew about it beforehand and it was the first episode I had watched on that particular day so this did not happen. The recap itself is good and covers all the important information. The proverbs section was an advertisement for the second live-action movie. It looks okay. If I find good releases of the film trilogy I might watch them. The worst part about these episodes though was males being in the proverb sections, which is BAD! Not that I actually find the woman particularly attractive.

Not that many hours remain in Kaiji's day but there are still 9 episodes left. I wonder how the pacing will be handled but I'm still finding this season very good so far. The cheering at the end energised me. We must keep going, so don't forget: you are the one who will open the door.



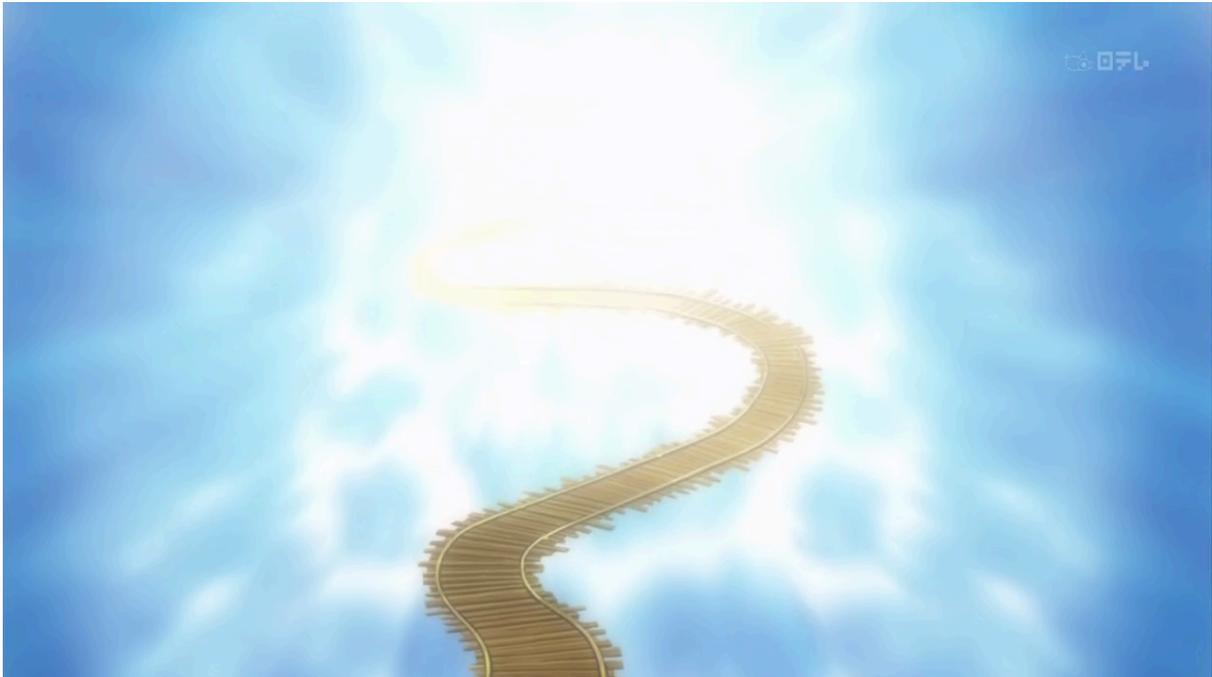
Kaiji S2 Episodes 18-26 - Iron Gate; Miraculous Trajectory; Crossroads of Fate; A Sure Winner; The Might of Benjamin; Candle in the Wind; Spiralling Silver Spheres; Bitter Tears; 未来は僕らの...

The Battle for Everyone's Souls concludes with screams of joy and whimpers of despair. Each obstacle of the forest of pins, the iron gate and the three trays are each overcome in nerve-wracking stages and Kaiji's last day in general plays out over about 10 and a half episodes. It's almost like we're fighting a certain purple Mewtwo-like racist alien. While the pacing might be slow, I believe that it serves a purpose in getting us to dig into each character's emotions and explore more of their stories, as evidenced by how we are shown all of Endou's torment and especially how we get to explore Ichijou's thoughts and backstory. The space also allows the series to express more of its metaphorical images which are brought to new heights.

In this span of episodes we get imagery such as Hyoudou threatening that Ichijou will swim with the fish; military set pieces with armies, planes and zombie Kaijis; samurai Kaiji slaying a lordly Ichijou; a railway to Heaven and a ghost ballet among others. But perhaps the most striking one of all is one bound in reality: Kaiji's sweating hands and the frequency at which he reaches out to the pachinko dial with determination. Much like how he's chasing the bird of freedom in the OP, he is chasing the light that will shine out of the jackpot hole once a ball goes through it. Even the pachinko balls are chasing the light! It's as if the team's prayers, that have previously been rejected and have even been derided by Kaiji as something not to rely on, have been answered. The analytical presentation was also intriguing, with some

examples being the physics lessons and arrows showing the direction of the tilts. By extension, the characters are being tilted in numerous ways.

Ichijou is also experiencing divinity and picturing a divine path to salvation:



I felt sympathetic for Ichijou during his emotional descent despite being reminded by Kaiji that he was a cheating scumbag. He still made bad choices, but we can see why: he felt like the best way to get back at the scum of society who bullied others, and also to succeed after an economic downturn, was to join the darkness. He started from the very bottom and climbed up the mountain. But just like Ohtsuki, his condemnation of Kaiji was not decisive and he was sent to the abyss. At least he was very “moe moe”.





However, the double-edged sword presents itself: since everything has been intense for so many episodes, particular moments don't feel as impressive as they could be. Even when Kaiji and Endou are in the bathroom, their emotions are heightened and tears fall. We can't experience these intense emotions for such a long time at once, assuming you're sober.

The last episode was humorous and shows how great our kusohero Kaiji is. He never learns and that's both good and bad: he believes in the Power of Friendship but is still an easy target and he uses up all his money on pachinko. Thank you, "my dear friend".



This leads into my last point: that Kaiji creates hope. We see this in almost everyone watching his struggle crying and suffering with him and him telling Endou that "Life is only really worth living when you have hope!" Looking back on it, Kaiji escaped Espoir because he believed that there was a way out. This train of thought is notable because unlike other series that focus on teenage youths of either sex (if there's something featuring intersex people let me know), Kaiji focuses on males who are in their 20s-50s. It still maintains grit throughout but Kaiji pushes through everything because he has hope. It's not about looking back to the time before you faced the adult world, but making use of the energy you have right now. Given that the manga started in 1996 during Japan's Lost Decade and the anime's two seasons began airing in 2007 and 2011 respectively right before and after the global financial crisis, the message of hope and keeping your head high in Kaiji has maintained relevance. It will remain relevant as the world inevitably experiences more recessions. That is my ultimate takeaway from the series.



The [first OP](#) is a cover of the 1987 song by The Blue Hearts, a Japanese punk rock band active from 1985-1995. I greatly prefer the cover over the original, but the point is that it's a fantastic song choice in terms of theming and how the sound of it matches the rock tracks of the first season's soundtrack. It also matches the rawness of the first season, which is on the whole darker in tone than season 2. In addition, it's only 48 seconds long which efficiently communicates the message. Finally, there's a chance that a Japanese 2007 anime watcher will remember the song from earlier in their life, reminding them of the potential excitement and optimism of that time.

The [second OP](#) by Fear, and Loathing in Las Vegas is an extremely iconic song for many reasons intertwined with the narrative of my life and musical taste. It's electronic, complementing the second season's soundtrack more. It channels the desires of the characters to get out of their desperate situations and their frequent screams. "Take it easy" is how Kaiji sometimes breaks through the barriers by calming down and thinking about how to defeat the opponent, and the other relevant lyrics demonstrate how the song choice is

also excellent. It's short like Mirai, clocking in at 1 minute and 10 seconds. However, knowing the full song, it definitely doesn't feel as complete and self-contained as Mirai and the points at which they cut it are very obvious. Therefore I'm more inclined to say that Mirai is the better OP. Regarding the EDs, I think the [first one](#) is better than the [second](#) due to its more serious and melancholic tone.

That's the end of my Kaiji watchthrough. There ain't no gettin' offa this train we're on, so stay sharp!

Kaiji-san! The future is in our hands!

