

Translation by Nicolas "Stargaze" Hechler @ bronies.de

When Men Love Pink Ponies

BY SVEN GREST

Adult men interested in pink Ponies have to take a lot of malice. The "Bronies" gladly do so: they are ready to go much further for their favorite series "My Little Pony".

He's used to suffer. The Brony knows how it is to be addressed about his hobby. He knows the frown on an listener's face when he admits he's a fan of a TV-show designed for girls in their pre-school age. And he knows the reservations towards a man who comes out about collecting pink Plush-Ponies in his free time and can barely wait for the next season of "My Little Pony" to start. But they don't mind.

[\[Text beneath first photo\]](#)

[Nicolas Hechler \(27\) is avowed Brony. The Düsseldorf resident is fan of the show "My Little Pony". Image by: Sven Grest](#)

Bronies (an acronym of "brother" and "Pony") are men, usually between 16 and 34 and heterosexual, who do not deny their preference for the american cartoon show. Predominantly they are part of the generation of "digital natives", they grew up with the internet and know how to handle that some reply in mockery when learning of their great passion. "You don't always have to insist being extremely manly", says Danny. The 30-year-old is sitting in a pub in Siegen within the Sauerland, cooped up with eight other fans of the series. All of them are here to give insight about their Pony-World. For the first time.

One Million Fans Worldwide

Up to now not many know of their hobby. But their numbers are increasing: the website www.bronies.de, which serves the Pony-fanbase as a forum, reports about 200 new registrations per month. Worldwide their numbers are estimated to exceed a million.

The Siegen-Regular's Table, which happens sporadically in real life, but all the more often in online-forums, consists primarily of men. The only woman of the group tonight is Yasmin. She's important to the group: she called them all to the meeting, sews the treasured Plush-Ponies, which she sells for 100 or more Euros via the internet or occasionally gives away for free to good friends. Of course, two of the plushies are with them this evening. One is yellow, one is pink, and their obvious feature are their huge eyes.

[\[Text beneath second photo\]](#)

[Part of the "My Little Pony"-Regular's Table in Siegen reports on their exceptional hobby. In the middle: one of the little Ponies from the show. Image by: Sven Grest](#)

For him it was like this, explains James, who doesn't want his real name in the media. As usual he was browsing the internet and suddenly all these pictures of the cute ponies kept popping up. James' curiosity kicked in. When the 25-year old anglistics student had watched the first episode he liked the feeling left behind afterwards. "Back then I wasn't well. The series helped me to improve my situation." TV shows for children as a therapy for adults?

Violence and serious arguments have no place in the world of the Ponies. In "My Little Pony" the amiable and undiscerning unicorn "Twilight Sparkle" tries to make friends. This doesn't turn out the simplest of things, as every pony has individual traits which require to be understood and respected. But no longer than a few minutes later the situation is back to happy and a colorful rainbow spans across Ponyville. How come adult men dream themselves to such a place?

References to pop culture with a winking eye

Those seeking to understand the phenomenon Brony have to delve far into the depths of the internet. He has to deal with the numerous subcultures that have developed online in the past years and where some teenagers and young adults maneuver naturally and much more secure than in the real world. There, in the digital world, remote humor is omnipresent. Nothing goes without hidden references, without hints to other sources of pop culture - with a winking eye. The so-called memes, that spread with lightning-speed across social media, are an expression for that: memes are images, videos and graphics that refer to other images, videos and graphics in ironic ways.

You need to be profoundly ignorant to deny Bronies having a lot of humor. Their excitement about the series also originates from myriad references to movies and events within the storyline. There are parodies of the action series "24" and the classic film "The Big Lebowski", furthermore countless quotes and hints to all levels of pop culture. Danny at least tells to have become a fan via this detour: "At first I hated the series. To make fun of it all I watched an episode. And never stopped."

By now the series about the cute Ponies made its way into politics. The internal rules of procedure of the Pirate Party at the Berlin City Parliament features a so-called "Pony Break". It may be requested in case of the discussion getting too hot headed. With a positive vote the caucus is interrupted to watch an episode of "My Little Pony" together.

"I recommend Ponytime any party."

"As chairman I recommend Ponytime to any party. It helps, it relaxes the atmosphere, this leads back to reason. You get down on things, think of something different, watching kids TV. That's actually a good idea", says Philip Brechler, chairman of the Berlin Pirate Party. Two times Ponytime was conducted successfully.

But Bronies don't quite agree on politics making their use of the pony-show. "Ponies should not be instrumentalized," says Danny. After all the Ponies with their adorable colors and partially paranormal abilities are the antithesis to the normal world - and should remain as such. The Pirate Party's booth at the Pony-Convention "Galacon", which took place in August, caused a fair share of critique.

As much as the Bronies love their series they question the commercialization of the idyllic world. Yes, the series was developed by US toy manufacturer Hasbro mainly to advertise their new own TV channel. But the amount of merchandise has increased beyond countability, starting with fragranced rainbow sculptures to limited Collector-Ponies. The business with the Ponies flushes a lot of money into Hasbro's pockets - and the adult fans of the series observe the progress with scepticism.

Nicolas Hechler is one of them. He drove the 130 kilometers from Düsseldorf to Siegen to participate in the meeting with the other Bronies. He loves the series especially for its humor - and of course the fondly drawn pictures. His girlfriend respects his passion for the kids show, says the 27-year-old. When the third season starts on November 10th it's probably going to be the same procedure as so many times before. His girlfriend busies herself with something in the apartment - and he sits in front of the TV, watching "My Little Pony." He can hardly wait.

Translator's notes:

Thanks for reading.

Sadly Mr. Grest mixed up names and ages here and there.

Siegen is not within the vicinity of the Sauerland, but the Siegerland. Go figure.

Danny is 22, James is 30.

The original "hater" is actually neither of them, but "MetroBrony", who is chairman of the regular's table over in Siegen.

And I'm actually engaged and my fiancée found her way into the community as a neutral - no care for Pony, but all the more for the new friends we made.

We had a fun evening, Mr. Grest showed great interest and willingness to accurately gather information. It was the first time a journalist properly introduced himself and asked reasonably for an interview, so we agreed (after turning down the yellow press months before).

We sought to give general opinions over personal ones, to represent the fandom, not ourselves.

Greetings,

Nicolas "Stargaze" Hechler (aka Rudiger xD)