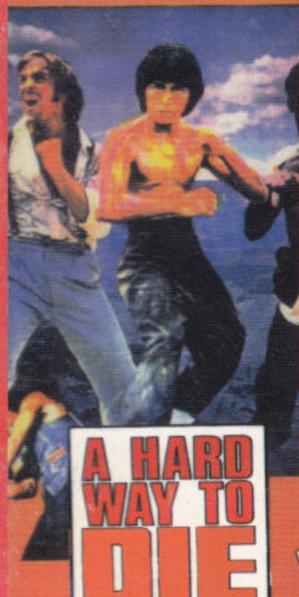


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#10

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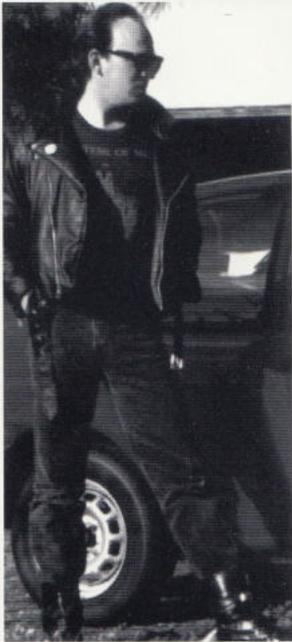
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EDITORIAL

In the old days, when OC was just another home-made fanzine, it was commonly understood that fans of unique films didn't take themselves too seriously and had an openminded outlook, accepting of alternative writing styles, freedom of speech and irreverent humor. The writing style of myself and several other OC contributors is sometimes an indirect bi-product of the eye-opening punk rock movement. As a youngster, I was rather influenced by the over-the-top messages of inciteful bands ranging from Sex Pistols to Devo, to Dead Kennedys. The only connection a magazine about Asian films has to that whole new wave scene was a song by the Vapors called "Turning Japanese" (one of the first new wave songs I really got into, and, having been into Japanese stuff for so long, this catchy tune helped drive me into that whole "alternative rock" scene). Back then, OC's unique coverage of equally unique films received minimal (if any at

all!) complaints, despite its being even more vulgar, satirical & subversive than it is now. But eventually OC became comparatively "big time" (by my standards; but then I still blush when I see my name in print), and it became available in stores all over our rapidly decaying planet, from sea to oily sea, therefor opening OC to a whole new audience. No longer was OC an obscure magazine for the eccentric elite, punk rockers and unique individuals who had to search high & low to find it. So no longer is OC's audience of the uniquely creative set exclusively, it's now in stores, available to the common folk (the type who would pick it up on a news stand if it's convenient, but would never painstakingly seek it out if it offered a challenge to do so). As such, there are plenty of "normal", uptight individuals who have just joined OC's readership, and several are just a bit too stupid to understand the concept of alternative press. I'm not attacking any specific demographic of letter writers, I've received ignorant complaints from at least a couple of walks of life:

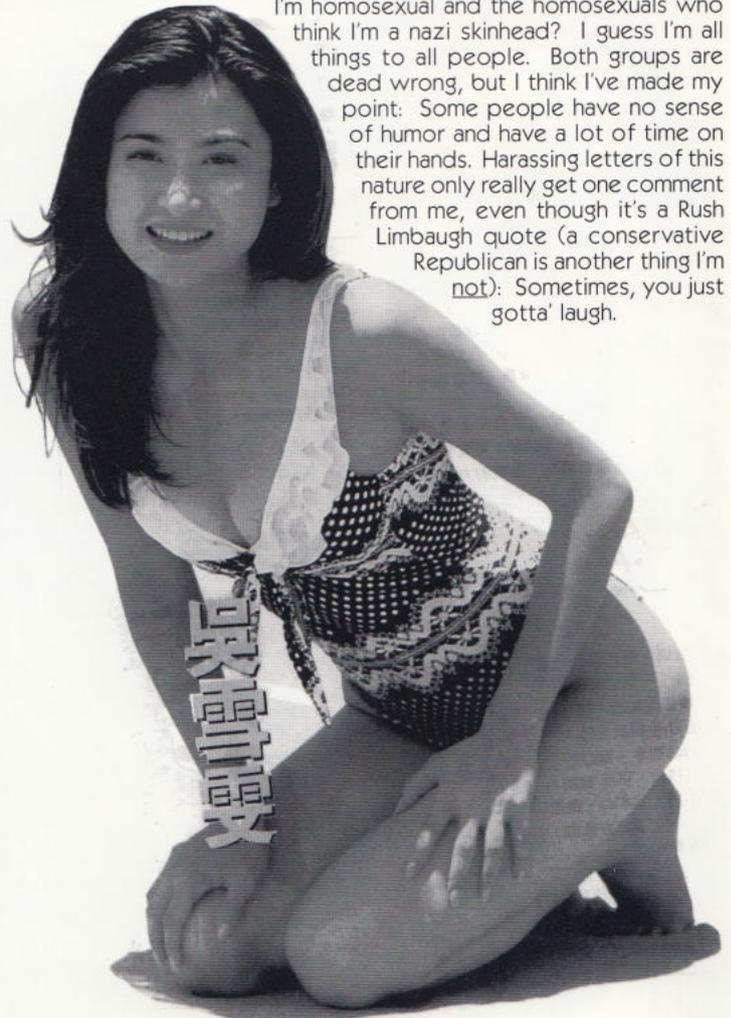
1. One letter was apparently from some neo-nazi type in the NY vicinity. He said I "look like a faggot" and condemned me for writing about all that "Jap crap", "Chink crap", or whatever. On a similar note, it seems some anonymous redneck reader called (back when I was dumb enough to have a listed phone number!) my answering machine and called me a "nigger-lovin' Jew-boy" before delivering an oh-so-intimidating death threat.

2. More recently, I've been attacked, insulted & threatened by some

gay guy in Canada who (get this) labeled me a nazi! The letter was a pointless, rambling collection of insults, the type of harassment to come only from a sick individual (this pervert even went into explicit detail about his sexual shenanigans; one minute he's attacking & condemning me, OC & its writers and in the next, he's boasting about how proud he is to suck dick-- go figure! I mean, if you truly hated somebody, would you tell them about what's suppose to be a private, intimate act?). He also implied I "have no guts" and yet he (it) remained anonymous (just like the redneck who drew a swastika on his letter, for my viewing pleasure)-- no name or address, so he's hardly in a position to make such rude statements.

What's the point of all this, aside from the nazi skinheads who think

I'm homosexual and the homosexuals who think I'm a nazi skinhead? I guess I'm all things to all people. Both groups are dead wrong, but I think I've made my point: Some people have no sense of humor and have a lot of time on their hands. Harassing letters of this nature only really get one comment from me, even though it's a Rush Limbaugh quote (a conservative Republican is another thing I'm not): Sometimes, you just gotta' laugh.





Well, enough of my bitter rambling; and on into this edition of OC. It's the 25th edition of OC, aka "OC#10", to all you newer readers only familiar with this here Draculina volume. The chosen main topic is Asian Giants this time, since so many of OC's readers just can't get enough Godzilla, Ultraman, Majin, Gamera, etc. In the proceeding pages, me and my talented staff of writers will gather as many movie & TV shows [about giants] as we have time for, to include as good & complete a

time and going to school to get myself out of this rut. Naturally, it would be absolutely impossible to edit zines like OC and Heroes on Film while attending school and working. So is there anyone out there who feels qualified to take over the responsibilities, for a year or two, at least until I get my life together? I'm looking for somebody who's at least somewhat computer literate, creative and has diverse interests in Asian film, be it Japanese, Hong Kongese, Filipino, and Korean. Interested parties may contact me by writing to me, at: Damon Foster, P.O. Box 576, Fremont, CA 94537-0576.

filmography as is possible. Naturally, no issue of OC would be complete without the other regular columns like Hong Kong Heroes and Asian Oddities.

One final statement before ending this editorial. I'm debating retiring, at least temporarily, from zine-dom. No matter how many OCs you see in stores, it's still not profitable enough to pay my household bills, and my mundane, 9-to-5 dayjob (if you think I do only OC for a living, get reall), only barely helps me to scrape by and make ends meet. Numerous problems in my personal life dictate I might be better off going back to school to get serious skills and a real job so I can live comfortably & happily for once. So, if this happens, I'll be both working full-



Just got OC#8 and I must say, outstanding! The coverage was great as usual! Plus I want to thank your contributor Frank Strom for the nice comments he said about our video show me and Jay Johnson did at G-Con. Yes, it was only limited to Friday. The reason was Jay had to leave Saturday, originally we wanted to do it for three days. However, Jay had to run because he had to catch a music gig. However, for G-Con '96, we are going to do it again! Our show was a great success! We are taking and planning steps to making our video show even better! Thank you, Frank, for those nice comments (oh, I forgot! I did show some stuff Saturday night for the hell of it anyway).

I would like to close this with a statement

to the people who criticize and trash OC, its creator and the videos Damon has done. Keep your comments and bullshit to yourselves! Lighten up! OC is Damon's mag and he can say what he wants! Damon, among the creators of other kaiju-related zines (like G-FAN, KAIJU REVIEW, ULTRA FAN, SENTAI, MONSTER ATTACK TEAM, JAPANESE GIANTS, and others who volunteer their time and efforts along with hundreds of contributors of articles to put these mags out for our enjoyment! We don't see any of the kiss-ass mags like STARLOG or SCI-FI UNIVERSE regularly covering the Japanese genre. They tend to trash, hurt & especially ignore it. Those are the mags we should trash! I support Damon and the other creators of their zines!

How's it going? I would like to suggest that you do an article on these Japanese TV series: BLUE SWAT and SUKEBAN DEKA. / BLUE SWAT was covered in 1994's OC#4: The Godzilla Issue, and SUKEBAN DEKA was in the slightly more recent American Martial Arts issue of OC.-DF! One of the reasons that I like OC is because it's not "P.C." I hate all this PC shit!

Steven Taylor
California



Thanks to people like them, the coverage of the Japanese genre is alive and well here in the U.S. It's better than no coverage at all! What do you think, Damon? */I think the odds of the Japantasy scene ever dying is about as likely as finding K.D. Lang buying condoms. -DF/*

Good news to all fans of Godzilla and Gamera! MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000, which trashes and makes fun of our Japanese heroes & kaiju is finally being put to sleep (its about time)! That show was a dog anyway! Ratings were bad for the show and they were double-crossed by their own network. They should have killed MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000 a long time ago! I hated that fucking, shit-ass show, they got what they deserved!

Plus I've seen Saban's MASKED RIDER too! You're right, Damon, the show is garbage! I'd rather watch a rerun of GILLIGAN'S ISLAND, MORK & MINDY, LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE, or my videos than watch this junk! */Hell, I'd rather attempt to jog after receiving a lap-dance from Shelley Winters. -DF/* Another popular icon of Japanese fantasy has been shot to Hell by Saban! Anyway, Damon, keep up the good work and with OC, you have my support!
Lenell Bridges
Illinois

First of all, I would like to say that I enjoy your magazine very much. You deliver good information and pictures of Asian actresses, without any pretense of being artsy-fartsy. I am a big fan of Asian movies, and have collected Filipino movies for several years, while I lived in the Bay Area.
Jeff Curry
Washington

Being 15 is not easy, you have homework, more homework, girls, girls again, hard-ons, stretched pant seems! Hardly enough time for my kung fu movies! Here in Dubuque, oriental movies are anti-abundant, my only source is Blockbuster's \$3.00 rental, quite hard on one's pocketbook, I've seen almost all of them! Aaargh! So playing hackey sac, kung fu-ing to myself in the mirror when no one is around, arousing myself with perverted sexual thoughts, is what I do in my free time when I'm not actually watching a kung fu movie. As for Chinese triad/gangster films, THE KILLER and HARDBOILED is it, no joke. Diversity is not in this town's vocabulary!

Once again you've made me laugh with dirty one-liners. I too have many stories to tell and I have an ear for yours; keep up the above-average work.
Victor Cayro
Iowa

In your review of HONG KONG PLAY-BOYS, you said that Fu Sheng's brother had also died in the car crash, and all other accounts say he was only injured. */Oops! The last time I heard about that fateful accident was three days after it occurred back around 1983. I heard of it through word-of-mouth, a friend said, "I heard Fu Sheng died in an automobile accident, along with his brother".*

It was never confirmed that his brother actually died, so I assumed, which as you know, makes an ASS of U and an ASS of ME. Sorry. -DF/ Also, in Darren Wheeling's news update, he said that Gong Li and Zhang Yi-mou were married. Gong Li was living with Zhang Yi-mou and his wife in China, but Gong Li is not, and has not been, his wife. And has Liu Chia Hui really been doing work as a bodyguard? */Hell if I know. -DF/*

I enjoyed Frank Strom's G-Con report. It sounds like the kind of convention I wouldn't go to twice, being out in the middle of nowhere, stranding the attenders, with no good video rooms for most of the con. No interesting people to talk with if you don't want to go to the single programming event at the time. If it got turned into an Asian cinema event, though, it might be over-run by anime otaku and HK film fans. Okay, I've never been at a convention where I ran into a bunch of HK film fans, only encountered a small handful of such fans at any single event.

ATTACK OF THE MUSHROOM PEOPLE is based on a William Hope Hodgson story, either The Voice in the Night or the novel Boats of the Glen Carrig. Also, KAIJU OUJI, the Japanese series looks a lot like the Spanish-dubbed PRINCE DINOSAUR live action series! Could it be the same? I have a half-episode of PRINCE DINOSAUR. Shaw's THE MAGNIFICENT TRIO is a ripoff of Hideo Gosha's THREE OUTLAW SAMURAI (1964), I've seen both.

The Japanese never invented karate. It was imported to Japan in 1900, from Okinawa. It had been used by the Okinawans for the previous two centuries, to defend themselves after the Japanese warlords banned weapons in the hands of the Okinawan peasantry.

I do hate stupid statements like Goodhartz's "And if you disagree, go fuck yourself". Everyone is entitled to an opinion without getting that crap tossed in their face. You don't say things like that, */I quit telling readers to "go fuck themselves" a while back, because I figured they can remember to do it enough without my reminding them. That's why I put so many girlie shots in OC now. -DF/* which is why I enjoy your writing, and not Garo's which is full of it. I'm renewing my subscription to OC, because I enjoy most of it. Lots of interesting info.
Laurine White
California

OC#8 turned out very well. Actually, the only problem I had with it were some of the omitted films. I mean, THE WAR IN SPACE is no masterpiece, but I wish it could have been included, */Chris, it's all YOUR fault for not sending in a review of it! Don't worry, we forgive you-- just don't do it again. -DF/* even if only in reference to your review in OC#4. However, as you said, such omissions were unavoidable. You did a super job compiling such a freaking list.

I'm sure someone's already told you the following info, but I'll share it anyway. Apparently, UCHU G-MEN played in the U.S., as SPACE G-MEN */And Santa Clause visits Israel. -DF/* Passing reference was made to it in a minor book I have called The Best of

Science Fiction TV. The same sentence also refers to an obscurity called "Prince Dinosaur". An English dubbed KAIJU OUJI, maybe? Who knows?
Christopher Elam
Louisiana, U.S.A.

Dear Chris,

I hope I'm wrong, but I very much doubt that UCHU G-MEN or KAIJU OUJI made it to America, unless maybe on a foreign language channel, left in Japanese (most likely without subtitles). But in the previous letter, Laurine mentions a possible Spanish dubbing of Japan's classic KAIJU OUJI series! Does anybody out there know the truth about this show? Was it an international hit at one time, and do English dubbed prints actually exist?! Enquiring (if not obsessed) minds want to know!!! -DF

Ed Holland's address does indeed change more than Madonna's hairstyle (though I really wish you would have picked a less asinine personality to make an analogy with). */Okay, how about this: Ed Holland's address changes more frequently than Ross Perot's political stance. -DF/* However, our club, "Monster Attack Team" now (finally) has a P.O. Box, which will most definitely not change, we swear to God and hope to watch SAILOR MOON. Please pass this on to your readership: MONSTER ATTACK TEAM, P.O. Box 821631, Ft. Worth, TX 76182-1631.
Michael Keller
Texas, U.S.A.

First of all, I want to thank you for such a great zine. It's because of you and OC that I have been re-born in the world of Asian cinema. My first taste was as a small child in the late 1960s. I remember me and my brother pretending to be Ultraman and Goldar out in our yard, kicking the shit out of each other. Catching a Godzilla movie was always a rare and welcomed treat. My uncle used to call them "cheap ten cent movies". He said that about all Japanese flicks. What did he know? These monsters were kicking some ass, and even I could see that was better than anything else on TV. Batman & Robin couldn't compare. I hated playing Batman & Robin because I always got stuck being Robin, who I knew (even at my young age) was a big pussy.

As a teenager, my weekends were spent over Gram's watching Kung Fu Theater with my cousin. We were (and still are, I guess) about the same age (probably with the same brain power). After watching the double dose of back-fisted mayhem, we could be found outside taking swings at each other with freshly snapped tree limbs. We had a lot of aggression and energy that needed to be released. What better way than to stab and slap each other with sticks? Not only have you helped to bring back some memories, but also brought to light a wealth of information (where to get this or that, plugs for other material, etc.). So thanks to you, my friend. You're doing a great job.

Tom Emory
M.D., U.S.A.

I wanted to drop you a line with regard to OC#8, The Japanese Science Fiction Issue. I really enjoyed reading all the capsule reviews, especially when you were able to provide some insight on a few of the more obscure titles (like those "Invisible Man" films). I especially enjoyed the biographical material you put together on several of the creative people who brought these shows and films to life. Great job, Damon! *Actually, it should be, "Great job, Augie!", since without August Ragone's seemingly unlimited knowledge on these dudes, such bios wouldn't have been possible. -DF/*

My only complaint about this issue is with Frank Strom's short article concerning his visit to G-Con. He writes that representatives of various Asian-related fanzines were on hand at the convention and includes my own publication Kaiju Review *For the record, typing it "Kaiju Review" was a move on my part. In his list of zines, he mentioned something called "Kaiju Report", which I've never heard of. I assumed he meant "Kaiju Review" so I changed it, assuming no such thing as "Kaiju Review" exists, or does it?! -DF/* as one of them. While I am aware of the fact that I had friends there, it is misleading to say that Kaiju Review was being "represented", not only were we not invited, but it was made clear to us well in advance that we were not even welcome to attend. Furthermore it is incorrect to give Kaiju Review any credit for setting up the "non-sanctioned" video room, which I have heard great things about from many people who were otherwise disappointed at G-Con. Credit for this belongs to superfans Lenell Bridges and Jay Johnson alone.

Like Frank Strom, I hope that future G-Con (and Asian-related conventions) will continue and improve, I just hope that at the same time the narrow-minded set of those few individuals who think fandom "lives and breathes" by their efforts alone changes.

Dan Reed
Kaiju Review editor
New York

I just picked up my first issue of OC, #8, and I enjoyed it. I also read your little life-story and must say, it reminds me a little bit about myself, only my life was almost as crazy as yours. I fell in love with Godzilla & Japanese science fiction when I was about nine. I'm 32 now, and still love Godzilla and Japanese fantasies. Like you, the first Godzilla movie I saw was MONSTER ZERO. It was love at first fright. Then came GAMERA, GIGANTOR (aka IRON MAN 28), and the rest is history. I'm up to date with all the recent Godzilla & Gamera movies that I enjoy as an adult. But I noticed in OC you haven't done features on famous Japanese animation heroes like my all-time favorite, which is the reason I'm writing this letter. I'm talking about "Fade In!"

YUUSHA RAIDEEN. Damon, come on, man! This is the coolest cartoon to come from Nippon. *As a new-comer to OC, I think it's a little premature for you to say I've never written about YUUSHA RAIDEEN! The cartoon was reviewed in the original OC#2, back in 1978! -DF/* The first RAIDEEN cartoon I saw was in 1975, on a local Japanese station

which was on Channel 22, every Sunday night at 6:00 P.M. There I was, ready to fade in the TV. RAIDEEN had it all. He was colorful, the music, the weapons ("God Go Gun!"), the monsters he fought. There was Mighty Gonda, Biira, Torasu, Maddone, Basutodon, Gatar, and Mammoth. Bet your freaking out how I can still remember all those names. I really loved this Japanimation, it's been about 20 years now, since I've seen one of these cartoons. I've tried everywhere, to see if I can find any videos of RAIDEEN, all Little Tokyo has to offer is ULTRAMAN, GIANT ROBO, GUYVER, KIKAIKER, and KAMEN RIDER. But I will never forget RAIDEEN. I've looked everywhere, Nippon Books, nothing. To this day I have never forgotten about RAIDEEN and I'm hoping one day I'll find that one special video *Finding RAIDEEN tapes isn't that hard, but does anybody have tapes of the ultra-rare subtitled episodes we Californians were treated to back before anyone had VCRs?-DF/* and also see OC do a special feature on RAIDEEN. "Fade In!" Paul Bainotti
Southern Calif.

I at first chided myself for even walking into a downtown news shop looking for anything interesting, I thought it was useless. But when I found a copy of ORIENTAL CINEMA I was rewarded. That issue focused mostly on Japanese stuff; and I have to admit, the only Japanese movies I've seen are those that take themselves overly-seriously that I've rented at Hollywood Video and Blockbuster, and those heckled on MST3K. So I sent for some of the back issues on HK movies, and found those to be great fun. In 1995 I got into HK flicks to the point of studying Chinese, listening to Cantopop *I've heard samples of this stuff, and quite frankly, I'd rather drink the hot-tub water from a gay bath house. -DF/* more than I listen to U.S. music, joining the Jackie Chan fan club, and, of course, watching well over 100 HK movies (many of which I don't even know names for because I couldn't read the English subtitle of the name, or none was given). Jackie Chan's comedy saved me from depressing winter weather, made more depressing by a romance that didn't work out and problems at work. It was just a crack into this world I didn't know existed.
Diane M. Zentner
Oregon

Just wanted to write and compliment you on another great edition of OC and congratulations to John Marshall and Barrie Evans for joining the ranks of we insulted OC writers. I guess it means something to get hate mail. And to those writing this stuff, lighten up. Since when have words ever caused physical harm to someone? And have you all forgotten what the words "humor" and "writing style" mean? I am one of those fat people Damon talks about all the time. I'm not offended, I think it's funny. Instead of being angry, I write for him. Do I detect some insecurities out there? If you really like yourself, who fucking cares what other people say? How can anyone take this stuff seriously? Do you really think anyone as fucked up sound-

ing as OC's writers would be anywhere other than an asylum if they really felt that way? / *Well put! -DF/* Get real, people!

John Emma
Japan, the Orient

Thank you for the copy of ORIENTAL CINEMA with my letter in it. I was a tad disappointed that you chose to cut out the post-1973 titles, but I'm sending William Wiggins of NINJA DRAGON FURY a heavily revised filmography anyway. I'm not convinced that OC is the best mag to cover U.S. martial arts movies, and to answer your question, Edison was the movie company run by Thomas Edison. I mistakenly thought that everybody would know that. THE FINAL PROBLEM, incidentally, was the famous short story where Sherlock Holmes supposedly died fighting Professor Moriarty, as to why "baritsu" was used in place of ju-jitsu, my wildest guess is perhaps Mr. Doyle chose to use a more exotic name because the real word was better known. Mr. Doyle decided Mr. Holmes didn't die after all, and brought him back for more tales.

I was wondering if Harry Cackeman *For those unfamiliar with the guy, see Mr. Harry's amusing letter in previous OC. -DF/* thinks that photos have eyes or feelings or something. I wonder if he gets upright over people who do woodpecker dances watching videos or the movies. He wrote a strange letter, that's for sure.
Charles Floyd Rhodes
Washington

I just finished the "Femme Fatales" issue of OC. Is it possible that #9 is my favorite from the Draculina incarnation of OC? I'd say it is. The many actresses from various Asian film genres were truly a joy to behold and reading about them was fun too (though my senses still haven't recovered from Naomi Morinaga's current career). This was definitely a fascinating issue. I'll leave it to others to determine whether my interest stems from being a "movie fan" or a "horny guy", heh heh.

Seriously, I'm glad all those idiots keep pestering you, if it leads to great issues like this. On second thought, maybe not. The very fact that Harry Cackeman even exists worries me. What is the problem with these weirdos that they feel compelled to slag you? Last time I checked, you didn't create any of the problems in the world that they seem intent on blaming you for. If I didn't know better, I'd swear you make these letters up just to entertain us. They are certainly the product of a deranged imagination. At least they're good for laughs.

Speaking of bad (ouch!) I just finished OWARI#2. *For the record, OWARI is Chris's new Asian film and/or Japanese superhero fanzine, you may purchase it from Christopher Elam, P.O. Box 129, Reeves, LA, 70658. Ask for prices, available issues, subscription rates, etc. Be sure to enclose a self-addressed-stamped-envelope to insure a speedy reply. -DF/* It's much improved over #1 in my unbiased opinion.
Sincerely,
Christopher Elam
Reeves, LA

GIGANTIC TITANS!

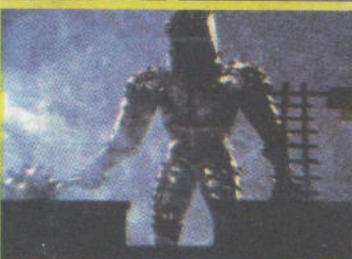
THE BIGGEST STARS OF ASIA!

Though comics (or "manga" as they're called by Japanese and by trendy Americans who suddenly think they too speak Japanese -- this week) were around in Japan since the 1930s, and ancient legends of dragons and demons (like Majin) date back to ancient times, the first oriental giant to appear on celluloid was of course, that most famous, beloved fire-breathing reptile Godzilla, who made his stomping debut in *GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS* (Toho; 1954) -- but more on the Big G later. Robots, both giant and not-so-giant, had been popular characters in Japan since WWII ended. In the 1950s & '60s, Japanese robots often started out as comic book characters, and the more popular ones became live action flicks during the 1950s, and then again in the 1960s as TV cartoon characters (that's "dimensionally challenged characters", to all you politically correct snobs).

Getting back to that not so-jolly green Godzilla, the king of all Asian giants, like his American counterparts (titanic titans in flicks like *THE GIANT CLAW*, *THE BEAST FROM 20 THOUSAND FATHOMS*, *THE GIANT GILA MONSTER*, *EARTH VS. THE SPIDER*, Britain's *THE GIANT BEHEMOTH*, etc.), the groundbreaking Godzilla film series was part of the "Atomic Age 1950s", an era which more-or-less invented the sci-fi film, kinda' sorta'. Godzilla was a smash hit, so Toho began cranking out additional movies, many of which were inter-related (many of these creatures would later battle each other or team up in later films), flicks like: *GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER*, *MOTHRA*, *RODAN*, and *ATRAGON*. But more on these giants later.

The original, Japanese dub of *GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS* is believed by many to be the second best Japanese film ever, the first being

Left column: MAJIN HUNTER MITSURUGI.
Right column: ULTRAMAN ZEAS,
RETURN OF GIANT MAJIN,
ZONE FIGHTER, GODZILLA VS. MEGALON,
CHANGEMAN and KING KONG ESCAPES.



魔人ハンター
ミツルギ



The ill-fated
ULTRAMAN
NEOS.

Akira Kurosawa's *THE SEVEN SAMURAI*. In fact, *GOJIRA* director Ishiro Honda was Akira Kurosawa's senior, at Toho's director chair. But Honda got drafted into WWII, while Kurosawa continued to direct movies. After WWII came to its tragic end, Ishiro Honda began directing again, and a few years later, came up with the inspiration for *GOJIRA*. According to Honda's memoirs, a fishing boat in March of 1954 mistakenly strayed into the waters near the Bikini Atoll atomic testing site, and the crew later found themselves having a strange illness (one of the guys died from it) upon returning to Japan. Panic overran Japan, and a recall of contaminated tuna was ordered. But the inspiration for *GOJIRA* goes deeper than that, since legends, fantasies & fears about massive destruction can be found in all old cultures, be it Japanese, German or Italian mythology. Primeval terrors such as this increased well with the advent of modern technology -- hence the "modern" legends of doom such as *GODZILLA*, and imitations such as *RODAN*, *VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE* and other monster films which came out years after the end of WWII.

Our fear of nuclear war has declined in more recent years, because we have new fears (crime, AIDS, hip-hop music, etc.), though to get the feel for the original Japanese giant monster films, 'tis best to remember the environment of the post-nuclear 1950s, where even in America paranoia existed, and "abnormal" types were suspected of being communists. So the U.S. had such atomic-giant movies as *THE BEGINNING OF THE END* (huge grasshoppers run amok), *THEM* (huge ants), *THE AMAZING COLOS-*

SAL MAN (an amazing, colossal man), its sequel *THE COLOSSAL BEAST* (the same guy, but with his skin torn off his face), *EARTH VS. THE SPIDER*, *THE DEADLY MANTIS* (no relation to the Chinese kung fu film of the same name) and *TARANTULA*. Though, to the best of my knowledge, none of these were destined to become "classics" (to date, are there fanzines which regularly cover such films?), unlike the Japanese counterparts, even if they get more than their share of criticism for supposed "cheapness". Why the Japanese titan movies became so much more prolific, successful & inspirational than the American ones is debatable. Skeptics & cocksuckers will no doubt say it's because the Japanese "cheapies" have more unintentional comedy, when in fact I suspect the real reason was because nobody was better equipped to make movies about nuclear devastation than the Japanese. With the scary memories of Nagasaki and Hiroshima still imbedded in the Japanese mind, it comes as no major surprise that post-atomic monster films like *GODZILLA/GOJIRA* had a certain atmosphere which made these films all the more memorable & provocative.

So in the early 1950s, to cash in on the public's fears about atomic bombs, Toho canceled the Japanese/Indonesian blockbuster *EIKO KAGE-NI* (aka "Behind the Glory") in favor of Tomoyuki Tanaka's *KAITEI-NIMAN MAIRU KARAKITA NO DAI KAIJU* ("The Monster From 20,000 Miles Under the Sea"; a title influenced by two American classics: *THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS* and *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA!*), later renamed *GOJIRA*, written by sci-fi writer Shigeru Kayama, and to be directed by Ishiro Honda, of course. The public's interest in this project was kept intact by a weekly, serialized radio-drama also called *GOJIRA*, from 7/17/54 to 9/25/54. So production on the live action, theatrical *GOJIRA* officially began on 7/5/54, already having had a head start, thanks to two months of pre-production out of the way. Filming was completed in 122 days.

Another popular form of moving picture which showcased huge characters was the TV cartoons of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Though diehard animation freaks may deny this, the influential robot cartoon *GIGANTOR* (aka *TETSUJIN 28*, which means "Iron Man 28") was indirectly influenced by *Godzilla*, as it was *Godzilla* who officially put Nipponese giantdom on the sci-fi map. But to say all of TV's B&W giants were animated is more stupid than asking O.J. Simpson, "Would you take a stab at marriage again?" One of the most wellknown of the early, live action monster programs was of course, *ULTRA Q* (Tsuburaya/TBS; 1965), which was more than inspired by the likes of *GODZILLA*, etc. But the "Huge Robot genre" quickly evolved into a strong category in its own right. Unlike *GIGANTOR*, not all of them were animated. *SPACE GIANTS* (P Productions; 1966) and *JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT* (Toei; 1968) were the start of something really big. In later years, giant robots would explode across TV in TV shows like *RED BARON*, *MAHA BARON*, *GANBARON* and

DAI TETSUJIN 17 (aka *BRAIN 17*). Though the likes of *RED BARON* no doubt had their followers, it's pretty obvious that the more famous giant robots of TV (in the 1970s and beyond; a new breed of action-packed, cartoon hero began, though still resembling older ancestors like the 1960s *GIGANTOR* series) were in fact cartoons in such shows as *MAZINGA Z*, *GREAT MAZINGA*, *YUUSHA RAIDEEN*, *GETTA ROBO*, *GETTA ROBO G*, *UFO DAI APOLON*, *UFO GRANDIZER*, *VOLTUS V*, *COMBATTLER V*, *FIGHTING GENERAL DAIMOS*, *DAIKENGO*, *GA KIN*, *GOZAUURA*, *DUNBINE*, *VOLTRON*, *MACKROSS*, *DUNBINE*, and of course, crappy American ripoffs like *GOBOTS* and *TRANSFORMERS*. As you all know, Japanese cartoons became big fun for hard-up con-geeks; uh, oops, I'm sorry, I'll try and be Politically Correct, let me rephrase that: Japanese anime became big fun for sexually-independent individuals. Almost exclusively the product of the Tokyo TV animation industry, animated characters like *Devilman* and the *Mazingers* were intended to be equally as successful as both TV shows and, of course merchandise like dolls, posters, books, T-shirts, etc. The first of these new cartoons was *MAZINGER Z* (Toei Animation; 1972), created by Go Nagai. *MAZINGER Z* made its debut on 1/3/72, and lasted for a massive 92 episodes until 1974. It was a huge success, spawning plenty of other cartoons about robots and giants like *DEVILMAN*.

Fire-breathing turtle *Gamera* made his debut in 1965, in Daiei's *GAMERA* (aka *GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE*). *GAMERA* was Daiei's second attempt at producing a flick about a huge beast on the loose. The first was 1962's *KUJIRA KAMI* ("The Whale God", though there's no English version), a B&W





ripoff of MOBEY DICK. The next step for Daiei's joining the cinematic world of giantdom was meant to be a thriller about giant rats called DAI GUNJU NEZURA, which was never completed. The use of real rats caused an epidemic of fleas on the set, so the project had to be scrapped. But what was Daiei to do with all the miniatures and other SPFX stuff they had created for the ill-fated DAI GUNJU NEZURA? Well, everybody knows that fleas aren't attracted to flying turtles made of rubber, so Gamera was born! Of any Daiei film series from the 1960s, beyond a doubt the most wellknown were the Gamera films. These presented Daiei's long overdue return to sci-fi (there had been earlier efforts like WARNING FROM SPACE and the "Tomei Ningen" flicks, but neither involved giant creatures), and to the best of my knowledge, the only Daiei genre to get plenty of airplay on American TV and be in plenty of American videostores.

Being a blatant Godzilla imitator, Gamera's films followed in Godzilla's footsteps more than closely: Once again, a prehistoric creature is revived by a nuclear bomb, and in the later films, the monster in question, be it Toho's Godzilla or Daiei's Gamera became a good guy, battling monsters infinitely more evil. In both cases, the films got pretty childish in later years, and it's possible that the movie studios were trying to compete with the whole "Ultraman savior" superhero genre which took Japanese TV by storm. But while Gamera succeeded in being even more infantile than the average Ultra TV show, Daiei presented some refreshing alternatives to the endless films about childish reptiles trying to be the new Ultraman (but more on the Ultra Brothers later): MAJIN MONSTER OF



TERROR (Daiei; 1966) and 1968's YOKAI DAISENZO ("The Big Ghost War") are period fantasies which concentrated heavily on actual, ancient Japanese legends. MAJIN MONSTER OF TERROR (like its sequels RETURN OF GIANT MAJIN and MAJIN STRIKES AGAIN) told the story of a large samurai statue which came to life to destroy evil warlords who terrorized the common folk (the films were loosely inspired by Germany's "Golem" flicks), and YOKAI DAISENZO concentrated on a big demon, who at the end, tangles with several smaller ghosts. YOKAI DAISENZO was too exotic and campy for release in America, and although it's not available in English, is quite an entertaining piece of work.

But Daiei wasn't the only company to make period films about giant monsters. There was Toho's THE THREE TREASURES, and of course, Toei's THE MAGIC SERPENT ("Kairyu Dai Kessen"; 1966), which dealt largely with ninjas and magical powers, but managed to toss in a giant bird, tarantula, frog and dragon, all of which had ridiculously familiar roars obviously rented from Toho's sound effect dept. Seen today, THE MAGIC SERPENT is still an amusing, well-rounded fantasy, but unlike the titanic titan flicks from Toho & Daiei, never seemed to get any sequels. However, the frog (or rather, its costume) made additional appearances in the Toei TV show KAMEN NO NINJA AKA KAGE ("Masked Ninja With a Red Shadow"; 1966). This childish fantasy series was full of cheap FX, giant monsters, impossible feats, and ninjas with more weapons & gadgets than Batman's utility belt. Seen today, it generally looks pretty stupid, but the show is important historically in that it was an evolutionary link in what would eventually become Toei's TV hero genre, something which, in later years would offer many a giant. One of the main stars of KAMEN NO NINJA AKA KAGE, little boy Yoshinobu Kaneko, also had a similar role in WATARI THE NINJA. Because of the international success of this movie WATARI (particularly in the Philippines), Toei created English dubbed movies, by piecing together episodes of the TV show, now dubbed into "WATARI" sequels! The kid looks basically the same in both WATARI and the unrelated TV series,

so it was no surprise when the series's movies came out as WATARI: NINJA BOY, WATARI THE CONQUEROR, WATARI & THE 7 MONSTERS, WATARI AND THE FANTASTICS, and at least three others. These English dubs were never shown in America, but a short compilation called NINJA SCOPE: THE MAGIC WORLD OF NINJAS is making the rounds in our bootlegging underground.

In the 1960s, Japan wasn't the only country intrigued with the idea of movies about enormous beasts. The Hong Kongese fantasy THE MONKEY (Shaw Brothers; 1967) featured the famous Monkey King (Yueh Hua) battling a huge dinosaur, and Korean offerings included 1967's WANG MA GUI ("King Monster"), and of course, DAI KOESU YONG-KARI, which made it to America as YONGARY, MONSTER FROM THE DEEP. Though THE MONKEY and YONGARY are entertaining little farces even today, Korean and Chinese giants didn't have a major role in movies in the years to follow, though both countries made some stupid KING KONG ripoffs in the 1970s: Korea offered the dismally cheap A.P.E., and HK cranked out GOLIATHON (aka MIGHTY PEKING MAN), a Shaw Brothers film starring Danny Lee (later of THE KILLER, etc.). I have also seen photos from a Chinese movie about dinosaurs and a giant snake, but have not been able to see this apparent imitation of KING KONG, MOTHRA and THE LOST WORLD (while I'm on the topic of Chinese gargantuas, a great many years later, giant creatures would appear in other HK flicks including PEACOCK KING and the CHINESE GHOST STORY trilogy).

Though the live-action, giant monster movies of Godzilla, Daiei's Gamera etc. continued to flourish on into the early 1970s, 1965's ULTRA Q created its own, immensely successful "Ultra Genre" (as mentioned before), thanks to superhero sequels like ULTRAMAN, ULTRASEVEN, and countless other Ultraman-inspired TV shows. Early in the '60's, the first hint of what would become ULTRAMAN can be traced back to some story called WOO. Exactly what it was I'm not sure, but much of ULTRA Q and ULTRAMAN were based on it. Whatever WOO (the name was also later re-used in ULTRAMAN, for an Abominable Snowman



サンバルカンロボ



バトルフィーバーJのロボ
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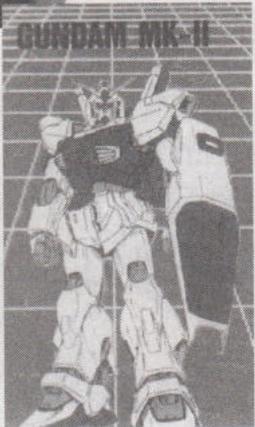
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GUNDAM MK-II



グレートファイブ



pronounced "Oo", or "Ew" in the English dub of episode #30) was, it laid down the groundwork for what would become ULTRA Q (Tsuburaya; 1965), the B&W series of half-hour salutes to Toho movies (RODAN, GORATH, VARAN, etc.). As such, this classic SF show was rather a "Japanese Dr. Who", or more likely, "THE OUTER LIMITS with continuing characters". For the second season, the concept of man-against-monster was carried a step further with ULTRAMAN, thanks to the addition of full color, and a futuristic superhero. ULTRAMAN is a sequel to ULTRA Q in every way, a few monsters appear in both programs, and the very beginning of all the Japanese ULTRAMAN episodes even read "Ultra Q", before it abruptly changes to "Ultraman"! These Ultra Brothers became regular icons of Japanese pop culture for decades to come. Only a few of them ever got released to America, but in Asia, the Ultramen are a big thing (don't pardon the pun). The Ultra Brothers are world famous figures, one of the hottest marketing gimmicks since Mickey Mouse; Ultraman dolls, shirts, mugs, books, posters, noodles, candy and underwear are more widespread than beer-bellies in a biker bar. Why are

these heroic brothers so universally loved? Well, what's not to like about silver & red giants who so generously protect Earth (and Japan in particular) from alien invaders and giant monsters of the post-Godzilla variety? Godzilla-maker Eiji Tsuburaya supplied costumes & other FX for the first few Ultra programs, and after he got some permanent shut-eye, his replacements (Tohru Narita, Noriوشي Ikeya, the late Tetsuo Kinjo, Koichi Takano, Kazuho Mitsuta, Toei's Nobuo Yajima, etc.) and sons kept that Ultra tradition going! Additional Ultra programs included ULTRASEVEN, RETURN OF ULTRAMAN, ULTRAMAN ACE, ULTRAMAN LEO, ULTRAMAN TARO, ULTRAMAN JOE, ULTRAMAN 80, Australia's lame ULTRAMAN: TOWARD THE FUTURE, and unfortunately, the pathetic American "adaptation" ULTRAMAN POWERED: THE ULTIMATE HERO.

Needless to say, the immensely popular Ultra Genre paved the way for countless imitations; weekly, on TV, Japanese audiences were treated to plenty of giant monsters and superheroes in the 1970s. Classic, post-Ultra TV shows (called "ripoffs" by dumbshits and non-fans, though each series has its own unique charm) include mega fun programs like: MIRRORMAN, JUMBORG ACE, SILVER KAMEN, IRON KING, SPECTREMAN, THUNDER MASK, FIRE MAN, and of course, the infamous ZONE FIGHTER, aka RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE. As mentioned many times before, ZONE FIGHTER was unique in that it combined the post-ULTRAMAN hero genre with the Toho Kaiju Eiga genre, because of appearances by Godzilla and two other movie monsters. Though, like the actual, legitimate Ultra programs themselves, these wannabies had their share of silly rubber monsters, there was enough action, miniatures, explosions, colorful characters, and super-impositions to make each and every one of them worthwhile.

Toward the late 1970s, there was a resurgence of giant robot action, the likes of which hadn't been so popular since the old days of GIGANTOR and MAZINGA. The "new wave" in Japanese robotdom could be spotted a mile away in TV shows like DAI TETSUJIN 17 and the Japanese SPIDERMAN series. This new generation of robots seemed to take a clue from Toho's RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE (aka ZONE THE METEOR MAN, HUMAN COMET ZONE, ZONE FIGHTER, and so on, and so on), in that it too dealt with a squad

of human-sized heroes who were aided by a humongous giant-- but more specifically, this new genre, called "Super Sentai", would feature giant robots (Zone Fighter, despite the metallic look, was an alien, not a robot) as the official saviors who came in at the end when all else failed, and the human-sized heroes needed emergency back-up. Looking back on it, the Super Sentai genre seemed to be a continuation of the old HIMITSU SENTAI GO-RANGERS (Toei; 1974) style of series, but with the added benefit of a giant robot not unlike a "Transformer", but more like the one in DAI TETSUJIN 17. Of course, the Super Sentai genre had plenty more to offer than just giant robots; perhaps its five team squad of human-sized heroes are what really made these programs such hits, that and the abundance of kicks, flips, punches, air vehicles, explosions, swordplay, and guns a poppin' like cheerleader cherries on prom night. The Super Sentai legacy got off on a great start, with action packed programs like SUN VULCAN and GOGGLE V, but an absolute lack of originality, and decline in action quality made later programs (anything after 1985) rather disappointing. I don't watch them any more-- but then, I don't watch them any less, either.

In 1979, a single animated series turned into one of the huggest franchises in Japanese cartoon history. The program is Sunrise's (then known as Nippon Sunrise) KICO SENSHI GUNDAM, known to English language audiences as MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM. The design of the original Gundam revolutionized the genre, though the giant robots themselves were nothing more than weapons piloted by the heroes and villains of the series. Gone were the good old days when giant robots fought monsters and aliens. The emphasis in GUNDAM was on war and the enemies were fellow humans. Political intrigue, character development, questions about mankind's place in the universe, and the dawning of a new race of humans were what the original GUNDAM was all about. According to Paul Haberman of Henshin Video, the quasi villain (Sha Aznable) became the most popular character in Japanese animation history.

TV shows included MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM (1979), MOBILE SUIT ZETA GUNDAM (1985), MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM ZZ (1986), MOBILE SUIT VICTORY GUNDAM (1993), MOBILE FIGHTER LEGEND G GUNDAM (1994), NEW MOBILE



1980) was an enjoyable attempt to keep the huge monster battles going. Also out in 1980 was the crappy GAMERA, SUPER MONSTER, a pathetic combination of a giant (the turtle Gamera) who aided a squad of (you guessed it!) human sized super heroes. But a limited budget, combined with an extremely limited amount of entertainment value, made this one fail miserably, it was nothing compared to the ULTRAMAN 80 series and failed to have even five percent of the impact enjoyed by the ever-popular Super Sentai heroes. So like Godzilla, Gamera was once again a hasbeen monster. Toei's Super Sentais seemed to offer the only giant-against-giant action in the early 1980s, though 1985 offered a slight glimmer of hope, in the form of two distinctly different productions:



GODZILLA 1985. The music is weaker than a muzak version of "Muskrat Love", and though this film is dull and only worthwhile for its good special effects, it did bring Godzilla back to the cinema, after a ten year absence. This doesn't make me want to watch it though, I would rather sponge-bathe a leper.



MONSTER HUNTER JUSPION. Toei's unique TV series which was basically an extension of their Uchu Keiji ("Space Sheriff") legacy, featuring a giant robot who looked like a combination of typical Transformers/Super Sentai stuff and perhaps a pinch of Ultraman influence. But, as with ZONE FIGHTER, GAMERA SUPER MONSTER and the never-defeated Super Sentai crap, JUSPION also dealt largely with the adventures of a human-sized hero (Hiroshi Watari of SHARIVAN), who only requested the aid of his giant helper when absolutely nec-



Hiroshi Miyauchi, actress/model Tamao and other characters from OH-RANGER.



essary. Also worthy of mention is WORLD NINJA WAR: JIRAIYA (Toei; 1987), which started out as your typical sword-wielding, human-sized hero, in a sometimes fast-paced, sometimes stupid tale of rival ninjas with an assortment of far-fetched, outlandish powers. But later episodes occasionally involved the humongous robot "Jiraishin", a mechanical samurai who had more than a slight resemblance to YUUSHA RAIDEEN. Regardless, the late 1980s proved that giants were back in force, not only did the Super Sentais and various cartoons continue to thrive, but the "new age" in Godzilladom was about to ex-

WAR CHRONICALS: GUNDAM WING (1995) and MOBILE NEW CENTURY: GUNDAM X (1996). Its legacy still continues today in sequel series, Original Animation Videos, comics, and movies. Starting in 1980, it seemed that oldtimers like Gamera and Ultraman had become hasbeens much like Godzilla, who's last film was in 1975. While the Super Sentai robots kicked serious ass on Japanese TV for years to come, other giant creatures became less popular, though ULTRAMAN 80 (Tsuburaya;



plode, thanks to GODZILLA 1985, and getting a major boost from the successful GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE (Toho; 1989) flick.

Meanwhile, the Koreans, who seemed to have given up on giant creatures after the failings of YONGARY and A*P*E*, gave it another try in the early 1980s. The UREME ("Thunderhawk") comedies feature giant robots, animated ones set against an otherwise live action setting. These cheap little farces may be incredibly stupid, but were successful enough to spawn an eight movie film series. Its star, comedian Shim Hyung Rei, would later go on to work on other intriguing, Korean sci-fi adventures, at least two of which (SPARKMAN and TYRANNO'S CLAW) involved giants.

In the 1990s, the two most successful genres to regularly feature giants are of course, Japanese TV hero programs. Unfortunately, both genres are stale, predictable and cliché-ridden, the good old days of ZONE FIGHTER and IRON KING are well behind us. For what it's worth, the two 1990s genres are:

1. A new series of animated robot shows began to flood Japanese TV, starting in 1990. Called "the Brave Robot Heroes", each program is a new update of the same old basic concept of "Transformers"-like robots protecting the Earth from monstrous villains, but each show has its own story to tell, and features different character designs and crew. According to Japanese superhero buff and video collector Paul Haberman, only the producers and mechanical designs remain the same from show to show. It will be interesting to see how long this trend continues.

2. The ever prominent "Super Sentai" legacy. For a year or two, it looked like this genre would conquer the whole world when Saban marketed a couple of these TV shows internationally under the now infamous, notorious name of MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS. Though the fad has finally (maybe there's a god after all!) died somewhat, the Super Sentai program is still going strong in Japan, the audience these programs were originally intended for. This year's Sentai is called CARANGER (literally "Car Rangers"). In human form, these Car Rangers seem to work at some sort of car rental agency. Their secret weapons are all based on car parts (who says Toei is running out of ideas!?) and they drive mini-formula racers. There are an assortment of giants, including the obligatory huge robots, but also a couple beauties connected to the chest of the female alien leader. She's a real cock-stopper, and this femme fatale seems to spend a lot of her time in a STAR WARS-like Cantina set. She's part of yet another alien race of space villains, rather a cross between Hellraiser and Robocop in appearance.

Though even Godzilla has continued his

successful comeback in the 1990s, there is still one name that continually tries to achieve success and reincarnations. We're talking about Ultraman, of course, but if lame programs like ULTRAMAN: TOWARD THE FUTURE and ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO are any indication, the genre may be better left dead. Recently, there have been enjoyable, shot-on-video Ultraseven movies in Japan, but an eight minute pilot for a planned TV show called ULTRAMAN NEOS proved to be as profitable as a fish-tank made of wood; ULTRAMAN NEOS failed to attract any networks or investors, so the proposed series was canceled. Instead came a strange new movie called ULTRAMAN: WONDERFUL WORLD which consists of three separate, 30-minute segments:

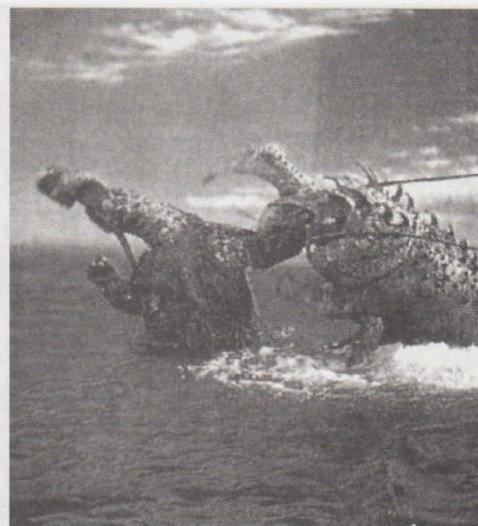
1. A bastardization of the final episode of ULTRAMAN, or rather, episode "40". From what I've heard, almost the whole thing consists of stock footage from the original series. The story starts after Arashi uses his gun to wipe out Zeton, but the existence of Zofy is neglected, therefor eliminating any actual continuity with the original show. Ultraman/Hayata revives (again, without Zofy's help, though it was made clear in the actual show that the only one who could help Ultraman was a fellow being from Nebula M78!) shortly before several monsters revive (Dodongo, Gehora, Kira, Gango and Woo) to cause more destruction, Ultraman somehow manages to multiply himself into several Ultramen to fight the stock footage, I mean, monsters. Among these battles, Ultraman takes on Zeton again, and wins. If you'll remember, in the original series, during his duel with Zeton, Ultraman was trapped-- but then, aren't we all?

2. ULTRAMAN COMPANY. Animated bullshit along the lines of all that "Super Deformed" nonsense. Better fun to be had being on the receiving end of a blowjob from a grizzly bear.

3. ULTRAMAN ZEARTH, finally an entertaining idea! A cool-looking new Ultra Brother goes into action, and available photos look fun, even if the segment itself is satirical and/or comedic.

The story has something to do with a strange crisis: The world's gold supply is melting. The current Science Patrol-clone, MYDO (Mysterious Yonder Defense Organization) have a secret headquarters located beneath a gas station, of all things. One of the members, Katsuto Asashi is Ultraman Zearth in human form. Meanwhile, Kotenpope (a gold-eating giant) strikes, sent by an alien villain called Benzen. Okay, so you know who the hero is, and who the villains are; so unless you're an absolute moron, you can guess what happens.

But of any humongous titan to make a



major comeback, it would have to be Gamera, who had a rematch with longtime enemy Gaos in the smash hit GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE (Daiei; 1995). The film was good enough so that a sequel is in the works tentatively titled something like GAMERA 2: ADVENT OF LEGION. The beast Legion (pronounced "Re-ji-own", me thinks) is a marvelously designed bug who guarantees the flick (due out later this year) should be fun. Legion comes to Earth by being part of a crashed meteor, and the name Legion is based on a swarm of insects from some biblical story.

As for Toho giants, next up is a new Mothra (without Godzilla) movie, which is fine, if you're a Mothra fan (personally, I would rather see Godzilla clobber another monster). In this new flick (tentatively called MOTHRA), the huge Moth will battle Ghidrah, without Godzilla's help! It's also rumored that Ghidrah himself will have his own solo flick, apparently based on a Nostradamus prophecy that the world will be destroyed by a dragon in 1999 (now come on, it was a lucky guess that "Hister" would lead a holocaust with a 'crooked cross', but a dragon is a little far-fetched). So with Mothra and Ghidrah still in the spotlight, what's up with Godzilla himself?! Well, every now and then we hear that Tri-star is still planning to make the first American Godzilla movie, but the next Japanese Godzilla movie won't come out until the year 2000, and it will deal with the Baby Godzilla seen in more recent films, but he'll be all grown up of course-- you can't keep a good man down.

So one thing is for sure: In one form or another, Godzilla will be with us for a while to come. Ditto Gamera, the Ultramen, the Sentai robots, and the various giants of Japanese anime. What follows are reviews of as many movies and TV shows as we had time for. Don't expect an absolutely complete filmography though, after all, we all have busy lives and can't cater to your every whim.



TITANIC TITANS & GIGANTIC GIANTS: A SEMI-COMPLETE FILMOGRAPHY

AGON, THE ATOMIC DRAGON- A B&W, 1960s show from P Productions. Similar to **ULTRA Q**, but borrowing more heavily from Toho's many giant-monster-on-the-loose films. Agon is another mutant dinosaur resurrected by radiation who terrorizes Japan, in a series of well written, logically paced half-hour episodes not unlike the first **Godzilla** film (if **GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS** were chopped into 30-minute segments, it would look a lot like this). Agon doesn't seem inherently evil, however; when shown, he spends more time just standing around than stomping on buildings. He's quieter and less hyper than the average movie monster. Agon's scenes are decent, but at least in the episodes I saw, too much screentime was given to the human characters (i.e. a reporter called Goro). With plenty of scientists, reporters and a couple little kids all speaking Japanese, many episodes excel in tedium, making them about as fun as sponge-bathing a leper. But the special effects, though crude at times, are decent. I've yet to see a Japanese film or series without fairly good miniatures. **1/2 -Damon Foster

AIZENBORG (KYORYU SENSO AIZENBOGU, aka "Dinosaur War: Aizenborg")- Part live action, part animated sci-fi series from Noboru Tsuburaya. The portions I saw were fun yet stupid, but later episodes involved a superhero I've not yet seen. The show is an unintentional (?) comedy, and kept me thoroughly amused!

It consists of 38 episodes, lasting from 10/77/77 to 6/30/78. Main Writer: Keiichi Abe, Main Dir.: Kanya Otsuka, Music: Toshiaki Tsushima. -Damon Foster ***

AKUMA KUN (1966)- The weirdest of the weird. And I loved it! Where else can you

see a mummy grow gigantic for absolutely no reason for only one scene and not have it explained? Nothing seems to make much sense (I'm not sure a translation would make a difference) but it makes for cool, hilarious fun. Plus, it was neat to see Akijo Ito in something other than **JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT**. **** -Jeff Goodhartz

ALBEGAS (1983; aka "Light Speed Albegas")- Three robots- Alpha, Beta & Gamma, combine into the mighty Albegas to defend Earth from Derigner Invaders in this fast-paced, 45-episode cartoon series from Toei Animation. -Paul Haberman **1/2

ASTRO GANGA (Toei; 1972)- Along with **MAZINGA Z**, one of the earliest color giant robot cartoon series (26 episodes). Young boy controls a mighty robot hero against alien invaders. -Paul Haberman **

ATRAGON (1963)- Though not all of the miniatures in this Toho flick are entirely convincing and the sea serpent Manda (the only giant creature in **ATRAGON**) looks like a rubber snake dangling from a string, **ATRAGON** is an enjoyable story of the subterranean humans at the lost continent of Mu, so I'll call them "Mumans". Despite their advanced undersea technology, they still carry spears and dress like their Egyptian/Polynesian ancestors. This makes destroying them easy (did I forget to mention the entire Mu population is evil?) when the crew of Atragon (a flying submarine) sprays 'freeze-gas' all over them. Slow-paced, talky at times, but not actually dull-- it's consistently entertaining. Features: Tadao Takashima, Yoko Fujiyama, Yu Fujiki, Kenji Sawara, Akemi Kita, Tetsuko Kobayashi, Akira Ifukube's music, Eiji Tsuburaya's spe-

cial effects, Ishiro Honda's directing, etc. *** -Damon Foster

ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS- Chopped up version of 1969's **GAMERA VS. GUIRON** ("Gamera Tai Dai Akuju Giron"). Childish beyond belief, about two annoying twerps who voyage into space, dodge braineaters and see Gamera take on knife-headed monster Guiron. This stupid (yet entertaining, I must admit!) movie is made all the more intolerable knowing they chopped out the few "gory" scenes. A Daiei Prod., Produced by Hidemasa Nagata, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, Starring: Nobuhiro Kazima. ** -Damon Foster

ATTACK OF THE SUPER MONSTERS- I can not be entertained by this compilation of **AIZENBORG** episodes. Even the camp elements get tiresome before the film is a quarter over. Everything is handled ineptly, the FX, the dubbing, the animation, everything. And one of my biggest complaints is that "Jim and Jem Starbuck" have to join together to become a super being to defeat the hammy dinosaurs; however, they don't do a damn thing! All they do is pilot this Atragon-looking ship that does all the work. Why don't they just have the ship transform (or better yet, just leave it permanently in its ass-kicking stage) and save all the energy used to create a hermaphrodite pilot? The only thing worth watching this for are a few snippets from some Ultra series, but if you blink you'll miss them. /You sure we saw the same film? The **ATTACK OF THE SUPER MONSTERS** that I reviewed a couple issues ago was all Tsuburaya footage, both the animated and live action segments. -DF/ "Humans are scum! Death to humans! Kill the vermin!" Good possible

sound bites for an answering machine. Other than that, I'm out. Producers: Tsuburaya Productions, 38 episodes (10/7/77 thru 6/30/78), Creator: Noboru Tsuburaya, Writers: Keiichi Abe, Hiroyasu Yamamura, Kazuo Takagiwa, Shigemitsu Taguchi, Bunzo Wakatsuki, Dir.: Kazuo Mitsuta, Jun Oki, Starring: Toshiaki Tsushima.
-Michael Keller

BALDIOS (Asahi Productions; 1980)- 31 episode cartoon, basically giant robot series with an environmental theme. Full title: "Space Warrior Baldios". -Paul Haberman **1/2

BARRATAK (31 episodes/Toei; 1977)- This animated series (full title: "Superman Task Force Barratak") features a different type of super maneuverable robot; five super powered individuals stand against the Shaizock aliens, in defense of Earth. -Paul Haberman **

BATTLE FEVER J (1979)- Not even the acting & fighting of JACster Kenji Ohba can save this simpleminded, sometimes stupid series. This is the first live action Sentai to offer a giant robot. A Toei production, Creator: Saburo Yatsude, Main Writer: Susumu Takahisa, Dir.: Koichi Takemoto, Music: Chumei Watanabe, 52 epi., lasting from 2/3/79 to 1/26/80. -Damon Foster **

BIOMAN- ("SHODENSHI BAYOMAN", aka "Super Electron Bioman")- The FX of this live action Toei series are flawless, and the plots are logical (for once) in this 51-epi. program. However, the quality of martial arts stuntwork is inferior to that in the previous three Sentai TV shows. The action had reached its peak in GOGGLE V, so starting with BIOMAN, it's all downhill. However, the scenes of giant robots are the most rationally scripted giant battles in Sentai history. Broadcast on TV Asahi (2/4/84-1/26/85), Main Dir.: Nagafumi Hori, Music: Tachimi Yano, Starring: Ryusuke Sakamoto, Yuki Yajima, Yukari Oshima. -Damon Foster ****

BLOCKER ARMY IV MACHINE BLASTER (1976/38 episodes; Nippon Anime)- Tenhei Asuka and his three friends battle the un-

derground dwelling Moguru with the help of four powerful robots in this Japanese cartoon. -Paul Haberman **

BLUE COMET SPT LAYZNER (1986; 38 episodes)- Another high quality robot cartoon from the creators of GUNDAM. -Paul Haberman ***

BORN FREE (1976-'77?)- I've never seen a complete episode of this one, only clips and the wretched English adaptation, RETURN OF THE DINOSAURS. The original TV show must be better, right? The premise: An expedition uses their post-ULTRAMAN vehicles to explore a dinosaur-populated area. The catch is that the humans are cartoons, while the vehicles and dinos are live-action (models and stop-motion effects). Tentative rating is one star. * -Christopher Elam

BRAIN 17- While this English adaptation of GIANT- er, JOHNNY SOK- er, that is, I mean DAITETSUJIN 17 ("Giant Iron Man 17") makes no real sense, it sure is a lot of fun. The kid from KIKAIDA stars and sort of has control of Robot 17. The dubbing borders on the insane. But still, Robot 17 looks better than Power Rangers robots. Creators: Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama, Writers: Shozo Uehara, Masaru Igami, Taku Ezure, Dir.: Minoru Yamada, Kan Wakabayashi, Issaku Uchida, Music: Michiaki Watanabe, Starring: Masahiro Kamiya.*** -David McRobie

CAPTAIN ULTRA- From 1968 came Toei's first live action, sci-fi TV series. I've seen enough episodes to safely say this is one cute show, despite sets & creatures which look like rejects from LOST IN SPACE (but thankfully, CAPTAIN ULTRA never stooped quite so low as to hire common circus performers to play villains). Despite the high camp & cheesy miniatures, charismatic star Hirohisa Nakata manages to maintain a straight face throughout, playing the raygun toting, sword wielding Captain Ultra, a space soldier dedicated to protecting the world from aliens called "Bandel Seijin". They look like retarded Mushroom People, and some of their spaceships resemble common umbrellas, but unintended humor aside, CAPTAIN ULTRA is an exciting, 26-part outerspace fantasy/ad-



GODZILLA
(aka Gojira, Gigantis, the Big G, etc.)
Height: 50 Meters
Weight: 200 Tons

August Ragone says that there's been a little debate as to how this creature's name, Gojira, came about. It was partially based on "Gorilla-Whale" since "Kujira" is the Japanese word for 'whale'. But this incarnation of the word "Gojira" was actually a nickname of some actor, and the name existed before production began on the original GOJIRA (Toho; 1954)! Supposedly, it's believed that the actor, Kokuden Kodo (who played the Ainu villain in HALF HUMAN, and the old man on Odo Island in GOJIRA) is the one nicknamed "Gojira", and that the giant monster in the film GOJIRA/GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS was named after the actor! But also, the Japanese staff (Eiji Tsuburaya and the boys) found three separate kanji characters for "Gojira", which fit what kind of a monster it is, each having a different definition of what Gojira can literally mean. Otherwise, all of you should pretty much know Godzilla's life story by now: Originally called a "Gojirasaurus" in the Jurassic Age, he hibernated for millions of years until a nuclear bomb woke him up and mutated him into a huge monster that battled tanks & artillery, he stomped on a lot of buildings, fathered a son or two, and dealt with numerous monsters & superheroes. Filmography:

GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS, GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER, KING KONG VS. GODZILLA, GODZILLA VS. THE THING, GHIDRAH, THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER, MONSTER ZERO, GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER, SON OF GODZILLA, DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, GODZILLA'S REVENGE, GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER, GODZILLA VS. GIGAN, GODZILLA VS. MEGALON, GODZILLA VS. THE COSMIC MONSTER, TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA, THE GODZILLA POWER HOUR (cartoon), GODZILLA 1985, GODZILLAND (cartoon), GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE, GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORA, GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA, GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA, GODZILLA VS. SPACE GODZILLA, & GODZILLA VS. DESTROYER.



Baltan
[aka "Alien Baltan", "Barutan Seijin", "Baltanian"]
Height: 50 Meters
Weight: 200 Tons

They had to search through space, for a new home, because their home planet, Baltan was destroyed by mad scientists (of their own species), though the American version of ULTRAMAN never reveals this. Also neglected in the English dub is that the reason they couldn't colonize Mars is because the planet has some sort of element consisting of an abundance of minerals called Spacium, which is harmful to these weird "Space ninja-lobster" critters. Fortunately for us Earthlings, Spacium also happens to be the power in Ultraman's ray, making the benevolent silver giant their mortal enemy. The Baltans have battled the Ultra Brothers in a number of programs, and, unfortunately, the "Super Deformed" (overweight, friendly, 'cute' versions of monsters resembling Charlie Brown-style characters) cartoons like MONSTER GANG, ULTRAMAN KIDS, and MONSTER COMPANY. Baltan filmography: ULTRAMAN (1966), ULTRA FIGHT (1970), RETURN OF ULTRAMAN (1972), ULTRAMAN JOE (1979), ULTRAMAN 80 (1980), ANDRO MELOS (1981) ["Mecha Baltan"], and ULTRAMAN POWERED (1993).



RODAN

[original Japanese name: "Radon", accidentally pronounced "Raydin" in the U.S.A. print of TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA]
Height: 50 Meters
Weight: 150 Tons

This flying reptile was closely related to the teronodon (a dinosaur bird), and that's partly why the creature's original Japanese name 'Radon' was based on (Radon is derived from the Japanese pronunciation of teronodon). In the first movie (RODAN), the mountain where Rodan supposedly died is called something else in the English version, but in Japanese, it's an actual volcano called Mt. Eiso, and not coincidentally, it's the very same volcano that Rodan comes out of in GHIDRAH THE THREE HEADED MONSTER. At least in the American version of GHIDRAH, Mt. Eiso (also spelled "Mt. Aso") is identified cor-



venture full of spaceship dogfights, giant monsters, and last and certainly not least, action! Isao Tomita's theme is catchy, and really started to grow on me after a while. NTV (4/12/67 to 9/24/67), Creator: Michio Tozoku, Writer: Susumu Takahisa. ***1/2-Damon Foster

CAR RANGER- The 1996, currently airing Sentai in Japan. This show wasn't readily available for review at the time of this writing, fortunately. Maybe some other time, if I end up that desperate for material to write about. -Damon Foster

CHANGEMAN (DENGEKI SENTAI CHIENJIMAN, which means "Blitzkrieg Task Force Changeman", also translated "Electric Shock Task Force Changeman")- Not bad, but worse than the previous live action Sentai, BIOMAN. This is where the stagnation really starts to set in. Although the action staging isn't as good as BIOMAN's, the FX are an improvement. As always, it's five heroes aided by their giant robot. Toei, TV Asahi (55 epi., 2/2/85-2/22/86), Music: Tachimi Yano, Starring: Haruki Hamada. -Damon Foster ***

COMBATTLER V- 54 episodes of Toei animation (aka "Super Electron Robo Combattler V"), about Combattler V, a good robot who battles not-so-good robots like General Garuda. The obligatory, post-GATCHAMAN team of human pilot heroes consists of Hyoma, Daisaku, Juzo, Kosuke and Chizuru. Though I don't recall the show reaching America, some dolls did, there was a small, die-cast metal Combattler V "Shogun Warriors" (remember them pre-Transformers dudes?) available at Toys R Us discount aisles as late as 1978. From what little I bothered to see of this cartoon, it seemed okay, better than any of that SAILOR MOON crap, or current Japanese anime, at any rate. ** -Damon Foster

DA*GARN- Other than its full title translating into English as "Legendary Hero Da*Garn", and that it's a 1992 Sunrise cartoon, I don't know jack-shit about this series. -Damon Foster

DAGORA THE SPACE MONSTER- Early 1960s crime drama from Toho, and the monster's

(or rather, the flying, ghostly jellyfish) name is actually "Dogora". Perhaps too talky for some, but entertaining performances by Robert Dunham, Eisei Amamoto and the beautiful Akiko Wakabayashi make it worth watching. It's probably the most realistic of Japan's giant monster movies. Special Effects: Eiji Tsuburaya, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Music: Akira Ifukube. *** -Damon Foster

DAGUON- A currently running, 1996 Sunrise cartoon, part of the Brave Robot Heroes genre. Full title: "Brave Rescue Daguon". I haven't seen it, but Paul Haberman gave it two and a half stars, so I'll stake my reputation on his taste. -Damon Foster **1/2

DAIGORO VS. GOLIATH (Tsuburaya; 1972)- Incredibly goofy kiddie movie with monsters. It's dialogue-heavy with no available English translation, which seriously hampers my ability to enjoy the antics. I'm not sure I'd like this crazy yarn about a constipated (?) monster anyway, but I guess I'll never know. ** -Christopher Elam

A SECOND OPINION:

DAIGORO VS. GOLIATH ["Daigoro Tai Goriasu"]- Strange tale of a young monster learning how to beat another monster. Too bad they didn't include several more monster fights in this movie, as those are the only exciting parts. Still, they are giant monsters. Producers: Tsuburaya Productions. **1/2 -David McRobie

DAIKENGO, THE GUARDIAN OF SPACE- Back in 1978, Toei sure seemed serious about cartoon robots! I haven't seen this one, so, I won't give it a rating. But then again, the old saying, "If you've seen one, you've seen 'em all" applies to Japanimated robots in a big way. So just interchange titles like COMBATTLER V, VOLTUS 5, FIGHTING GENERAL DAIMOS and VOLTRON, and basically you get DAIKENGO. Consisting of 26 half hour episodes, it's the story of Ryger, who control the guardian space robot, Daikengo. Woop-dee-doo. * -Damon Foster

DAIOJA- Prince Mito of the Edon Empire and his two vassals travel from planet to planet to investigate corruption in this 50 episode, 1981 robot cartoon from Sunrise. -Paul Haberman **1/2

DAI RANGER (full title: "GOSEI SENTAI DAIRENJYA", which means "Five Star Task Force: Great Ranger")- An exemplary example of latter day Super Sentai. Five youths are recruited to wage war with the diabolical Goma Clan. They become "Gosei Sentai Dai Ranger" (the program's full Japanese title), and use some of the obligatory giant robots (chiefly the unbelievably cool Daireno) to defeat Goma's monsters. An intricate storyline, good drama & action make this a winner. A Toei Production, Consisting of 50 episodes from 2/19/93 thru 2/11/94 Broadcast on TV Asahi, Creator: Saburo Hatte, Writers: Sho Sugimura, Kunio Fujii & Susumu Takahisa, Dir.: Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Katsuya Watanabe & Taro Sakamoto, Music: Eiji Kawamura, Starring: Ke'ichi Wada, Tatsuya Nomi, Ei Hamura, Natsuki Takahashi, Hisashi Sakai, Keisuke Tsuchiya, Tomohisa Naruse. ***1/2 -Christopher Elam

DAI RUGGER XV (full title: "Armored Squadron Dairugger XV")- In the year 2025, the Rugger Team is sent to explore space. They encounter the hostile Galviston Empire. This anime features the first (and only) giant robot to combine from 15 separate vehicles. Shown in the U.S. as part of the VOLTRON: DEFENDER OF THE UNIVERSE package. 1985, 52 episodes, Toei. -Paul Haberman **1/2

DAITAN 3 (1978; Sunrise; 40 episodes)- This cartoon (full title: "Steel Man Daitan 3") mix of parody and action was popular with fans. Hero Banjo Haran challenges the evil Mechanoids and their plot to turn all humanity into their livestock. -Paul Haberman **

DAI TETSUJIN 17 (aka "Giant Iron Man 17"; 1977)- The series from which the seriously brain-damaged movie BRAIN 17 was edited. The story's the same: A young boy controls a giant robot and takes on a sinister organization of meanies. Some of the robot designs are downright weird and the show itself is decent entertainment, though no classic. It's just an obvious ripoff of JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT and GIGANTOR, and everybody knows it. I prefer the dubbed version for its comedy value, but the entire series is much more flashy & logical. Creators: Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama, Writers: Shozo Uehara, Masaru Igami, Taku Ezure, Dir.: Minoru Yamada, Kan Wakabayashi, Issaku Uchida, Music: Michiaki

Watanabe, Starring: Masahiro Kamiya, Tadao Nakamaru, Wolf Osuki, Akihiko Hirata, Akira Yamaguchi, Takeshi Haraguchi. **1/2 -Christopher Elam

DALTANIAS (Sunrise; 1979)- Human-type, Lion-type, and Plane-type mecha combine into Daltanias in this 47-part Japanese cartoon ("Future Robo Daltanias"). Daltanias is Earth's last hope in defeating the Zelu Invaders. -Paul Haberman **

DANCOUGA- Actually called "Super Beast Machine God Dancouga", this 38 episode cartoon (Asahi; 1985) is about four members who comprise the Jyusenki Tai-A team of specially trained individuals who power their animal mecha by psychic energy. Earthling Shapiro Keats, who feels unappreciated by the Earth military forces, defects to the attacking Zorbados Empire forces. This proves to be one of the show's most important plot points, since his lover, Sara, is part of the Jyusenki Tai. Also, this series is unique in that the four animal mecha don't combine into Dancouga for the first time until halfway through the series. An excellent mix of action, great characters, kicking music, and all around entertainment value. The series ended on a cliffhanger and was concluded in the Original Animation Video REQUIEM FOR VICTIMS. This was followed by GOD BLESS DANCOUGA and the four-part BLAZING EPILOGUE. -Paul Haberman ****

DANGARD ACE- Another Toei robot cartoon (full name: "Planet Robo Danguard Ace"; 56 episodes) from 1977. I wasn't especially impressed by the English dubbed version (released as a "Force Five" package around 1980), they called the lead hero "Winstar", which sounds a little too much like "Wildstar" of STARBLAZERS. Especially embarrassing is the childish theme song, though sung by Isao Sasaki. When translated into English, these lyrics go, "Dan Dan Dan, Dan Dan, Dan Dan Dan, Dan Dan- Dan-gard Ace! I like you, yes I do! Oh, Danguard Ace!" *1/2 -Damon Foster

DEMON CHANGING KING GRANZORT (1989/41 episodes; Sunrise)- From the makers of WATARU comes another mystical giant robot series with comedic overtones. An Original Animation Video (OVA) was also released. -Paul Haberman **1/2

rectly, though some American film books made mistakes like calling it "Mt. Aesop" or whatever. So it pretty much links the two films together; we see both Rodans "dying" at Mt. Eiso at the end of RODAN, but one survives, recovers and emerges from Mt. Eiso in GHIDRAH THE THREE HEADED MONSTER. In MONSTER ZERO, Rodan is first seen hibernating in some mountain apparently called Washikazawa in the English version, and in some scenes on Ogasawara Island in DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, Rodan flies among hills & mountains. Keeping all this in mind, it seems a logical conclusion that Rodan's natural habitat is high altitude, though the first film indicates they prefer to lay their eggs underground. Ironically, it seems that the surviving Rodan, who would later be in GHIDRAH, MONSTER ZERO and DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, is probably the female! This theory comes from the Japanese version of GHIDRAH, where Mothra goes off to fight Ghidrah alone, and Godzilla & Rodan remain behind. In the Japanese version, both Godzilla and Rodan have single lines of human dialogue (not to be confused with the scenes of the Peanuts/fairies translating them), much like the infamous English conversations between Godzilla & Angilas in GODZILLA VS. GIGAN's American print. In GHIDRAH (again, only the Japanese print), Godzilla questions Mothra's sanity in a gruff, Toshiro Mifune-esque voice, and Rodan, dubbed in a female voice, says the Japanese equivalent of "Good luck, Mothra!" This Rodan was mentioned verbally in GODZILLA'S REVENGE, as being an inhabitant of Monster Island, but never shown. For what it's worth, there was a third Rodan, seen in the absolutely worthless, childish cartoon GODZILLAND, consisting of caricatures of movie monsters, basically turning them into cute little "Smurfs". In more recent years, we've seen a fourth Rodan, in the film GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA. Again, the egg it hatches from is discovered in a cave. A bizarre twist in the plot tells us that Rodan and the Baby Godzilla are linked because of some strange moss that grew on both eggs that acted as a conductor (due to more radio-active fall-out) between both of them. Supposedly, the way the Godzilla egg and the Rodan egg got together was because the "mom Rodan" had mistaken a Godzilla egg for a Rodan egg and added it to her nest (there are cases of animals accidentally "adopting" other species like this in real life, though it's not very common). So Rodan felt linked to Baby Godzilla. Filmography: RODAN, GHIDRAH THE THREE HEADED MONSTER, DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, GODZILLA VS. MEGALON (stock-footage), TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA (flashback), GODZILLAND (more "Super Deformed" anime), and GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA.



ドクトキング

RED KING

["Redo Kingu"]

Height: 45 Meters

Weight: 200 Tons

Nicknamed the "Skull Monster" because his small (in comparison to the rest of his body) head resembles a skull; it doesn't look like he's got any flesh on it. Skull Monster would actually be a more accurate name, since most Red Kings are grey, not red. The original design was suppose to be red (hence the name), but they forgot to change the name when they changed the color. But in **ULTRAMAN POWERED** (aka **ULTRAMAN GREAT**, and, unofficially, "Ultraman-Anything-But-Great"), the male Red King was actually red, to live up to his name. The female Red King, which I suppose we can call "Red Queen", was more of a yellow-ish color. Visually, Red King, a favorite Ultra villain looks like an armor plated tyranosaurus, the rocky appearance was probably adapted for camouflage, as the creatures are often seen among rocks, snow or mountains. He likes to throw rocks sometimes. Ironically, he's never called "Red King" in either of his appearances in the English-dubbed **ULTRAMAN**, yet in episode #37, Drako is accidentally dubbed "Red King"! The Red King body costume was also used to portray the monster Avoras (**ULTRAMAN** #19), but with a new head. Filmography: **ULTRAMAN**, **ULTRAMAN JOE**, **ULTRAMAN 80**, and **ULTRAMAN POWERED**.

バラン

VARAN

[Japanese name: "Baran"]

Height: 10 Meters

Weight: 60 Tons

All scenes from Varan's English film (**VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE**) eliminate this creature's flight capability, though even in the Japanese version, this reptilian equivalent of a flying squirrel only flew in one brief scene: He climbs up a mountain and flies (off to the ocean) away, to escape from a huge forest fire. Unlike Godzilla, Varan wasn't awakened or mutated by nuclear bombs; he was always around, lurking around much like the Loch Ness monster. In the Japanese version, there was no scientific experiment that awakened him, that was just added to the American print. In the original Japanese film, Varan is a mountain god (feared by the locals, much like Majin) called "Baradaki Sanjin" (which is what the natives use to call the creature), and "Baran no



DENZIMAN (1980; 51 epi.)- Japanese name: **DENSHI-SENTAI DENJIMAN**, which sort of means "Electron Task Force Denziman" and/or "Electronic Task Force: Denziman". Kenji (**BATTLE FEVER J**) is back, in this influential, live action Sentai series which set the pace for every ripoff Toei Sentai program to follow. **DENZIMAN** is not a bad show though, and, like **BATTLE FEVER J**, has five heroes, and one giant robot against evil monsters. Broadcast on TV Asahi (2/2/80-1/31/80), Creator: Saburo Yatsude, Writer: Shozo Uehara, Main Dir.: Koichi Takemoto, Music: Chumei Watanabe. -Damon Foster ***

DESTROY ALL MONSTERS (1968)- Aliens, spaceships and mass destruction abounds in this Japanese monster classic (directed by Ishiro Honda) that has all of our favorite kaiju stomping around the earth's major cities. A personal favorite of mine, **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS** features some of Toho Studios best looking miniature cities, as well as Akira Ifukube's rousing musical score, which has never sounded better. But the piece de resistance of **DAM** is the climactic showdown between King Ghidrah and all of Earth's mighty monsters, led by Godzilla. It doesn't get any better than this! A Toho Production, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Dir.: Ishiro Honda, Music: Akira Ifukube, FX: Eiji Tsuburaya, Starring Akira Kubo. **** -Patricia Gonzales

DESTROY ALL PLANETS ["Gamera Tai Uchu Kaiju Bairasu"; 1967]- One of the best Gamera movies as the titanic turtle takes on the outerspace squid Viras, who, naturally, wants to take over the earth. He fails. And we are treated to 20 minutes of stock-footage flashbacks from previous Gamera movies, and the little kids aren't too annoying. Best of all, Sandy Frank didn't get a hold of this one! A Daiei Film, Producer: Hidemasa/Masaichi Nagata, Dir.: Kenji Yuasa, Starring: Toru Takatsuka & Kojiro Hongo. ***** -David McRobie

DEVILMAN (1972/23 epi.; Toei)- Akira Fudo is the human identity of Devilman: A demon who turns against his fellow demons and defends the mortal world. Based on the manga by Go Nagai, this animated program was a lot more superhero oriented than the original comic. A two-part O.V.A. was released in the late 1980s, which was more faithful to the original story. -Paul Haberman ****

DEVILMAN VS. MAZINGA Z- Despite the title, this is a team-up of two of Go Nagai's most famous cartoon creations. They never actually battle each other. But with that said, this is simply the most astounding 45 minutes of animated action I've ever seen. The two heroes team to battle the villains from their respective series. And what battles! The quality of this widescreen production is top rate. Now, if only the modern anime crap could be this action packed and as much fun. Produced by Toei Doga, Creator: Go Nagai. ***** -Jeff Goodhartz

DINOSAUR TASK FORCE: KOSEIDON ("KYORU SENTAI KOSEIDON")- I've never seen a full episode, just a few clips. A special team uses special vehicles to fight dinosaurs. There's even a red-suited hero with a sword who is launched like a missile at the reptiles. This is all live-action, unlike **BORN FREE** and **AIZENBORG**. I think I'd love it but I'll be conservative until I know for sure. Tentative rating is two stars. Produced by Tsuburaya Productions for Broadcast (52 episodes; 7/7/78 thru 6/29/79) on TV Tokyo, Creator: Ifumi Uchiyama, Writers: Masaki Tsuji, Keiichi Abe, Hiroyasu Yamamura, Bunzo Wakatsuki, Dir.: Toru Sotoyama, Shohei Tojo, Music: Seiji Yokoyama, Starring: Tetsuya Onishi, Daigo Kusano & Takako Kawasaki. ** -Christopher Elam

DINOSAUR WAR: AIZENBORG ("KYORU SENSO: AIZENBOBU")- I've only seen the English compilation tape of this, called **ATTACK OF THE SUPER MONSTERS** and thought it was, well, not too exciting. Cartoons fighting neat-looking monsters, well, only half fun. If it's true that later on in the series there is an Ultraman-like hero, that might be more fun. ** -David McRobie

DORVACK- "Specially Armored Trooper Dorvack" is a 36-part animated program from Asahi. When the Ideria Aliens send an inva-



sion force to Earth, the Earth Defense Force counters with the Dorvack team, comprised of three specially trained individuals in transformable mecha. This show is especially noteworthy for its depiction of slightly more realistic than usual mechanical designs and the interaction between Earthlings and aliens. -Paul Haberman ***1/2

DRAGONAR (Sunrise; 1987)- This anime series ("Armored War Chronicles Dragonar") follows in the tradition of **MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM**. Rebellling space colonies bombard Earth with meteors and only the Dragonar team can win the war for Earth. -Paul Haberman ***

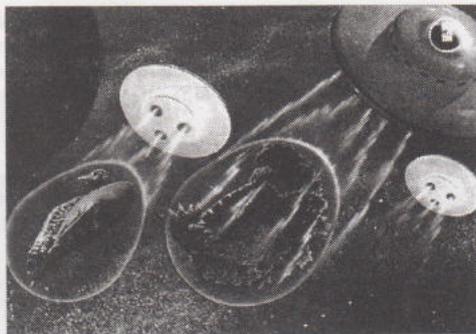
DUNBINE- Sho is drawn to the fantasy world of Byston Well and helps in the battle against the Drake Army. The appeal of this cartoon ("Holy Warrior Dunbine"; 1983/Sunrise/49 epi.) lies in its uniquely designed insect mecha, which are piloted by aura power. A Three-part O.V.A. (Original Animation Video) which was part compilation, part original, was released. -Paul Haberman ***

A SECOND OPINION:

DUNBINE- Giant robots, little fairies, regular people and other dimensional earths. You try and figure this Japanese cartoon out, I've got better things to do! * -David McRobie

DYNAMAN- Don't let the English-language, bastardized American TV version shown on "Nightflight" fool you! **DYNAMAN** was always meant to be campy & silly, but its original Japanese version is pretty damn good, with great FX, action galore, Junichi Haruta as Dyna Black, Sayoko Hagibara as Dyna Pink, a giant robot, monsters, etc. If only it wasn't so damn infantile, but at least it's fun!! Toei, TV Asahi (51 epi.; 2/5/83-1/28/84), Creator: Saburo Yatsude, Music: Kensuke Kyo. -Damon Foster *****

EVANGELION (aka "Neon Genesis



Evangelion)- This cartoon series (1995; 26 epi.) from Tatsunoko & Gainax is highlighted by its unique robot designs: The robots are very skinny, highly maneuverable, fast, and.....alive! -Paul Haberman ***

EXKAIZER- The full title of this Japanese cartoon from Sunrise is "Brave Exkaizer", it was made in 1990, and consists of 48 episodes, according to Paul Haberman. **

FAIRY AND THE DEVIL- No it's not a new production of **FAUST** starring Boy George. This is a Chinese fantasy flick full of battling wizards, dragons, living statues and giant monkeys. It reminds me of Japan's **MAGIC SERPENT**, but I like this movie a little more. There's action throughout and you're in no danger of being bored. Strangely enough, it borrows its soundtrack from **STAR TREK, THE MOTION PICTURE**. But this film is far better than anything bearing the over-rated, puke inducing name of ST. The dragons aren't the most realistic looking things I've ever seen, but then, life's not perfect, is it? Very entertaining. ***1/2 -Michael Keller

FATAL PREDICTION (1992; aka **DAI YOGEN**)- An extremely odd, two-part movie from Toei Video. Some guy's girlfriend apparently is important because everybody (I mean everybody) is trying to kidnap her. There are wizards, bikers, monsters, aliens, and even a dead-ringer for Majin who shows up briefly at the end to shoot laser beams at a fleet of UFOs. Unfortunately, the movie is too vague and indecipherable to be much fun. There are some nice FX and stunts, but not enough to save this dialogue-driven effort. * -Christopher Elam

FIBIRD- aka "Solar Hero Fibird", consisting of 48 episodes from 1991, produced by Sunrise. However, this cartoon wasn't available for review. -Damon Foster

FIGHTING GENERAL DAIMOS- More Toei animation, consisting of 44 episodes of giant robot action and preposterous love stories and melodrama. I never saw it in Japanese, but recall an English adaptation, a feature called **DYNAMO**, or something like that. ** -Damon Foster

FIGHT! SUPER ROBOT LIFE-FORMS TRANSFORMER (1986; 65 epi., Toei)- This series is made up of Japanese dubbed episodes of **THE TRANSFORMERS U.S.** series. Followed

Poda". The creature was loosely based on the Komodo Dragon (the world's largest monitor lizard), and the Latin word for dragon, "Varanis" is obviously what inspired the name Varan (though again, the Japanese pronounce it Baran). Ever the kaiju expert, August Ragone did heavy research as to what "Baran no Poda" means. 'Poda' is the Japanese pronunciation of the Latin word 'podder', which means father. So Varan's title, 'Baran no Poda' basically means 'Father of all Lizards'. It's also a play on words, since not only does "Baran" come from the Latin "Varan", but ties in with the Japanese word "baradaki". Varan has only been in two movies: **VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE** and a brief glimpse (flying miniature only; no costume) in **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS**.



BARAGON

Height: 20 Meters

Weight: 2.5 Tons

According to August Ragone, the literal translation would have to be "Varagon", since, like Varan, it takes its name from the latin word varanis. Baragon's name is a combination of the words "varanis" and "dragon". In **FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD**, Baragon was only about 25 meters tall, but had to be much larger, to keep up with Godzilla in **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS**.

ヒゲモン

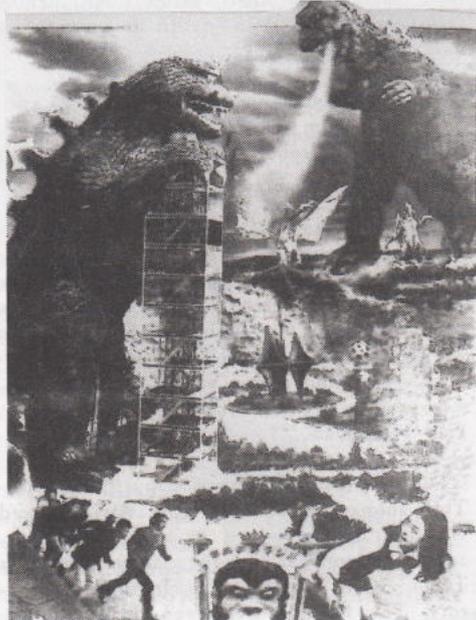
PYGMON

(aka "Pigmon", "Pigumon", sometimes even "Pigman" and "Garamon", sort of)

Weight: 1 Meter

Height: 40 Kilo.

Pygmon/Pigmon isn't really a giant at all, and may be out of place in a magazine meant to be about giants, but his costume is basically an altered Garamon (from an episode of **ULTRA Q**) costume, and Garamon was giant -- and besides, he's one of the wellknown Ultra monsters and deserves this little bio. For years, we've been spelling his name "Pigmon", when in fact, the correct translation should be Pygmon, with a "y". Being a small monster, the name is meant to be a combination of "pygmy" and "monster", a "Pygmy Monster".
Filmography: **ULTRAMAN, ULTRAMAN JOE** (robot version), **ULTRAMAN POWERED: THE ULTIMATE HERO**.





SPECTREMAN

["Spectralman", "Supekutoruman"]

Height: variable

Weight: Equally variable

People from the planet Nebula M71 (called "Over Lords" in SPECTREMAN's English prints) created the cyborg Spectreman (aka Jiyoji Gamou, or George) to battle pollution and bad apes. He uses a spectral energy (note the rainbow-like effects when he changes) in order to fly.

ドラコ

DRAKO

(aka "Dorago", possibly "Doracko" & "Doraco")

Height: 45 Meters

Weight: 200 Tons

An Ultraman villain who came off of the comet Tsuifon, and flew down to Earth to battle other monsters. He was revived in a later episode by Geronimon, and looked a little different: No wings, and he had hands instead of claws. Also, he's accidentally dubbed "Red King" in the idiotic English version.

アイアンキング

IRON KING

["Aiyan Kingu"]

Height: 45 Meters

Weight: 55 Tons

Iron King was created by Pro-

by TRANSFORMERS 2010, which consisted of Japanese dubbed episodes that took place after the movie. The subsequent Japanese series were all original Japanese productions. -Paul Haberman ***

FIGHT! SUPER ROBOT LIFE-FORMS TRANSFORMERS VICTORY- Features a whole slew of newly created characters. 1989, 37 epi. from Toei. -Paul Haberman **1/2

FIREMAN- I've only seen the first episode of this Tsuburaya show. From what I've seen, it looks pretty good. The visuals are nice, and the monster seems less ridiculous than in similar programs. The one in the first episode looks pretty cool, in fact; although when it fights I think its actions are too human-like. This seems to be one of the more serious giant superhero shows. Broadcast dates: 1/7/73-7/31/73; 30 episodes, Creator: Akira Tsuburaya, Writers: Hiromi Higuchi, Toshisugu Suzuki & Jun Oki, Music: Toru Fuyuki, Cast: Naoya Makoto, Goro Mutsu, Shin Kishida. *** -Michael Keller

FIVEMAN (full title: "CHIKYU SENTAI FUAIBUMAN", which means "Earth Task Force: Five Man")- Another of Toei's rainbow hued super team shows. The Hoshikawa family can use some little gizmos to become the nigh-invulnerable team of Fiveman. Fiveman uses their giant robots Five Robo & Star Five (which can also combine to form Super Five Robo) to combat the monsters of Zone. The bad guys use a Michelin Tire Man lookalike to make their monsters grow. This is a completely generic Super Sentai, neither better nor worse than average. Producers: Toei, 48 episodes (3/2/90 thru 2/1/91) Broadcast on TV Asahi, Creator: Saburo Hatte, Writers: Hirohisa Soda, Toshiki Inoue, Maimi Watanabe, Kunio Fujii, Dir.: Shohei Tojo, Takao Nagaishi, Music: Akihiko Yoshida, Starring: Toshiya Fuji, Kazuko Miyata, Megumi Ishii, Takeshi Ishikawa, Genko Watanabe. **1/2 -Christopher Elam

FLASHMAN- What can I say that I've not said [about late 1980s Sentai programs] before? The FX are the best yet, but everything else is the worst yet. My main problem with FLASHMAN (full title: "CHO-SHINSEI FURASHIYUMAN", which means "Super Nova Flashman") is that it was made at a time when I was losing faith in Toei live action programs. Since then, I've come to expect very little from the newest Super Sentais. With FLASHMAN (as well as its predecessor CHANGEMAN), I still had some hope that the Sentai legacy would pick up again, and that one new series would offer a comeback, a step back in the right direction. Yet as I watched FLASHMAN and MASKMAN, I kept finding myself saying, "Why must these new Japanese programs always disappoint me?!" Expect just the usual watered-down superhero fights, and of course, the obligatory giant robot. 50 episodes (3/1/86-2/21/87), Music: Tachimi Yano, Starring: Keita Tarumi. -Damon Foster **1/2

FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD (1965)- Toho rehash/revamp of Frankenstein is actually a more legitimate follow up to the original than their King Kong was to his original. Scientists Nick Adams (yeah, right!) and Kumi Mizuno chase after an ever-growing Asian-Frankenstein, who winds up fighting the giant monster Baragon in the finale. Tsuburaya's SFX are kept to a minimum until the final reel, and are some of his best of the period. Reptilian, yet dog-like Baragon is a wonderful monster design -- sorta' reminiscent of some of the later Ultra-monsters, but not as stupid-looking. Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Music: Akira Ifukube, FX: Eiji Tsuburaya. **** -Frank Strom

A SECOND OPINION:

FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD- A true winner from Toho's Golden Age. A little Japanese kid eats the heart of the monster and grows big. Then he battles Baragon and wins, then, depending on which version you see, he loses to either an earthquake or a giant octopus. Nick Adams stars, and the rest of the cast is good as well. Great stuff, better than any Hammer Frankenstein movie. **** -David McRobie

GAIKING ("Great Sky Dragon: Gaiking")- A team of eight pilot powerful dino mecha in battle against the Black Horror Army. It's a cartoon created by Akio Sugino (TOMORROW'S JOE), 1976, 44 episodes; Toei. -Paul Haberman **1/2

GA KEEN (Toei; 1976/42 epi)- Sort of a sequel to JEEG in that it's the second robot to combine using magnetic power. It takes two people: Takeshi and Mai, to pilot Ga Keen (series full name: "Magnetic Robo Ga*Keen"). -Paul Haberman **1/2

GALACTIC TORNADO SASURAIGA (1983/43 epi)- Third entry in the J9 series. JJ9 protects space with their giant robot, which transforms into a train in this anime series. -Paul Haberman **1/2

GALATT ("Super Robo Galatt")-1984, 25 epi., Sunrise. From the same staff as VIFAM, comes this gag robot cartoon. -Paul Haberman **

GALIENT ("Panzer World Galient")- This cartoon joins the ranks of Sunrise's other robot dramas (DOUGRAM, VOTOMS). On the planet Astro, 12 year old Prince Jordy leads a rebellion against the Usurper Madlu to gain his rightful place as ruler of the Boda Kingdom. Two compilation videos and an O.V.A. were also produced. Sunrise; 1984, 25 epi. -Paul Haberman ***

GALVION (Movie International; 1992/23 epi)- This animation series ("Hyper Attack Speed Galvion") is highlighted by the unique character designs of manga artist Yoshihisa Tagami (GREY, HOROBI). In the 23rd century, The Earth Government is being infil-



trated by the mysterious organization called Shadow. An elite team called Circus tries to stop them. This series features cars that transform into robots. -Paul Haberman **

GAMERA- The groundbreaking Daiei film from 1965. B&W, pretty boring at times, and stupid at others. But it has its moments, in a tale of an overgrown, arctic turtle who wrecks havoc in Japan. For more info on Gamera and his films, see OC's Gamera Issue (OC#6, 21st Edition). Producer: Hidemasa Nagata, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, Starring: Eiji Funakoshi. *1/2 -Damon Foster

GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE- Honestly, I was tired of the hype and was prepared to hate the big turtle's comeback. But you can't deny the appeal of a good giant monster movie. Superior to the last four Godzilla movies and easily the best of the Gamera series, this remake of **GAMERA VS. GYAOS** has excellent special effects, exciting action sequences and top-notch, colorful cinematography. One aspect that separates this film from the new Godzillas is Gamera actually has a personality and the Gyaos creatures are portrayed as a menacing threat, unlike the current Toho films where the creatures are a set-up for an ILM-inspired light show. While the human-only scenes tend to drag a bit, and the music score is too John Williams-ish, this is still too fun not to watch. A Daiei Production, Starring: Ayako Fujitani.**** -John Grace

GAMERA, SUPER MONSTER- Well, our hero proves he's super by defeating six other monsters in 85 minutes. He also defeats us as viewers in that time period as well. Not atrociously horrible, but not really great, either. A lot of the story makes no sense, and the villainess is the best part. *I myself kinda' liked the wrestling dke.* -DF/ Daiei; 1980, Producers: Masaya Tokuyama, Shigeru Shinohara & Hirokazu Ohba, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa. ** -David McRobie

GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE- The less than incredible start for the huge turtle. This version of **GAMERA** has added American actors and a rockin' cool Gammerra theme song. The commies wake Gammerra up by accident, then it's up to the resourceful Japanese to take care of him. But not permanently, as they had to make sequels! The effects are great as well. All the added scenes are hysterical and border on the surreal. Don't even bother with any other version. Producer:

Hidemasa Nagata, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, Starring: Eiji Funakoshi.*** -David McRobie

GAMERA VS. BARUGON- Also known as **WAR OF THE MONSTERS**, depending on which version of this Gamera classic (Daiei; 1966) you see. The highest budgeted Gamera movie of the 1960s, and the least childish. There are intelligent characters and the script is logical & coherent for once! Easily my favorite Gamera tale, tying with **GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE**. New Guinean islanders prophesize that some weird mutant alligator called Barugon will make things freeze, which is exactly what happens, until Gamera drowns him. Sometimes, finding a non-childish Gamera movie [such as this] is like finding a Christmas tree in Israel. Producer: Masaichi Nagata, Starring: Kojiro Hongo and Kyoko Enami. **** -Damon Foster

GAMERA VS. GUIRON- This one was actually the same movie as **ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS**, but this is an alternate English dubbing, supplied by Sandy Frank; and it's uncut! So when the monsters are battling, we get to see a decapitation and chopped-off foot. It's an amusing little kiddy film, but trying to watch it and not get annoyed is even more difficult than beating off to a Tracey Ullman video. Planning: Kazumasa Nakano, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa. ** -Damon Foster

GAMERA VS. GYAOS (aka **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS** and **GAMERA VS GAOS**)- Watchable though disappointing follow-up to **GAMERA VS. BARUGON**. Gyaos is a laser-spitting bird who terrorizes bickering construction workers until Gamera finally yanks him into a volcano. A good film on the whole, but overrated. It's got the sexual magnetism of Andy Rooney and the raw power & energy of a Phil Collins album. Daiei; 1967, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa.*** -Damon Foster

GAMERA VS. MONSTER X- A pretty decent entry in the original Gamera series, though my personal favorites are **WAR OF THE MONSTERS** and **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS**. Jiger is the only kaiju I know of that uses spit as a weapon, so of course it's cool. It's also one of the few Japanese monsters that can walk on all fours without being reduced to crawling on its hands and knees. Bravo! The flick's downfall are these annoying kids who I really wish the mon-

fessor Tsushima of some national undercover secret agent group that Goro & Kyotaro are members of, and made Goro into a cyborg (sort of the reversal of **KAMEN RIDER** -- and an extension of **SILVER KAMEN**: Where the main character is turned into a cyborg, in this case Iron King, by friendly sources, and not the villains). Visually, Iron King may appear to be a ripoff of Ultraseven, but the **IRON KING TV** series is infinitely more action packed than its so-called "inspiration".

メフィラス星人

MEPHIRAS

{aka "Mefilas", Mefirasu", "Mephilas Seijin", "Alien Mephilas", etc.}

Height: 60 Meters

Weight: 200 Tons

His name is based on Mephisto, but the creature looks more like a space-age alien than a devil. One of Ultraman's toughest opponents; in fact the duel was considered a tie. Knowing this alien invader couldn't defeat Ultraman, he basically retreated, but the option was kept open that they may have a re-match. The only rematch actually happened in **ULTRAMAN TARO**, where a "new" (but not improved) Mephilas got destroyed by **ULTRAMAN TARO**.

ザラブ

ZARAB

{aka "Zorab", "Zorabu", "Zarabu" "Zarabu Seijin", "Alien Zarab"}

Height: 40 Meters

Weight: 200 Tons

Another space alien who battled Ultraman, in the episode titled, "The Brother From Another World". He deceived the Earthlings by calling himself their "brother". This also plays into his name: The literal Japanese katakana for his name is these three symbols: "Za (ザ)", "Ra (ラ)", and "Bu (ブ)". Okay, to uncode this dude's name, you simply read these calligraphy letters backwards: "Bu (ブ)", "Ra (ラ)", and "Za (ザ)". As anyone with a slight knowledge of Japanese English knows, "Buraza" would be how the Japanese pronounce our word, 'brother'.



SILVER KAMEN
 ("Silver Mask")
 Height: 50 Meters
 Weight: 500 Tons

Silver Kamen wasn't originally a giant, that came later in the series. His show was a ratings flop though, because it was one of the few Japanese superhero programs to have a more serious, adult-like approach. It's talky style comes off as boring, much like ULTRASEVEN, unless you're fluent in Japanese, but when examined closely, Silver Kamen's story is an interesting one: The Kazuka Family has five siblings-- two daughters, and three brothers: Koichi (Mr. Kanahiro, who was originally up for the KAMEN RIDER part, but Hiroshi Fujioka got the role), Koji (Toshio Sibamoto of GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER) who turns into Silver Kamen, and knife-expert Kozo (Sabuo Shinoda who later went on to become ULTRAMAN TARO). Their father was a really famous scientist in space technology; all his life he was working on this rocket called Bem 5, with a light-speed engine. He was killed mysteriously by the Tigress Aliens, and died not being able to finish the Bem 5 spaceship. He had known that aliens from an assortment of different planets didn't want human beings to explore outerspace. So during the course of the series, the five siblings travel across Japan visiting their late father's associates, trying to find the secret of the light-speed engine. But their father, unbeknownst to them, had broken up the plans into five pieces, and are put on or in parts of the five siblings bodies (so if only one of the five was kidnapped by aliens, and assuming they could uncode the info, they still wouldn't have the complete plans)! For example, when one of the brothers is placed under a certain light, they could see his portion of the plans tattooed onto his skin. To try and improve the ratings, at the last minute, they suddenly wrapped up the whole script by having our heroes discover all the answers by the 10th episode,

sters would step on. The little girl in particular would make excellent Gyaos food. Daiei; 1970, Prod.: Hidemasa Nagata, Starring: Tsutomu Takakawa. ***1/2 -Michael Keller

A SECOND OPINION:

GAMERA VS. MONSTER X- One of the turtle's wilder movies, as he gets impregnated by the titular monster, who may or may not be female. Some people spend too much time worrying about this stuff. It's a fun movie, with plenty of monsteriffic action. What more do you want? **** -David McRobie

GAMERA VS. ZIGRA (Daiei; 1971)- Cheaper and dumber than usual, even for a Gamera flick. Everyone's favorite fire-breathing turtle tussles with an ill-tempered space shark with a taste for human fillets. The kids must be the most annoying children on the planet, but the beguiling "space woman X" and Shunsuke Kikuchi's rocking score make up for that liability. Screenplay: Fumi Takahashi, FX: Kazuo Fujii. ** -Christopher Elam

GETTA ROBO- Classic robot anime series from the mind of Go Nagai (MAZINGER Z). The first series (Toei; 1974/51 epi.) to offer a combining robot. Getta 1, Getta 2, and Getta 3 can combine into three different combinations. Pilots Ryo, Hayato, and Musashi use Getta Robo to battle the Megasaurus monsters of the Dinosaur Empire, bent on world conquest. -Paul Haberman ***

GETTA ROBO G (Toei; 1975)- Sequel series (39 epi.) to GETTA ROBO features all new streamlined mecha. New member Benki replaces Musashi who was killed in battle. 26 episodes were shown in the U.S. as FORCE FIVE: STARVENGERS. -Paul Haberman ***

GETTA ROBO GO- Go Nagai's Dynamic Productions updates Getta Robo for the 1990s. Modern version still retains all of the classic trademarks-- slimy monsters, bizarre villains, great music, and lots of action. 1991, 50 episodes from Toei. -Paul H. ***

GHIDRAH THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER (Toho; 1964)- Godzilla, Rodan, and Mothra team up for the first time to tackle space dragon King Ghidorah. Simultaneously, assassins try to rub out a princess who thinks she's a Martian (or is that Venusian?). Forget the naysayers; this is a great movie with terrific performances and cool effects. It's easily my favorite Godzilla movie. Who cares if that guy caught a rock? FX: Eiji Tsuburaya. Music: Akira Ifukube, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka. ***** -Christopher Elam

GIANT GORG (1984/26 epi., Sunrise)- A cartoon about Youngster Yu Tagami and his friends, who investigate the mysterious Austral Island and Yu befriends the Mighty Gorg, a giant blue, sentient robot, brought to Earth long ago by an alien race. -Paul Haberman

GIANT ROBO, THE ANIMATION- As a fan of the TV show JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT, I was more than skeptical

about this anime rendition, which is actually a closer translation of the original manga. To say the least, I was blown away. I'm not the biggest anime fan in the world, but I really liked this one, even if there are no giant monsters (not counting other robots) for Robo to battle. They really did a good job here. The animation looks closer to BATMAN or GARGOYLES than the traditional Japanese style, and the characters, story, pacing, action, etc. are all top notch. The thinking man's answer to JOHNNY SOKKO, but with enough ass kicking thrown in to keep it interesting. If you only decide to watch one, make it this one. ****1/2 -Michael Keller

GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER (1955; aka GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN)- Whether you're watching the English or Japanese version, it's definitely one of the lesser Godzilla entries. The plot's aimless and forgets about the main characters for a long time. The battles between Godzilla/Gigantis and Angilas are great, and the movie itself is relatively painless if you can get past the English dubbing. To paraphrase that old scientist, it is bad! A Toho Production, FX: Eiji Tsuburaya, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka. **1/2 -Christopher Elam

GIGANTOR- The original story about a boy and his robot. Gigantor is one bad robot, he doesn't need any rays, missiles or weapons, he just pounds his opponents to dust with his fists. And he has one of the best theme songs *I think the Dickies improved on it, drastically.* -DF! ever! **** -David McRobie

A SECOND OPINION:

GIGANTOR- Jimmy Sparks is at the controls of the mighty flying robot Gigantor in this 1963 B&W cartoon from Japan. The main significance of this series is that it was the first of the giant Japanese robot cartoons. Created by manga artist Mitsuteru Yokoyama in 1958 and becoming a brief live action series and even a radio serial before seeing its way to two-dimensional cel-dome. Although the animation is rather stiff, there is a lot of action to keep viewers' attention. Fred Ladd dubbed the series (originally titled TETSUJIN 28, or "Iron Man 28" in English) and imported it to the U.S. on the heels of 8TH MAN and ASTROBOY. Probably the one element which really stands out about this series is the English language version's Calypso theme song: "Bigger than big, taller than tall, quicker than quick, stronger than strong, fighting the fight for right, against wrong..." ***-Bob Johnson

GIGANTOR (1980s remake)- It's actually worth watching, because it kept the fun tone of the original series. It also kept that awesome theme song. Okay, everybody, together now... "Gigantor, Gigantor". This gets three stars for that alone. *** -David McRobie

GINGAIZER (full title: "Super Combining Magical Robo Gingaizer")- Goro and his friends use the magical robot Gingaizer to

battle the revived Sasorian Empire in this 26-chapter, 1977 cartoon from Nippon Anime. - Paul Haberman **

GLI UOMINI DI MARTE MARS MEN (1975?)- The Italian dub of Thailand's stab at a Japanese JUMBORG ACE movie. I'm told the plot is basically a remake of JUMBORG ACE's final five episodes (which I haven't seen), only with a heroic statue thrown into the mix. The god helps Jumborg Ace and a gold-suited pseudo-Science Patrol battle the space monsters on the moon. This film is also noted for its odd music score. Would you believe the Jumborg Ace theme and....Pink Floyd? ** - Christopher Elam

GODMAN (aka "Go! Godman"; 1972)- I'm not that impressed with what I've seen of this Toho giant superhero show. The three mini-episodes I've have seen Godman (who has long blond/white hair) beating up a really shitty looking Gorosaurus costume. The mechanism that made Gorosaurus's jaw open & close was obviously damaged or not working, since his jaw just flaps in the wind. There isn't much done to make the character look big (i.e. miniatures or low angle filming) so the illusion of giant size doesn't hold up, a rarity for even the worst of these shows. ZONE FIGHTER is better. * -Michael Keller

GOD MAZINGA (1984; 23 epi.)- This Japanimated series by Go Nagai takes place in ancient Japan. The robot is actually a living God-like statue. Yamato Hino helps Mu Empriss Aira against the Dragonia forces. - Paul Haberman **1/2

GOD SIGMA (1980/50 epis./Toei)- Character designs are by Manga artist Kaoru Shintani (AREA 88). In the year 2050, Toshiya and friends stand against the Elda Aliens when they invade from one of the moons of Jupiter. God Sigma is formed from three separate robots. The cartoon's full name is "Space Emperor God Sigma". -Paul Haberman **

GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS (aka "Gojira"; 1954)- The debut film of the jolly green kaiju. GODZILLA stands out as Toho Studios's crowning achievement, setting the standard for all Japanese giant monster movies to come. American journalist Steve Martin (Raymond Burr) narrates the mass destruction inflicted on Tokyo by Godzilla, the fire-breathing nightmare mutated after being exposed to radiation from U.S. atomic bomb testing. If there's anybody out there who hasn't seen this classic thriller as many times as it's been mentioned in OC, what the heck is your excuse? Pick up your butt and go rent it already! Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, etc. ***** -Patricia Gonzalez

GODZILLA 1985 (aka "Gojira" and "The Return of Godzilla")- A long-awaited, overhyped, disappointing, and bewildering failure. Insult to injury: It's boring too, practically Kaiju-dom's own STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE. The standard Godzilla-

on-the-loose scenario, once exciting, is now like a straight jacket of predictable sights and events. Plus, it's got the lamest ending of any Godzilla film; he falls into a volcano! The American version, with Raymond Burr again, ably demonstrates Dr. Pepper's widespread use in the military community. ** -Patrick Macias

GODZILLA'S REVENGE- A touching story of a lonely boy and his monster. All little Ichiro wants to do is meet Godzilla, but in real life he has to contend with nasty bullies and a pair of inept bankrobbers. Fortunately, in watching Godzilla & Minya, he learns to stand up for himself and take charge of his own life. Yes, there is a lot of stock footage, but I love this movie. ***** -David McRobie

GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE- Despite an awful, John Williams-ish orchestral score, and a not too interesting opponent that resembles Audrey 2 (from LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS crossbred with a crocodile), it is still fun to see Godzilla kick ass after his lackluster stroll-thru-town in GODZILLA 1985. **1/2 -John Grace

A SECOND OPINION:

GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE (1989)- The first follow-up to GODZILLA 1985 kicks things off by trying to maintain the deathly serious tone of its predecessor, but shoots itself in the foot with one of the most unfathomably stupid premises used in the long running series. Godzilla's adversary is Biollante -- A monster hybrid of Godzilla-cells, a super rose bush and the soul of a scientist's dead daughter! Holy hokum, Batman! This film is served up way too seriously, given how silly it is conceptually. Adding to the misery are confused directing, and a miserable showing on the part of SFX director Koichi Kawakita. Some critics feel that Kawakita's strong suit is animation/light effects, but personally, I've yet to discover what this guy's good at -- His work is consistently flavorless and bland. Also be warned, this is the first film of the "new" series to adhere to an annoying plot continuity that would soon strangle the whole series, and seemingly prevent any fresh ideas from happening. Yuck-o. * -Frank Strom

GODZILLA VS. DESTROYER- If you like the more serious style of GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS, 1995's GODZILLA VS. DESTROYER is a good one. There's a direct relationship with the first film; The Destroyer is an interesting monster, and little Goji does a bit of growing for this film. I like this movie. I have only one complaint, and it's about this kind of film in general. Ray Harryhausen's films had the same problem: If they're made for adults, they're not scary enough. If they are made for small children, the plots are too complicated. But that aside, this is a good film. Glowing red, Godzilla is seen swimming toward HK. The monster is big Gojira. But Goji isn't becoming a commie, he's sick.

and starting in episode 11, Silver Kamen grows giant and the whole format of the show changed: Suddenly, Earth has a Moon Base and a Mars Base (not bad technology for 1971!). A spaceship crashes and the radiation mutates Silver Kamen so that he grows giant.

SEABOZU

["Shibozu"]

Height: 40 Meters

Weight: 3 Tons

A ghost/skeleton dinosaur from ULTRAMAN, though we never actually see what the creature looked like when it was alive, in non-zombie form. However, if the name is any indication, it would seem logical that this undead lizard was originally a sea monster before it died and ended up in the Monster Graveyard in outerspace. "Shi" is the Japanese interpretation of our own 'sea', and "Bozu" means, in Japanese, something like 'spirit' (ironically, there's a similarly named monster in SPACE GIANTS called "Umi Bozu", which also means 'Sea Spirit'; Bozu means sea in Japanese. Though the creature was called simply 'Gore' in the English dub). Getting back to Seabozu, it's been suspected by kaiju authority August Ragone, that its design may be sort of an in-joke: i.e. with the spines on his back, doesn't this goofy pile of walking bones resemble the dead Godzilla, destroyed by the Oxygen Destroyer at the end of GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS (Toho;

ゴジラ

1954)?

ANGILAS

["Angirasu", "Anguiras", "Angirus", "Angylas"]

Height: 60 Meters

Weight: 300 Tons

"Angi" is the changing that the Japanese did to 'anki', as in 'ankliosaurus'. So Angilas is of the anklisosaurus family, and the 'gilas' part of his name may have its roots in 'gila monster'. In GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER, Angilas was said to be one of the more vicious dinosaurs of its time. It has smaller brains in different parts of its body (much like a brontosaurus, believed to have had a separate brain down near its tail) so it can move faster. Filmography: GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER, DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, GODZILLA VS. GIGAN, GODZILLA VS. MEGALON, GODZILLA VS. COSMIC MONSTER, GODZILLAND ("Super Deformed" cartoon crap).

ゴモラ

GOHORA

[aka "Gomora", "Gomorasaurus", "Gohorasuarus" "Kaiju Denka", & "Grand Monster"]

Height: 40 Meters

Weight: 200 Tons

In the English version of ULTRAMAN, they say this triceratops-ish dinosaur comes from some island called Port Gohora, which is wrong. In the Japanese version, he's from the Johnson Islands, which is a real set of islands. Called "Gomora" in the Japanese print, it's possible its name was loosely inspired after the biblical "Sodom & Gomorrah", though there's no proof.

ガンボラ

ZANBORA

Height: 40 Meters

Weight: 200 Tons

This is that monster that causes forest fires in ULTRAMAN #32. The "Zan" could also be the Japanese mispronunciation of 'sun', but the 'Bora' part could be taken from just about any language: French, German, whatever. So as you can see, Japanese writers are well-read, and well-educated, making translating these names are all the more difficult.

テレスドン

TELESDON

["Teresudon", "Telesudon", "Teresdon"]

Height: 60 Meters

Weight: 200 Tons

The bad guys in this episode of ULTRAMAN have no eyes; Telesdon's light up and they're blue. Telesdon attacks at night as his eyes light up, because he see's for the bad guys. So his name is based on seeing, or vision. The "Teles" comes from 'telescope' or 'television', etc.



And I guess he feels the cure is to wreck HK. While Miki Saegusa is hopes to locate little Gojira, the army has determined that Godzilla is about to meltdown, becoming a giant atom bomb. One of the speakers at the summit is Kenkichi Yamane, grandson of Dr. Yamane from the first GODZILLA flick. At the same time, a research team has developed something called "Micro-Oxygen". In an aquarium tank in their lab is soil from under Tokyo Bay (at the same sight is where the first Gojira was killed by Dr. Serizawa's Oxygen Destroyer back in 1954). Unknown to everyone, a prehistoric one-celled life-form, a carbon dioxide breather, was revived at the time. It is exposed to Micro Oxygen and begins to mutate and grow. Soon this crab monster battles little Godzilla (now sort of a "teenager" 100 feet high) at Tokyo. Big Godzilla arrives for a fight with Destroyer, and the military blasts both monsters and a freeze ray disintegrates the Destroyer. Godzilla then explodes, but he's given enough energy to Godzilla Jr. that it's not a nuclear explosion. The film ends with Miki Saegusa saying, "Gojira dead, in 1995." But don't forget Jr., if necessary, he'll return. Toho; 1995, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Dir.: Omori, SPFX Dir.: Koichi Kowakita, Cast: Takuro Tatsuri (Dr. Iju), Yoko Ishino (Yukari Yamane), Yasufumi Hayashi (Kenkichi Yamane), Emi Kotaka (Miki Saegusa), Sayaka Osawa (Meru Ozawa), Momoko Kochi (Emiko Yamane). ***** -John Emma

GODZILLA VS. GIGAN (aka GODZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND)- Were it not for the excessive stock footage from DESTROY ALL MONSTERS and other movies, and the fact that the monster battles are slow-paced (and at times, downright dull!), this could have been a seriously fun movie! Oh well, any



movie where alien cockroaches infest a huge Godzilla statue and hire Ghidrah and Gigan to tackle Godzilla and Angilas can't be all bad. *** -Damon Foster

A SECOND OPINION:

GODZILLA VS. GIGAN- "Godzilla vs. the Stock Footage" would have been a fitting title, as 50% of the monster battles are lifted from GHIDRAH THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER and MONSTER ZERO. Why does GODZILLA VS. MEGALON get such a bad rap when this kaiju eiga has the most inane scene in all these films: Godzilla and Angilas converse in English. To make it goofier, they are dubbed by the "But still" looping team that dubbed most of the Shaw Brothers kung fu movies. The movie does score points for having the creepiest aliens in any science fiction movie: Human-sized cockroaches. Yuck! /Now come on, John. Anybody who's spent the night in my apartment knows cockroaches aren't so bad once you get used to them. -DF/ *1/2 -John Grace

GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDRAH (1991)- Some guys in a flying saucer trick mankind into thinking they will rid the world of a giant monster, when in fact they plan on using a giant monster to destroy the earth. No doubt about it, Toho's MONSTER ZERO is an undeniable classic. The clever story, Honda's deft direction, and Tsuburaya's unforgettable FX imagery make for a cinematic experience that will stay with you for the rest of your life! Hell, Nick Adams's take-no-prisoners thespic talents alone are...what?! Oops, wrong movie. Uh...GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDRAH is hauntingly familiar, but not at all unpleasant (surely it's better than GODZILLA 1985 or the downright awful BIOLLANTE). If you're in the mood for re-runs, you could do a whole lot worse. *** -Frank Strom

A SECOND OPINION:

GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDRAH- Ignore all the time anomalies and robot stuff, and you have a great Godzilla movie. Too bad they couldn't stop Ghidrah's heads from wobbling. *** -David McRobie

GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA- Trailing behind GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDRAH as the best of the 1990s Godzilla movies, I'd like this one more if Toho had not bastardized Mechagodzilla and Rodan. Mechagodzilla just doesn't seem like a threatening foe when it's nothing more than a weapon controlled by the Japanese military. I prefer the alien-controlled cyborg in the 1970s films. At least the pacing is fast, and there is plenty of action. And Baby Godzilla isn't nearly as annoying as Minya was. *** -John Grace

GODZILLA VS. MEGALON (1973)- Most G-fans consider this the worst of the series. I tend to cut it a little more slack than others. IT's not boring like GODZILLA'S REVENGE, at least. I think the monsters look okay. I even like the Godzilla suit used here. I know lots of people think the Godzilla looks cute in the movie, but for some reason, he never seemed that way to me. I'll take it any day over the ugly SON OF GODZILLA suit. Be that as it may, there's still a good amount of banality to go around, and the flute soundtrack sucks hard. ** -Michael Keller



A SECOND OPINION:

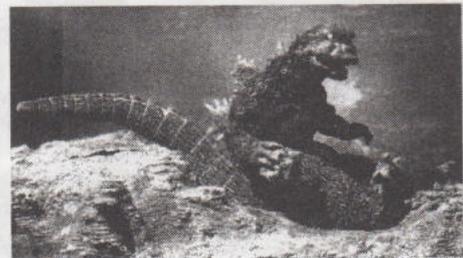
GODZILLA VS. MEGALON- Lots of monsters, cool fights and a well told story. Well, at least some of that is true. Seetopians want us topiders to stop our bomb tests (some of us do too!) and send Megalon to punish that nuclear-bomb crazy country, Japan. Godzilla beats the tar out of Megalon and Gigan, with the help of the robot Jet Jaguar. ***** -David McRobie

GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA (1992)- Two parts MOTHRA, one part GODZILLA VS. THE THING, and just a smidgen of original ideas (you really gotta' look for 'em!) make for a not-unpleasant, yet familiar film. The pacing is much faster in this film than in any of the other current series entries, with a non-stop string of destruction and monster fight scenes. Battrah (or "Batorah"), Mothra's evil twin, is the only successful new monster created in the "new" series. Kawakita's SFX are at their best in this film, largely due to the mostly non-humanoid monsters involved -- Kawakita's lack of inventiveness is showcased most clearly in scenes where two manlike monsters stand on opposite ends of a gigantic soundstage and shoot deathrays at each other (yawn!). While GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA is something of a mess conceptually (too much plot, not enough story), it's got more going for it than the other recent entries, so I'll say it's the best of them. ***1/2 -Frank Strom

GODZILLA VS. SPACE GODZILLA- Imaginative cinematography and some beautiful visuals highlight the special effects in this otherwise confusing mess. The scenes on the island, with Baby Godzilla are all too familiar to anyone who remembers the stupid segments of SON OF GODZILLA, complete with childish, sappy, embarrassing music (I thought Toho might have learned from their mistakes!). I also wasn't too impressed to see the filmed death of a tarantula (some soldier stabs it because it, a-hem, "attacked" a

fellow hunter), and as is always the case in any post-TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA film, the human characters are uninteresting, noncharismatic people who just pad out the film to make it longer. Godzilla is, of course, the real star, and he looks great, truly an awesome spectacle during the island scenes (shots of Godzilla at the water & beach are classic), but his outerspace double, Space Godzilla looks like Godzilla with icebergs sticking out of his shoulders (yep, they're running out of ideas in Tokyo), and the new Mogera (no relation to the one in the Mysterians) looks more like Atragon on hind legs. On the whole, GODZILLA VS. SPACE GODZILLA is a pretty fun movie, even if the monster battles aren't as thrilling as average. *** -Damon Foster

GODZILLA VS. THE COSMIC MONSTER (aka 1974's GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA)- Contrary to what has been written in other publications, this flick did play in theaters as GODZILLA VS THE BIONIC MONSTER for several months before Universal sued Cinema Shares over use of the word "bionic". Why Universal thought this fun-filled, action-packed fantasy would be confused with their lousy, dull BIONIC WOMAN show is baffling. I caught this one at a drive-in under its COSMIC MONSTER re-release moniker and those glorious Tohoscope images made more of an impression than STAR WARS ever did. Easily the best Godzilla movie of the 1970s, it proved that, for once, Jun Fukuda could make a good Godzilla movie. This is the superior Mechagodzilla, more interesting as an alien cyborg than the G-Force piloted mecha in the remake. Gotta' love the scene where its head rotates to create a force-field. Hell, Mechagodzilla was given a cool music theme, a gimmick that hadn't been used since the introduction of Ghidrah. King Seesar was a fun sidekick, but no Jet Jaguar, and Godzilla's muppet look fit in with the movie's light tone, although the suit /The water suit is what was left of the Godzilla costume from SON OF GODZILLA. -DF/ used for the water sequence is awful. ***1/2 -John Grace



GOLDAR

["Maguma Taishi", "Magma Taishi", "Maguma Daishi", "Ambassador Magma", and "The Space Avenger"]
Height: 7 Meters
Weight: 5 Tons

Though a machine, this robot, like his son Gam and wife Silvar, is also alive. They're artificial, but with personalities; they're not slow-moving automations like Johnny Sokko's Flying Robot; these three "living machines" have an artificial life of their own. I think maybe if you cut Goldar in half, he wouldn't be all nuts, bolts & wires, but may have molten metal as his blood, and have some synthetic biological system.

This classic, metallic giant actually predates Ultraman himself by a few months. I little known trivia fact is that his creator, called Methusem in the English dubbing of SPACE GIANTS, is meant to be God, God All Mighty; that's right, the Christian god in The Holy Bible. In the Japanese version, this wizard's name is "Earth" (he's even called that in the ending credits for the English print, though never dubbed that verbally). In the last episode, Earth must return to the king of all the gods, Zeus. Of course, the English version, not wanting to seem blasphemous, made it sound as though they were going off into outerspace. If you don't believe this, ask creator Osamu Tezuka, and since he's already gone off to meet his Methusem, it won't be easy unless you're psychic and have a Weejee Board.

ゼットン

ZETTON

["Zeton", & the inaccurate "Z-Ton"]
Height: 60 Meters
Weight: 3 Tons

The last monster from ULTRAMAN, and his name comes from the last letter in the English alphabet, Z, which, for some strange reason, the Japanese often pronounce "zeto". Zetton is sort of a mutant space dinosaur, not actually the invading alien itself -- he's a monster created by

the invaders. He's not like an intelligent being, but more like an animal, controlled by aliens. Though he doesn't resemble a lizard or dragon by Earthling standards, part of his Japanese title, according to August Ragone, is "Uchu Kyoru", which means something like 'Terrible Space Dragon'. So Zetton is some sort of prehistoric monster, possibly existing at the same time as our own dinosaurs in the Jurassic Age, except that he lived on a different planet.

ウー

WOO
["Oo", "Wu"]
Height: 40 Meters
Weight: unknown

What they don't tell you in the American ULTRAMAN is that the Snow Girl dies at the end of the episode (from exhaustion & exposure to the cold, she was chased by those hunters). It's at this point that Woo, the abominable snowman, fades away. So it seems that originally, she created him (the result of some faith, or extra mind power the Snow Girl had; concepts like this aren't uncommon in Japanese sci-fi & fantasy -- Woo was also a legend, she needed it and it needed her) because she believed in it, so it came to life. In the nonsensical English dub, Woo just fades away and Hayata is dubbed saying that it disappeared without a trace, it was only a legend after all! They also hid the fact that the Snow Girl died (that would have been too sad of an episode), with Ito saying something like: "I hope I will meet her again some day".

アゴン

AGON
["Aron", "Teron", "Kyodai Kyoru" which means 'ancient dinosaur']
Height: 50 Meters
Weight: 320 Tons

Though it wasn't meant to be the same creature, this costume was used in AGON THE ATOMIC DRAGON, and later as "Aron" in the first episode of SPACE GIANTS. In the first episode, he didn't have fangs, and they later painted it him red. The suit originally comes from the Japan Radio Pictures mini-series KAIJU AGON, from 1964. Interesting to note that the guy who made the suit, Fuminori Ohashi (who also played the yeti-monster in HALF HUMAN) was nearly sued by Toho. Toho felt the Agon/Aron costume looked too much like Godzilla (remember, this was before endless Godzilla imitations flooded the market), but when they found out the charismatic Fuminori Ohashi made it, they said, basically, "Oh it's you! Well, it's okay then!" Fuminori Ohashi helped greatly (under Eiji Tsuburaya) in making the original Godzilla costumes for the first few films, so he had helped Toho in their earlier years.



ウルトラセブン



ウルトラマンジャック



ウルトラマンエース



ウルトラ

GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER- This entry in the Godzilla films is surprisingly story heavy, and is for the most part, played straight. If not as serious as GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS, it still is nowhere near as goofy as the embarrassing GHIDRAH THE THREE HEADED MONSTER. A teenager and two friends enter an island where the Red Bamboo terrorists have a nuclear plant because their boat was sunk by a giant lobster called Ebirah. Godzilla beats off Ebirah and tries to resume his rudely interrupted hibernation by a giant bird, a Rodan wannabe. Next he fights off jets while people on the nearby island finally awaken Mothra. These giant monsters sure love their naps! Godzilla leaves the island just before it's blown to bits by a time bomb, but could even a nuclear explosion do in an atomic monster? *** -Robert Mallory

GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER (Toho; 1971)- A crazed hallucination disguised as a movie. What better way can you think of to describe a film featuring wacky animated inserts, a rocking ecology song, dead mah-jong players, and space tadpoles? There's much more, but I'll bet you understand. Godzilla (who figured out how to fly in this one) battles Hedorah, a monster which thrives on pollution. This is the closest the Godzilla series has come to an indecipherable "art" movie, so it's puzzling why it's not more popular. *** -Christopher Elam

GODZILLA VS. THE THING (aka MOSURA TAI GOJIRA; 1964)- One of the undisputed classics of the Godzilla series. Mothra's giant egg washes up on a beach and assorted reporters, scientists, corrupt businessmen and villagers argue about what to do with it. You

could interpret these shenanigans as a sly commentary on capitalism run amok, but such concerns become irrelevant after Godzilla shows up. The Big G conducts his own brand of beautification on poor Japan again. Then Mothra arrives to protect its egg and that beleaguered nation. **** -Christopher Elam

GOGGLE V- Junichi Haruta, one of JAC's unsung heroes of the 1970s, finally gets his big break as one of five (six, if you include the giant robot) generic heroes aided by, unfortunately, a group of whining kiddies who think they're the Science Patrol and have their own cheap version of the Starship Enterprise's bridge. Other than these twerps and a few dumb-looking monsters, the program is more fun than any of us truly deserve! Jap. title: DAI SENTAI GOGURU FUAIBU ("Great Task Force Gogle Five", Greatest Fighting Team Gogle 5", etc.), 50 epi., TV Asahi (2/6/82-1/29/83), A Toei Production, Music: C. Watanabe, Main Dir.: Shohei Tojo, Main Writer: Hirohisa Soda. -Damon Foster ****

GOLD LIGHTAN ("Gold Warrior Gold Lightan")- Six small robots called The Lightan Army befriend a group of school kids, who aid them in their battle against Emperor Ibalda. This series was unique in that the Lightan robot are living cigarette lighters. The main Robot-gold Lightan can grow giant size and fight the villains' monsters. -Paul Haberman **1/2

GOLIATHON- Back in the late 1970s, even them Shaw Bros. were making KING KONG ripoffs, as this unintentional comedy from HK proves. I haven't watched my tape of this cliché-ridden, sappy, tacky monster



ウルトラの父



ウルトラの母



ウルトラマンキング



ウルトラマン



ウルトラマンレオ

アストラ

ウルトラマン80

ユリアン

光の巨人

movie in a while, but I recall it as being highly amusing, even if it doesn't have the slightest hint of originality. Starring Danny Lee and Evelyn Kraft, whoever that is. **1/2 -Damon Foster

GO LION ("King of 100 Beasts: Five Lion")- Five robot lions combine into one giant robot. Five Earthlings revive the legendary Go Lion to challenge the evil Galura Empire. This 1981 series (Toei; 52 epi) was popular here in the U.S. as part of VOLTRON. -Paul Haberman **1/2

GORATH (1962)- Yeah, it's that movie about a runaway planet on a collision course with Earth. One of the repercussions of the operations to move our world is that a giant walrus is awakened. The sequence is brief and the walrus, seen only in the Japanese version, looks goofy. Why did Toho name a walrus "Magma", of all things? *** -Christopher Elam

GORDIAN (1979; 73 epi./Tatsunoko)- This cartoon ("Champion Gordian") was unique in that the robot was comprised of three different sized armor suits that fit inside of each other. Daigo and his friends, including his pet panther, fight against the Madoga Army. **1/2 -Paul Haberman

GRANDIZER- Standard 1970s animated robot stuff from Japan. There's a watchable English movie compiled from episodes, and part of the "Force Five" package. ** -Damon Foster

GRANDIZER, GETTA ROBO G & GREAT MAZINGA: FINAL BATTLE! OCEAN BEAST- Go Nagai's three greatest robotic heroes team to battle a giant mutated jellyfish in thirty

incredible minutes of non-stop action. I'm not sure, but this feels like it may have been the last appearance of these three and the animators went all-out. I'm in no way, a fan of modern anime (ugh!), but I can't stress enough how incredible this is. A fitting finale to the 1970s robot cartoon genre. ***** -Jeff Goodhart

GREAT MAZINGER (1974/56 epi., Toei)- Sequel series to MAZINGER Z. Equals, and in some ways surpasses, the original series in raw power and action. Tetsuya Tsurugi pilots the new and improved Great Mazinger against the forces of the Migenjijn. Another hit from the mind of Go Nagai, the grandfather of giant robot cartoons. -Paul Haberman ***1/2

GRIDMAN (full title: "Denko Chojin Guridoman", which means "Electronic Superman: Gridman")- This is not a really good show, but it's sorta' watchable in its own mindless way. Some nerdy Japanese kid obsessed with computers collides with a computerized warlord to cause trouble and even more nerdy Japanese kids obsessed with computers fight them. The good guys have all the cool toys, uh, I mean, mecha. There's Dyna Dragon, God Zenon, and Ultraman-wannabe Gridman. They look like giants, even though they're actually tiny inside a computer, and they battle computer virus monsters. The basis for SUPERHUMAN SAMURAI SYBER SQUAD, which I thought sucked even worse. Tsuburaya Productions, 39 episodes (4/3/93 thru 1/8/94) for TBS network, Creators: Noboru Tsuburaya, Writers: Hiroyuki Kawasaki, Kazuhiko Shindo. *1/2 -Christopher Elam

GUNHED- Some of Kawakita's best FX can be seen here, and the acting by the occidental actors is better than usual for Toho films. However, there's a whole lot of nothing going on. I've never been able to watch it all the way through, in one sitting. This is based on a submission to a story contest for a Godzilla film. The winning submission became GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE, but Toho liked this runner up about megalomaniacal computer and its robot warriors enough to make it one its own without Godzilla. It seems to borrow too much from movies like ALIENS and TERMINATOR, and isn't as entertaining as either. It's okay, no big whoop. ** -Michael Keller

HALF-HUMAN- Scientist Carradine explains every minute detail of this Toho yeti movie. The U.S. inserts scenes aren't really that bad, but they aren't especially good either. Akemi Negisha steals the movie (Toho; 1955), and John Carradine, Akira Takarada, and Momoko Kochi also star. Special Effects: Eiji Tsuburaya, Dir.: Ishiro Honda. **1/2 -Christopher Elam

HEAVY METAL L-GAIM (1984/54 epi.; Sunrise)- From the creator of GUNDAM, Yoshiyuki Tomino, comes this semi-sequel to DUNBINE. Daba Myroad, pilot of the "Heavy Metal L-Gaim", leads the fight against the Poseidal forces that rule the galaxy. Two compilation videos and an O.V.A. were also released. -Paul Haberman ***

IDEON ("Great God Legend Ideon")- From the makers of GUNDAM comes this battle over the infinite energy called "The Ide". Two compilations movies from this cartoon (1980; 39 epi.). -Paul Haberman **1/2



ウルトラマンU.S.A

アンドロメロス

アンドロウルフ

アンドロマルス

アンドロフロル

INFRAMAN (1976)- The classic HK superhero movie. A fellow named Raymar (Danny Lee of THE KILLER, etc.) becomes a robotic superhero and engages in lots of martial arts duels with invaders from the Earth's interior. There's also a bizarre sequence about midway through the movie where a spider-monster inexplicably becomes giant-sized. Naturally, our hero does the same and beats the bug until he shrinks to normal. Then Inframan steps on him. Squish! ***** -Christopher Elam



IRON KING- Nippon Gendai's wild & crazy successor to ULTRASEVEN! When our heroic, giant red hero isn't battling monsters, our human hero Gentaro Shizuka (Koh Harada of EDO NO GEKITO) is battling henchmen (cool karate fights!!) and goofing around alternately! So in short, IRON KING is a masterpiece of flash, fun, action, monsters, superheroes, comedy, and any other over-the-top thrills they could toss in! Highly recommended!!! 26 epi. (10/8/72 thru 4/8/73), Created and Written by Noriaki Yuasa of Gamera fame. -Damon Foster *****

IRON MAN 28 (1963; 96 B&W epi.)- The very first giant robot hero cartoon. Achieved great success here in the U.S. as GIGANTOR. Followed by two sequel series. -Paul Haberman ***

IRON MAN 28 (1980; 51 epi.)- Actually more of a remake than a sequel. Shotaro Kaneda controls the solar powered robot in IRON MAN 28 against the forces of evil. This series is known in the U.S. as THE NEW ADVENTURES OF GIGANTOR. -Paul Haberman ***

IRON MAN 28 FX (aka "Super Electronic Robo Iron Man 28 FX")- This sequel series is the true "New Adventures" of IRON MAN 28. Shotaro Kaneda, now an adult, returns as his son takes over the control of the all new and improved Iron Man 28 FX. Don't worry, though, Shotaro gets in some licks as well with the original Iron Man 28. -Paul Haberman ***

JETMAN (1991/92)- Toei's 13th entry in their eternal Sentai series (the post GO RANGER cycle, starting with 1979's BATTLE FEVER J). It's one of the best of the lot, featuring many elements lifted directly from Tatsunoko's animated GATCHAMAN (1972) series: The heroes in bird-suits, the tough-guy loner #2 hero, a spaceship that changes into a giant firebird, etc. Also notable is the fact that this series is fairly dramatic (pretty serious compared to the average Sentai show), with major subplots that run through the entire series. What's incongruous amidst all the serious drama (okay, melodrama) are the monsters - For half the run, the villainous Byram Empire use mini-transformers to turn inanimate objects like planes, buses, apartment buildings and so forth into incredibly silly monsters! The best (or at least most jaw-dropping) is episode #10's "God Ramen", a terrifying plastic cup of Oodles of Noodles who eventually grows gigantic and threatens civilization! ***** -Frank Strom

A SECOND OPINION:

JETMAN (Toei; 1991)- My favorite of the post-BIOMAN Sentais, mainly because of the short thrift given annoying twerps. Toei, I am thanking you! What we have here is a very GATCHAMAN-influenced team which combats unbelievably cool villains (except for that wussy Toran, but that problem solves itself) and deals with more personality clashes than usual. Wow, a dysfunctional

Sentai. Our heroes use their giant robots Jet Icarus and Jet Garuda to kill monsters dead. ***1/2 -Christopher Elam

JEYDECKER, aka "Brave Police Jeydecker"- 1994, 48 animated episodes; Sunrise. -Paul Haberman **

JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT (Toei; 1967)- It's difficult for me to write about this show as it's more responsible than anything else for my love of Asian movies & TV. I would rush home from grade school and for 30 minutes, nothing else mattered other than that robot. That was it. Everything hindered on catching Wee Willie Webber (local TV host) announce "Johnnyyyyyyy Sokko!" and watching the robot launch. It's tough to stop nostalgia. I could go on about it for hours and hours and hours...ouch! ***** -Jeff Goodhartz

A SECOND OPINION:

JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT- Back in the 1960s, they knew how to treat Japanese shows. No new scenes with stupid American kids. Or were they saving money only, by dubbing the show? Anyway, this is a great show, with neat monsters and a way cool robot, who could fire rays, missiles and things. It has been released on home video. **** -David McRobie

JUMBORG ACE- Fun if silly Tsuburaya tele-series about a young man and his plane, which transforms into the titular robot. Later on he was joined by Jumborg 9, who is a car in his spare time. They fight off creatures from the Gross Star Men. No, really! Kokusai Films (1973), 50 epi., Creator: Hajime Tsuburaya, Writer: Shigemitsu Taguchi, Dir.: Shunkei Suzuki, Music: Shunsuke Kikuchi, Starring: Naoki Tachibana. *** -David McRobie

JUSPION- The full title of this live action, 1985 sci-fi series from Toei is "KIYOJU DOKUEN JYASPION", which I guess translates loosely into English as "Monster Hunter Juspion" or "Monster Investigator Juspion". Toei's 46 episode (3/15/85-3/25/86) tale of disco dancing space traveler Juspion (Hikaru Kurosaki), his female helper Anli (Kiyomi Tsukata) and their arch rival, the huge monster Satan Gos. This villain unleashes creatures of all shapes and sizes, who must deal with Juspion's many weapons (Gabi Jet, Gabi Tank, robot Dai Leon and much more). JAC guest stars like Hiroshi Watari and Junichi Haruta highlight the program, as do FX genius Nobuo Yajima's incredible special effects! -Damon Foster ***

KAIJU MARINE KONG- I've only seen one episode of this series, but it looks like fun. Marine Kong is an underwater monster who decides to see what is above the waves. He finds us. Nicely shot and with some good effects. *** -David McRobie

KAIJU OUJI ("Monster Prince"; 1968)- Wow! Talk about unexpected. After several years of seeing only the opening credits (which I

found childish and irritating), I finally got to see a whole episode, and it's fantastic! Nearly non-stop action with great, gaudy jazzy music blaring, complementing terrific "Military-vs.-Alien-Invader" scenes. Even if the brontosaurus looks fake as hell, this is still way cool stuff. Definitely one program that I must see more episodes of. ***** -Jeff Goodhart

KAKU RANGER (1994-'95)- Am I the only one who likes this wacky entry (NINJA SENTAI: KAKU RANGER) in the Super Sentai cycle? Sure, it's silly and stupid, but I thought that was part of the charm. Five Japanese youths gain the powers of legendary super ninjas and attempt to ward off a threat of all sorts of newly-freed Yokai (spirits). Their arsenal includes the typical array of giant robots, including Muteki Shogun and Kakure Daishogun. *** -Christopher Elam

KAMEN RIDER J (1994)- Toei's follow-up to their hit KAMEN RIDER ZO. Only this time, the rider in question can become a giant! It seems that there are even more extraterrestrial interlopers (a lizard man, wasp woman, and cobra man, for easy identification) with unsavory intentions. A photographer is transformed into Kamen Rider J, to take them on and later confront the massive alien ship. Not quite as effective as its predecessor, but close. ***1/2 -Christopher Elam

A SECOND OPINION:

KAMEN RIDER J (1994)- Yeehaw! More dastardly aliens are out to conquer Earth, subjugate mankind, and kidnap our children (really!). Who can stop them? A new Kamen Rider, of course! This time out, the new hero is made a Kamen Rider (the 14th!) by a race of benevolent bug-people (I find it amazing that all these Kamen Riders are transformed into basically the same hero with the same equipment and costume, but all through different means). Kamen Rider J's unique power is his ability to grow to humongous proportions (the "J" stands for "Jiant"...er..."Jumbo"), though it's not like the other Riders couldn't turn giant if they felt like it-- much like Skyriders' unique power was that he could fly, but Kamen Riders 1 & 2 also flew on occasion, they just didn't make a habit of it. Anyway, this 30-minute theatrical short climaxes with Kamen Rider J duking it out with a mammoth living battle fortress. Better than KAMEN RIDER ZO and TRUE KAMEN RIDER, but not as good as most of the others. ***1/2 -Frank Strom

KAMEN RIDER VS. ULTRAMAN- This early 1990s, made-for-video, 15-minute featurette promises the biggest battle this side of MAZINGER Z VS. DEVILMAN, right? And I'll bet you're creaming in your jeans just thinking about it, right? Hah! The joke's on you! Our two titanic heroes never actually come to blows (much like Mazinga Z and Devilman). An alien supervillain and giant monster threaten life as we know it, until Ultraman and Kamen Rider (both the originals) kick their sorry asses up and down the

street. Kamen Rider grows giant size to help beat the combined super-menace. Neat-o keen. However, the question still remains-- who is more macho, Ultraman or Kamen Rider? I know it's frustrating, but try not to lose sleep over it. ***1/2 -Frank Strom

KING KONG ESCAPES- This is actually based on a Rankin-Bass cartoon, and the giant ape here isn't the same as the one in KING KONG VS. GODZILLA (this one is much smaller). If anything, the Kong suit used in this movie is even worse than the one used in that film! But it's still loads of fun. Dr. Who (no, not to be confused with the TV show that blows STAR TREK away), Gorosaurus and Mechani-Kong make life a pain in the ass for our primate protagonist. But everything works out in the end, and Jackie Gleason's daughter lives another day with the hope of possibly being able to use her own voice in another flick (don't hold your breath). **** -Michael Keller



KING KONG VS. GODZILLA- As I'm sure every reader of this publication knows, the Kong suit is so terrible, you couldn't use it in a bigfoot hoax at Bluff Creek! Had Eiji Tsuburaya ever seen a gorilla? Aside from King Kong, the movie is entertaining if you're a pre-schooler or just had a case of Red Stripe beer (or both). Okay, I'm being too harsh on this film. The miniature FX are flawless, the Godzilla/Kong rumble is a crowd pleaser, Ifukube score (heard only in the Japanese version) is up to his usual high standard, and the Godzilla suit is fat and sleepy-eyed (so many of you overweight fans can identify with him). **1/2 -John Grace

A SECOND OPINION:

KING KONG VS. GODZILLA (1963)- In hindsight, it's amazing how quickly (this is only the third entry) Toho's Godzilla series went from grim anti-atomic allegory to outright slapstick comedy. The out-of-place slapstick and only so-so SFX (surprisingly not as good as earlier films RODAN, MOTHRA, etc.) would be enough to ruin KING KONG VS. GODZILLA if it wasn't chock full of great memorable scenes like Godzilla's escape from the iceberg and a sensational slugfest at the climax. *** -Frank Strom

KUJIRA KAMI ("Whale God")- Its special effects make it a must see (well, almost) for fans of Japanese giants. While the miniature and not so-miniature models of the whale are great, I myself can't take seriously any film where Japanese are the heroes and a whale is the villain! Let's get real here, are whales driving Japanese into extinction?! Are whalers an endangered species (I wish!)? I kept rooting for the poor, innocent whale and cheered every time he killed a hunter! I have no sympathy for the small village of whalers, and question Shintaro Katsu's character's charisma; he's a bully and in one scene, he rapes a woman! And he's supposed to be a hero? This movie won't score points with feminists or Green Peace, that's for damn sure. When the fishermen of the old-style village aren't fighting among themselves (and emitting typically annoying Japanese grunts through out, which make them sound like drunken neanderthals), they're talking (if you can call it that) endlessly in this B&W drama which bored me to tears. Also features Kojiro Hongo and Takashi Shimura. * -Damon Foster

LAST DINOSAUR (1977)- This U.S./Japanese co-production centers on a "Great White Hunter" who becomes obsessed with offing a T/ rex living in one of those "lost world" places. The Tsuburaya special effects are brilliant and the dramatics are tolerable. This TV movie is a nostalgic throwback to the classic Toho U.S./Japanese collaborations. It's not in that league, but it's still okay fun. I'll take it over JURASSIC PARK any day. **1/2 -Christopher Elam

LATITUDE ZERO- Excitement abounds in this fast-paced adventure (Toho; 1969). Scientists are rescued by a submarine from a utopian civilization and help save the world from a megalomaniac (no, not Damon Foster). Some of the effects (i.e. giant mice) looks a little rushed, but it doesn't damage the movie. Notable as the only Toho sci-fi film released to America with no dubbing at all (it was all filmed in English). Dir.: Ishiro Honda, Starring: Joseph Cotton, Cesar Romero, Richard Jaeckel, Akira Takarada & Masumi Okada. ****1/2 -Christopher Elam

LEGEND OF THE DINOSAURS- This Toei movie (about a plesiosaur and a pterodactyl) was supposedly a vast undertaking requiring a huge budget. Judging from the results, it must have all been spent on coffee for the crew. This reminds me of all those cheap JAWS ripoffs that came out in the late 1970s like TENTACLES, ORCA, PIRANHA and BARRACUDA. Go watch THE CRATER LAKE MONSTER instead, at least the plesiosaur in that movie looks good. This puts me in a bad mood, I don't want to talk about it. 1/2 -Michael Keller

A SECOND OPINION:

LEGEND OF THE DINOSAURS (Toei; 1977)- What do you get when you take the worst elements of JAWS, PIRANHA, TENTACLES and THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT, mix

them with bad effects, no plot, blaring 1970s TV-movie music and stiff rubber monsters? Answer: One of the worst Japanese monster movies ever produced. Released in Japan as **THE LEGEND OF DINOSAURS AND MONSTER BIRDS** (an even more misleading title), this film is about as bad as it gets. I find it very hard to avoid any Japanese monster movie, but if you are going to sit through this one, bring a good book. Toei has not had very many theatrically released monster movies, and this is a good example of why they never reached the output of Toho, or even Daiei. The infamous Sandy Frank has released this one on bargain video which you can find in some bins for \$6.99. Hey, you can always use it as a blank tape! -Bob Johnson

LIVEMAN- This Toei live action program attempted to be original by being the only Sentai since **SUN VULCAN** to have only three heroes instead of five, but of course, two more characters were added later on. Other than this, **LIVEMAN** is absolutely indistinguishable from the other programs in this seriously overkilled genre. Full Japanese title: **CHOJU SENTAI RAIBUMAN**, which means, "Super Beast Task Force Liveman". 49 epi. (1988). -Damon Foster **

LYGER (aka "Beast God Liger")- From Dynamic Productions comes this violent adventure series (1989, 43 epi.) of cartoons, reminiscent of the old robot shows. Young kid controls Liger, a huge humanoid bio armor hero against alien invaders. Inspired by a famous Japanese wrestler of the same name. -Paul Haberman ***

MACHINE ROBO: REVENGE OF CRONOS (1986; 38 epi.)- This **TRANSFORMERS**-like cartoon from Asahi is based on a popular line of Japanese toys called Machine Robo (known as **Gobots** in the U.S., though this series has no relation to the nasty U.S. **GOBOTS** cartoon). As my Japanese friend so eloquently put it, "The story is cheap, but the animation is good". Followed by a short lived sequel series. The main female character, Leina Stol, was very popular and was featured in her own set of OVA's. -Paul Haberman **1/2

MACHINE ROBO: RUNAWAY BATTLE HACKERS- Short-lived sequel series (1987) to **REVENGE OF CRONOS**, noteworthy only for its funky rap theme song. -Paul Haberman **

MACROSS- Yet another of those giant robot cartoons, and this one, even when dubbed in English as **ROBOTECH**, bored me to tears. -Damon Foster 1/2

MACROSS 7 (1994; 49 epi.)- Sequel to **MACROSS**. Lots of loud music, a few familiar **MACROSS** characters, but not much else. -Paul Haberman **

MAGIC SERPENT- Here it is Damon, at long last. The first review I ever promised you, five years ago. This is the story of two war-

riors, one good, one bad, trained by a mystical master. The bad one helps take over the empire. Hhmmmm, I think George Lucas saw this movie. Anyway, it's great, with giant monsters, magical duels and several ninja. Miss it at your own peril. ***** -David McRobie

A SECOND OPINION:

MAGIC SERPENT- I wasn't too thrilled with this Toei fantasy movie the first time I saw it, but it's since grown on me like a bad case of athlete's foot. What happened between then & now is my growing interest in samurai films and Japanese culture in general. The swordplay and so forth can now keep me interested until the climax with the battling wizards who turn into dragons (well, one dragon and one fire breathing toad). The monsters aren't up to Toho standards of the same time, but they're good enough to keep you entertained. Excellent miniatures. *** -Michael Keller

MAHA BARON (aka "Super Robot Mach Baron")- Live action series which tries to combine the robot (ala **Mazinga**) angle with the **Ultraman** angle, but the only episode I ever saw was dreadfully dull. A slick, rockin' theme song (supplied by some old Japanese glam rock band!) full of grinding guitars highlights an otherwise uninteresting series.

1974, 26 epi., Creator: Shozo Uehara, Writer: Koichi Takano, Dir.: Yuhiko Takeda. *1/2 -Damon Foster

MAJIN HUNTER MITSURUGI- Stop me if you've heard this one before: A Japanese TV show about a squad of humans attired in helmets who fight off monstrous invaders, with the help of a giant superhero who appears at the end of each episode. Another **Ultra** clone, right? Wrong! The setting is old Japan, and the script is kickin' with swordplay, ninjas and samurais! Our heroic giant, the automated samurai "Majin Hunter Mitsurugi", like the giant monsters he battles, is animated! We're not talking cartoons here, but stop-motion, 3-dimensional models!



Claymation fans take note! These brief inserts aren't up to Ray Harryhausen standards, but they're cool battles which make this action-packed program a one-of-a-kind thriller! The series's budget is low, and I don't know how our three human heroes (magical ninjas, ala PHANTOM AGENTS!) obtained motorcycle helmets which pre-date motorcycles themselves, but this exciting combination of fantasy and swordfighting galore makes this short-lived series absolutely outstanding!!! Creator: Takeo Nakamura, Writers: Susumi Takahisa, Masayuki Shimada, Toshiaki Matsushima, Directors: Keinosuke Tsuchiya, Ichiro Harusuki, Music: Yukikazu Suzuki, Consisting of 12 episodes Produced by Kokusai films, Broadcast on Fuji TV from 1/7/73-7/31/73; Starring: Jo Mizuki. ***** -Damon Foster

MAJIN, MONSTER OF TERROR (Daiei; 1966)- Japan's variation on "The Golem". It's a fairly depressing pic about 17th century Japanese peasants abused by a real dickhead of a warlord. That is until the fantastic finale



when the peasants' 'God' awakens in the form of a giant living samurai statue. Visibly pissed, it kills good and bad guys indiscriminately before literally going to pieces. Followed by two sequel/remakes. *** -Jeff Goodhartz

MASKMAN- Yet another Toei Sentai clone, the only aspects of note are appearances by Hayato Tani (who, in the 1970s was in crime drama programs like NECHU JIDAI KEIJI HEN) and the fact that the heroes play Cat's Cradle for some reason. Otherwise, just more lame-ass, watered down "fights" and the obligatory huge robot. For what it's worth, the full Japanese title is HIKARU SENTAI MASUKUMAN, which means "PSI Fighting Team Maskman" or "Light Task Force Maskman", it depends on who you ask. 51 epi., 2/28/84-2/20/88. Starring: Ryosuke Umezu. -Damon Foster **

MAZINGA Z (1972)- The first (and best) of Go Nagai's robot cartoon serieses that are about as influential as anything that comes to mind. If you've only seen the butchered American version (TRANZOR Z), then you're missing out on the too-cool music and surprising bloodshed. Definitely seek the Japanese prints. ***** -Jeff Goodhartz

A SECOND OPINION:

MAZINGER Z (MAJINGA ZETO)- This is definitely the greatest giant robot of all time! I'm not kidding! I know there are other greats: UFO ROBO GRANDIZER, GETTER ROBO G, JEEG OF STEEL, VOLTUS V, etc. (GUNDAM, what?)-- but, the King of the Robots is Mazinger Z! Created by Go (DEVILMAN) Nagai, his hit comic was quickly picked up by Toei Doga Co., and transformed into an even bigger hit as an animated series, which ran for nearly three years; spawned numerous sequels, ripoffs (it caused the birth of THE TRANSFORMERS and GUNDAM; what am I saying?! I wish that MAZINGA Z was a flop, so it would be obscure, and only I would like it).

The result is one of the turning points (unfortunately?) in Japanese cartoonimation, and one of the finest and most violently delirious SF/robot cartoons ever - punctuated by Michiaki (GORANGER) Watanabe's heroic soundtrack. Now, you can stop sniveling because it's old, and go build your Bandai Gundam models. You know, MAZINGER Z may be 24 years old, but GUNDAM is 17, dude. Go get some contact lenses, lose some weight, and try going out with a member of the opposite sex, who doesn't go to conventions! This review is Warp Factor 10, Over and Out. And now to the script: It's about scientist Professor Kabuto, who discovers a new element called "Japanium", which when treated to metal deposits, creates a new type of building material: "Ultra Alloy Z". Evil & demonic rival scientist Dr. Hell wants the formula so he can create an army of giant automations in order to subjugate the world to his rule. Refusing to work with his former colleague, Professor Kabuto and his immediate family are killed by Hell's minions - save for his grandsons Koji & Shiro. The two find their elder dying in his countryside manor/lab, and his last words are to Koji, "take the robot I've invented, Mazinger Z...don't let it fall into Dr. Hell's hands..."; Now, brash teenager Koji Kabuto pilots the invincible Mazinger Z into battle against the venomous evil of Dr. Hell (there's more to the story, but Damon and I think you should watch it rather than read another damn over-detailed synopsis). Toei Doga/Fuji TV; 1972-'74, Created by Go Nagai. ***** -August Ragone

MAZINGA Z: ROBOT FROM THE STARS- Compilation of footage from the live action series MAHA BARON! Probably a Chinese compilation, since the songs are in Chinese! However, it's Spanish dubbed! * -Damon Foster

MEGALOMAN- I wish this series would come out on tape! Our long haired giant hero from space defends the Earth from giant monsters with the usual rays, but his fighting is actually kung fu! This is kind of a remake of RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE, from what I can tell. It's great. ***** -David McRobie

A SECOND OPINION:

MEGALOMAN (1979)- Dig that giant superhero with long, blonde hair. Another great giant superhero series. One of the more ac-



tion packed of the bunch. Cheap-looking monsters but great karate fights and of course, a rockin', opening theme. 31 epi., Fuji TV. Creator: Tetsu Ganya. **** -Jeff Goodhartz

MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS- The program's giants are robots they call "Zords", but should actually be called "Pathetically obviously gimmicks to sell overpriced toys". I really wish I could say I despise this American ripoff of Japan's **ZYU RANGER** and **KAKU RANGER** programs, but I think in some ways, the Americans actually improved over their Toei originators, not that this was any major accomplishment. But it's weird that they even bothered to so drastically change everything, when it would have been easier just to dub all the original Japanese footage into English! This is so odd, it makes as much sense as eating pussy with a straw. ** -Damon Foster

MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS: THE MOVIE- Though there's a nice scene of our heroes chased by a fairly large dinosaur skeleton, most of the "giant"

action is headache-inducing computer animation which takes up nearly the full final 30 minutes. As is always the case with these **o n c e - J a p a n e s e - n o w - A m e r i c a n** bastardizations, the funnest parts are its all too few karate skirmishes as our heroes kick ass though significantly outnumbered. The infantile one-liners (nearly ruining the fights) are a constant reminder that this is a kiddie film, but I'll take this childish, yet FX-filled, acrobatic action/fantasy over **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES**, **DOUBLE DRAGON**, or any of that videogame-inspired **STREETFIGHTER** crap! This isn't to say I loved this movie. Instead of watching it again, I would rather get a lap-dance from a porcupine. ** -Damon Foster

MIRRORMAN (1971; 51 epi.)- Another great giant hero TV series from Tsuburaya. Our hero gets his power from shiny objects and transforms into his giant self. It's fun, but not a "must see" sort of thing. It's better than **ULTRAMAN TARO**. *** -David McRobie

MISSION OUTERSPACE SPRUNGL (1983; 52 epi.)- A group of convicts are recruited and formed into a guerilla force. Using advanced mecha and weapons, they battle the forces of Crime. -Paul Haberman **1/2

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM series- Endless TV shows with titles like "Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam" and "Mobile Suit Victory Gundam" bring new meaning to the word 'overkill'. Plenty of cartoons exist about these giant Gundam robots. I did see an episode or two, and believe me, this genre is a sedative waiting to happen. I'll pass. 1/2 -Damon Foster

MONSTER FROM A PREHISTORIC PLANET- Before **GAMERA- GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE** came out, I would have to say this was probably the best non-Toho kaiju eiga. The Gappas are inspired creations, looking like crosses between Godzilla and Rodan. The effects are on par with anything Toho did, and the miniatures are fabulous. The story owes a lot to **GORG** and **MOTHR**A, both great movies in their own right, but it still has a flavor all its own. The ending is somewhat touching. A personal favorite. ***

MONSTER ZERO- A true highlight in Godzilla's career, as he not only stars with Nick Adams, but this is his first time defending the Earth against alien invaders. A wonderful movie with great effects and superb cast. This time, Godzilla and Rodan stop the invaders and King Ghidorah. **** -David McRobie

MOTHRA (Toho; 1961)- Not one of my favorites. I always considered the big moth to make a better co-star than lead. Some great destruction scenes and a lot of boring plot. I've seen worse. Starring: Frankie Sakai. ** Jeff Goodhartz

MYSTERIANS, THE- Has some of the best Toho mecha ever. And an original story line that everyone else has used since. The char-

acters aren't very memorable, and neither is the robot. However, it's the frenetic ending that most people remember, and deservedly so. Set to a great musical score, it's a huge battle between us and them. Guess who wins?! *** -David McRobie

NATIONAL KID (1960-'61)- An early Toei superhero series featuring a flying spaceman. A couple of stories featured him battling giant monsters. It's cheap by today's standards and not exactly action packed, but still pretty cool. Sorry I can't make it sound more interesting. Oh well. ** -Christopher Elam

OH RANGER (1995-'96)- From what I've seen, this installment ("Super Powered Task Force Oh Ranger", 48 epi.) in the seemingly unending legacy of the Super Sentai saga is fairly uneven. It wavers even more than usual, between high drama and high camp. Five members of the United Airforce derive super powers from ancient objects and use said powers to fight off the invaders from the Machine Empire, Baranoia. Hiroshi Miyauchi makes a welcome return to Toei superherodom. Oh, there are giant robots like Oh Ranger Robo and Red Puncher, too. **1/2 -Christopher Elam

PEACOCK KING- Yuen Biao in an uneven 1989 HK fantasy about an ancient witch (Pauline Wong in an Elvira wig) slaughtering modern HK. On the whole, just another fun, Hong Kongese combination of supernatural, comedy, & martial arts, but the stand-out scene is where large dinosaur statues (in a museum) come to life and little Yuen Biao must use acrobatics and "cowboy-like" tactics to take care of them. Not a perfect movie, but with enough over-the-top thrills and occasional gore to keep it consistently amusing. Also features: Gloria Yip, Hiroshi Mikami, Narumi Yasuda, Kao Hsiung & Liu Chia Hui. Dir.: Lan Nei Tsai. *** -Damon Foster

PRINCE OF SPACE (1959)- One of Toei's earliest attempts at superheroic thrills. A benevolent spaceman takes it upon himself to protect the Earth from Ambassador Phantom and his minions. What a guy, that Prince of Space! He even goes to the phantom's home planet Crangkor and uses his spaceship to zap the giant, bumpy-headed guardian. The giant is a wimpy monster and falls easily. It's so hard to find good help. **1/2 -Christopher Elam

PSYCHO ARMOR GOVARIAN (1983/26 epi./ N.A.C.)- From Go Nagai's Dynamic Productions. A team of young paranormalists are recruited to defend Earth against the Garadine Invaders. The robots in this Japanimation series are controlled by the pilots' "psycho power". -Paul Haberman ***

RAYEARTH (1988)- Popular fantasy/sci-fi cartoon ("Magic Knight Rayearth"; 49 epi.) of three girls who get transported to a mystical world and gain magic powers (and robots) to help rid the land of an evil despot and save a kidnapped queen. -Paul Haberman **1/2

RED BARON (1973)- Made perhaps, due to the popularity of MAZINGA Z and other animated robots, this live action version has some boring dialogue, but the robot fights are super terrific. I ate this stuff up. If watching giant three-dimensional robots collide is your thing, this is for you. ****1/2 -Jeff Goodhartz

RED BARON (1994; 49 epi.)- Loosely based on the live action series of the same name. This cartoon is like a blast from the past. Simple story infused with a lot of energy and action. In this one, the robots are called "Metal Fighters" and tournaments are held to complete for the title of World Champion Metal Fighter. Of course, an evil organization wants to capture the powerful Red Baron metal fighter for its own evil purposes. -Paul Haberman ***

RED LIGHT BULLET ZILLION- Enjoyable Tatsunoko cartoon (1987; 31 epi.) about The White Nuts Team, as they use the mysterious "zillion" power against the Nosa Invaders. The camaraderie between the three main characters (J.J., Champ and Apple) is what makes the show special. Only five episodes were released so far in English, as well as the O.V.A. -Paul Haberman ***

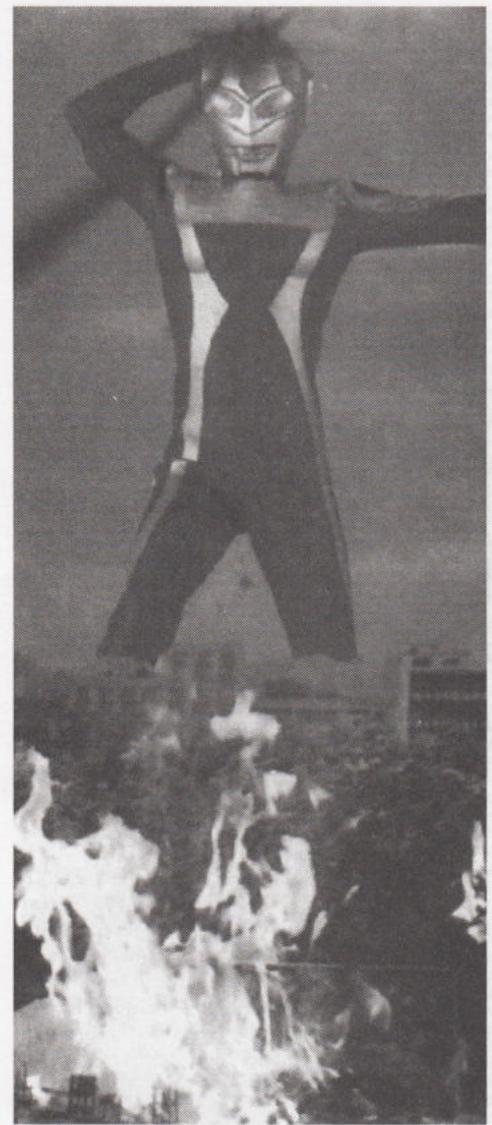
REDMAN (1972; 138 epi.) - Looks like this was one of those 5-10 minute filler programs. Wish we in the states had cool things like this on in the middle of the night. It appears to be one giant battle with Redman taking on various monsters. What story? ** -David McRobie

RETURN OF GIANT MAJIN (Daiei; 1966)- The second of the three Majin flicks is an improvement in every way over the first. The plot filler this time is more action oriented, not quite as depressing. And the Majin scenes are also better, bordering on brilliance. The religious symbolism in this one is also a plus. **** -Jeff Goodhartz

RETURN OF GODZILLA, THE (aka GODZILLA 1985)- I was lucky enough to get the uncut English dubbed version without the U.S. tampering. Finally, I have a different perspective on the Big G's less than stellar comeback. It's pretty entertaining, though it'll never be mistaken for a classic. Blame the worst of the idiocy on New World. Anyway, Godzilla's back from the dead and everyone but his fans have conveniently forgotten his '55-'75 exploits. He smashes up Tokyo and, uh, that's really about it. **1/2 -Christopher Elam

RETURN OF THE DINOSAURS (1985)- I couldn't finish this mixture of cartoon humans and live FX work. It's nowhere near as watchable as its predecessor, ATTACK OF THE SUPER MONSTERS. This one is edited from episodes of BORN FREE (another live action & animated program about dinosaurs), which apparently became much different later in its run. 1/2 -Christopher Elam

RETURN OF ULTRAMAN (KAETTEKITA ULTRAMAN; 1971)- After ULTRASEVEN ended in 1968, Tsuburaya Productions began planning a new Ultra series. Eiji Tsuburaya, who was part of the early planning stages died in 1970, before the new series aired. To keep the viewing public's attention focused on Ultraman, the studios released ULTRA FIGHT in 1970. This program condensed fight scenes from ULTRAMAN and ULTRASEVEN, and added newly shot scenes of Ultraseven (human sized) fighting poor versions of familiar kaiju, on a sandlot in Tokyo. Interestingly enough, the battles were set up like comedic versions of wrestling matches with an unseen sports commentator providing play-by-play reports. 367 fights were shown in 2-minute installments. During its run, RETURN OF ULTRAMAN blasted the airwaves on April 2, 1971, and ran for 51 episodes until March 31, 1972. The whimsical ULTRA FIGHT ended on the same day as well. RETURN OF ULTRAMAN was to be a direct sequel to ULTRAMAN, hence the name, "New Ultraman", also known as Ultraman Jack. The program was not really a sequel, but main writer Shozo Uehara, who wrote scripts for ULTRA Q, ULTRAMAN, and ULTRASEVEN was at the helm, along with Ishiro Honda, who directed episodes 1, 2, 7, 9, and 51. A good portion of the episodes' special effects sequences were directed by Koichi Takano, and most of the music score was borrowed from ULTRASEVEN, except for the catchy Monster Attack Team march. Monster Attack Team (MAT) was formed to attack the nasty kaiju, which woke up due to the earth's unnatural weather. Kaettekita Ultraman came from the M78 Nebula to help MAT with their dire situation, 4 years after Ultraman was beaten by Zeton. New Ultraman promised to save the earth with Goh as his agent of peace. Goh was brought back to life and became the alter ego of Ultraman Jack. Captain Kato of MAT asked Goh to be a member of MAT, and together MAT fought more monsters than the original Ultraman and Science Patrol did. New Ultraman even fought with Zeton again. This second version looked more like an "Ultra Fight" edition of the classic Zeton from ULTRAMAN. Baltan Seijin made his fourth appearance in RETURN OF ULTRAMAN, and the aptly titled "Baltan Jr.". Initially, the program maintained the quality of the predecessors, but lost its omnipotent, mysterious quality about midway through the series. There are some high-caliber episodes though, like: #35 "BEWARE THE LIGHT MONSTER PRIZ-DEVIL, because of its sheer weirdness and dramatic, spooky qualities; and an earlier episode: #12 REVENGE OF THE MONSTER SHUGRAN, which shines as a prime example of the fighting spirit of MAT. Even though New Ultraman did not inflict as much graphic damage as his big brothers did, the show made up for it with its character development, and unintrusive messages of companionship & peace, which were lit and photographed in that unique Tsuburaya style. **** -Ed Holland



A SECOND OPINION:

RETURN OF ULTRAMAN (KAETTEKITA ULTRAMAN) (Tsuburaya; 1971)- Third in the Ultra series is the most 'basic' one. Nothing too outlandish. Just Ultraman Jack battling well-designed monsters. Pretty straight-faced. **** -Jeff Goodhartz

RODAN- Called "Radon" in Japanese, this 1956 flick still holds up today, it's arguably the best movie ever made to deal with a couple reptilian birds and a few monstrous insects who terrorize a Kyushu mining community. Great dialogue too, like when a huge bug interrupts a tender, romantic subplot, Kenji Sawara is dubbed saying: "Guard, help! There's a monster here!" Despite Eiji Tsuburaya's great special effects and Ishiro Honda's masterful editing, it's not perfect--there are continuity flaws like the negative which shows only Rodan's wing, but once the detectives have developed a photo from it, we suddenly see Rodan's foot too! If you can tolerate the typically sappy, saccharine-sweet romance and Akira Ifukube's typically 1950s music, Rodan is an enjoyable tale of



prehistoric birds & bugs on the loose, and listen for the voice dubbing of what I'm convinced is a young George Takei! Cast: Kenji Sawara, Yumi Shirakawa, Akihiko Hirata, Akio Kobori, Yasuko Nakata. **** -Damon Foster

RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE (aka ZONE FIGHTER)- One of the best of the 1973 giant superhero programs. Zone Fighter (with occasional help from Godzilla) and his family battle the evil alien Garogas and their outlandish monsters (which include heavy-hitters like Ghidorah and Gigan). Top-notch fun for superhero and monster fans alike. **** -Jeff Goodhartz

SCIENCE ADVENTURE TEAM TRANSOR 5- In the year 1999, the Transor 5 Team investigates mysteries around the world. This animated series is unique because the mecha scenes are live action. -Paul Haberman **

SILVER KAMEN- This 1971 superhero (live action) series needs closer examination, since the show is so uneven, it's hard to get a feel for it, having seen only a few episodes. Some episodes are boring and really suck, while others are action-packed extravaganzas comparable to the generally superior **IRON KING!** 26 epi., Creator: Mamoru Sasaki, Starring: Toshio Shibamoto. *** -Damon Foster

SIX ULTRA BROTHERS VS. THE MONSTER ARMY (1974)- A Japanese/Thai co-production noted for its unusually high stupidity quotient. The top-billed Ultras play second fiddle to monkey god/dancing fool Hanuman. Some sort of solar effect awakens a ton of monsters, led by Gohora (aka Gomora) who sounds like Rodan in this movie. Far from the best, but I've seen worse and lately. *1/2 -Christopher Elam

SON OF GODZILLA (1968)- Lot's of people rag on this movie, but have they bothered

watching it? Minya is indeed uglier than sin. However, the story, acting & special effects are no worse than other Toho classics. A team of U.N. scientists are conducting weather experiments which go awry and cause bugs to mutate into giants. Those darn bugs menage Godzilla's newly hatched son so it's Papa G to the rescue. ***1/2 -Christopher Elam

SPACE GIANTS (P Productions; 1966)- While my nostalgia for **JOHNNY SOKKO** and **ULTRAMAN** runs strong, I can't really say that same for **SPACE GIANTS**, while I still like the show quite a bit. I'm not off to buy the 4-part story episodes. As a kid, I found the idea innovative, but now it seems like boring plot-filler. Oh well, it's still cool though. ***1/2 -Jeff Goodhartz

A SECOND OPINION:

SPACE GIANTS- Groundbreaking, if somewhat dull adventures of a gold robot and his family defending our planet from the evil mastermind Rodak, his Lugo Men and space monsters. It's not bad, and does have several variety of effects shots. Still, those damn kids (Miko and Gam) are hard to take. *** -David McRobie

SPACE WARRIORS 2000 (1985)- Unwatchable, "humorous" (hardy har har) dubbing of clips from assorted Ultra Brother programs. Don't expect another **WHAT'S UP TIGER LILY**, this pathetic bastardization makes me almost respect **Nightflight's** atrocious **DYNAMAN**. The dialogue tries to be funny but it's stupid. But being almost all fights and special effects shots, it's watchable if you turn the sound down. For more on **SPACE WARRIORS 2000**, see OC's J.A.C. Issue. ** -Damon Foster

SPARKMAN- There's a giant robot in this strange Korean ripoff of Japan's **Uchu Keiji** series. For more on **SPARKMAN**, see OC's **Robo Hero** issue. *** -Damon Foster

SPECTREMAN- Now here's one damn strange and wonderful series. **SPECTREMAN** is little a bit old fashioned **Nippon Superhero** (ala **SPECTRUM MASK**), it's a little bit **THE SPACE GIANTS**, and it's dressed up like **ULTRAMAN**; and it's really weird; in a good way, asshole! Anyone who thinks this series is trash was never openminded (or even closed-minded; maybe you don't have a mind at all!). Sure, P-Productions didn't have the kind of budget that Eiji Tsuburaya could command for **ULTRASEVEN**, but that doesn't hold **SPECTREMAN** back, it's extremely action packed, has a unique look, took chances, and beat **RETURN OF ULTRAMAN** (my fave Ultra show) by 12 episodes! And P-Productions did it with sheer guts- they may have fared better with human-sized shows like the superb **VIGILANTE LION-KNIGHT (KAIKETSU RAION MARU)** and the psychotic **DENJIN ZABOGA**, but still, **SPECTREMAN** is one damn entertaining series (and that's what it's all about, baby). Many of the shows detractors are staunch

Toho fans (who dislike even the Ultra Series and Gamera) or snob Ultra Series fanatics (who bow to Eiji Tsuburaya; but don't want to watch one of his non-monster films)- little realizing that many of the show's teleplays were penned by the very same scribes who breathed life into the scripts of the saintly Ultra Series (as well as **SPACE CRUISER YAMATO!**) Are you afraid to like **SPECTREMAN** because your friends will stop inviting you to their parties, and won't give you coke anymore? There's no such thing as New Wave - New Wave is the figment of some lame cunt's imagination... uh, sorry - I was **DECLINE**-ing. Maybe now that **SPECTREMAN** has finally been released on laserdisc in its homeland the video bootleggers here will be all over it, and you, the disenfranchised, will be able to give **SPECTREMAN** another look! Hurry up, lame-ass, before a trendy critic tells you it's cool! I'm August Ragone, and you're not. **** -August Ragone

A SECOND OPINION:

SPECTREMAN- It's a great series from P-Productions that made its way over here in the late 1970s (dig that groovy theme song!). It wasn't edited too extensively, and the dubbing is okay. Spectreman is here to save our planet from the mad genius, Dr. Gori and his bumbling assistant Kharis. He does. **** -David McRobie

A SECOND OPINION:

SPECTREMAN (P Productions; 1971)- This one I didn't catch as a kid the first time around. I saw the episodes on video (pre-records plus bootleg TV prints) much later in life. Still, this is a fun, energetic and violent early superhero series. I have to admit though, that it probably only deserves four stars. The extra star goes toward the hilarious dubbing of the space apes. Too much! For more on **SPECTREMAN**, see OC's **Super Hero Issue**. **** -Jeff Goodhartz

SPIDERMAN (Toei; 1977)- Kind of a ripoff in that it merely takes the likeness of Spiderman and surrounds him in a typically Japanese superhero-type scene, including a giant robot. But so what?! It's still lively and fun to watch. And that's what matters most. *** -Jeff Goodhartz

A SECOND OPINION:

SPIDERMAN- It's so much better than the American version. Spidey takes on an outerspace tyrant to save our planet with the help of the first ever live action giant robot (of its style) **Leopardon**. He also gets to drive around in a cool car, **Marveller** (where'd they get that name?). Lots of fun and action from Toei. For more on **SPIDERMAN**, see OC's J.A.C. issue. **** -David McRobie

STEEL JEEG (1975/46 epi.; Toei)- This Go Nagai robot cartoon features a robot that combines using magnetic power. Cyborg



Hiroshi Shiba transforms into Jeeg to battle the Jama Empire. -Paul Haberman **1/2

SUN VULCAN (Toei; 1981)- One of the best of the redundant Super Sentais (before they became too redundant). Comparing the excellent fights & giant robot battles in this one to anything made from the late 1980s on, is kinda' depressing. For more on **SUN VULCAN**, see OC's Super Hero Issue. Full title: **TAIYO SENTAI SAN BARUKAN** ("Solar Task Force: Sun Vulcan"), 50 episodes (2/7/81-1/30/83), Broadcast on TV Asahi, Creator: Saburo Yatsude, Writer: Shozo Uehara, Dir.: Koichi Takemoto, Music: Chumei Watanabe, Starring: Ryusuke Kawasaki. **** -Jeff Goodhartz

SUPER BATMAN AND MAZINGA V- Actually, its full Korean title is "Sta Jyanga 2: Supa Betaman/Majinga V", which means "Star Zanger 2: Super Batman and Mazinga V". It's a wacky, staggeringly stupid, unintentional laugh riot from Korea which combines animation and live action. Its budget is so low it's ridiculous, as is the whole film! Childish, full of the cheapest FX ever seen, but there are cool fights, and the pace is fast enough to keep us pretty amused! It's animated robots meet a yellow-costumed Batman who uses martial arts against werewolves dressed as ballerinas! A bizarre, lively, over-the-top turkey from 1990. For more on **SUPER BATMAN AND MAZINGA V**, order OC's Gangster Issue from Dracula Publishing. -Damon Foster **1/2

TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA (Toho;1975)- The Godzilla series first run went out with

style. An exciting and stirring rematch between Godzilla and his robotic double, now aided by the cackling Titanosaurus. For more on this film, see OC's Issues on Godzilla and Japanese Science Fiction. **** -Jeff Goodhartz

THREE TREASURES, THE- All anyone ever said about this Japanese period-fantasy (Toho; 1966) was that it involved a several-headed Hydra battling a swordsman, but don't expect another **JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS!** This costume-drama is incredibly slowpaced, talky beyond belief (worthless unless you're Japanese or manage to see the ultra-rare subtitled print), and it put me to sleep literally every time I attempted to sit through this tedious heap of boredom! Its few swordfights really suck (horribly choreographed, staged & filmed), and the duel with the hydra is okay, but too short to make this movie much good. A few pretty costumes, and an interesting effect or two, but otherwise it's got more boring scenes than there are beer bellies in a biker bar. * -Damon Foster

THUNDERMASK- This is one a par with my comments on **SPECTREMAN** (see review elsewhere in this issue), in other words, it rocks! Guess what, cartoonimation fans! **THUNDERMASK** was created by the late Dr. Osamu Tezuka (before he passed away, stupid), and it was not his first live action show! The others include **ASTROBOY** (yes, a non-cartoon version predates the 1963 2-D series), **THE SPACE GIANTS** and **VAMPIRE** (half live, half animated; but, it's actually about werewolves!). Another unique feature of this outrageously action-packed extravaganza, is that Koichi must employ a "Two-Level-Transformation" to change into the giant Thundermask: The first allows him, as a human-sized Thundermask, to battle Dekanda's mortal-sized henchmen and mutants; the Second takes him up to 40 meters high. Dekanda, the Satanic King of the Cosmos, plots to invade the Earth from across the universe, but it will take his legions several thousand years to reach the Solar System. Meanwhile, the Thunder Celestial Federation intervenes, dispatching their outrageous Thundermask to the targeted world. He arrives in humanity's Stone age, enters a dormant stage, and awaits the arrival of the invaders. Ten millennia later, when the Dekanda Invasion Forces arrive on Earth, a Professor Miyase unlocks the secret to awaken Thundermask, who combines with a young man named Koichi Inochi. Assisted by the Science Patrol Squad, Koichi and Thundermask begin the long battle against the enemies of Earth. For more on this show, see OC's Bruce Lee Issue. **** -August Ragone

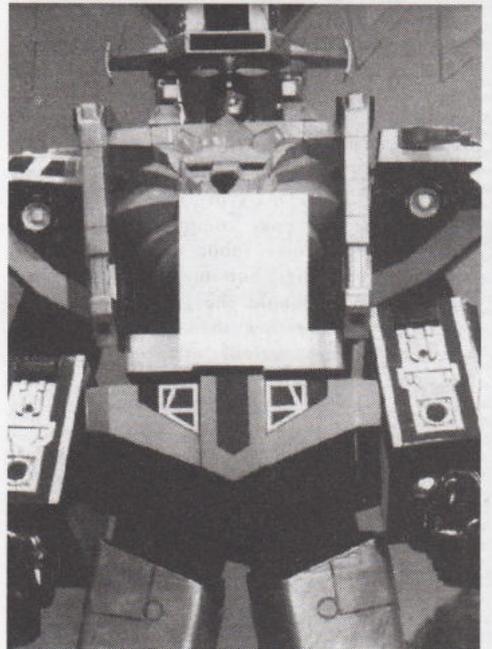
TRANSFORMERS- American cartoon, a ripoff of Japanese anime (itself not always blazingly original), and as such, this absolutely awful TV show is best unmentioned. -Damon Foster

TRANSFORMERS: SUPER GOD MASTER FORCE (1988; 42 epi., Toei)- This series fea-

tures the Power Master Transformers and The Pretenders. The emphasis is more on the human characters. -Paul Haberman **1/2

TRANSFORMERS: THE HEADMASTERS- All new (almost, it came out in 1987) Japanese adventures of The Transformers. -Paul Haberman ***

TURBO RANGER (aka "High Speed Task Force: Turbo Ranger")- What, who stuck me with this lame-as-hell Sentai Devolution to review? Damon Foster?! Well, that takes the cake, he really knows how to hurt a guy! When I got the pre-premiere episode of **TURBO RANGER**, I was excited, after all, this introduction featured all of the past Sentai heroes teaming up to meet the villains: The Violent Something Tribe (whatever), and introduce the new heroes! But, the next week, I saw the first episode! Oi, was it bad; I thought that **MASKMAN** and **LIVEMAN** were disappointments, nothing could be worse; but **TURBO RANGER** proved me wrong (and people keep telling me that I think I'm never wrong). The premise is, get this: Ancient Fairies and rejects from **THE NEVER ENDING STORY** mixed up in a Sentai formula (!)? People actually like this show; it was really popular among Japanese kiddies, and, at the same time, there are people who look down at the Luche Libre films of El Santo! At least El Santo is not pretentious, fanboy (Neo-Fanboy, that is). A Japanese version of lame-ass Fairies and other Anglo-Saxon mythology? Was the guy in charge of this one a student at U.C. Berkeley who had the time to be brainwashed by his "free-thinking" classmates, thus dragging him down into a state so low, that even he would delve into anti-Japanese traditions: i.e. smoking pot, playing D&D, reading Tolkein, joining the SCA and attending the Renaissance Fare?! Good God, I hope they have a good Deprogramming Agency in Japan! Somebody throw a net on this guy! No stars, but



lots of scars. Jap. title: KOKUSO SENTAI TABO RENJIYA, 51 epi., Starring: Kenta Sato. -August Ragone

TYRANNO'S CLAW- Every time I read Damon's praising of Korean films like the UREME series, EAGLEMAN or SPARKMAN, I can't help but think he only likes them because the slasher/anime/HK/Godzilla geeks haven't plundered the Korean fantasy film genre for themselves. Well, TYRANNO'S CLAW proves me wrong. Said to be the most expensive South Korean film ever made and it shows. The dinosaurs, portrayed by men-in-suits and animatronics, are convincing, the production values are competent with the Korean countryside providing some lavish locations (Korean locales also made many classic kung fu movies seem more expensive than they were), and the movie is fast-paced and fun. Best described as Shim Hyung rei's spin on CAVEMAN (that lousy Ringo Starr movie), it's a caveman-vs.-dinosaur flick filmed in grunts and groans (not Korean!) that can be enjoyed by kids of all ages, unless your kid is a wimp who can't handle the sight of a tyrannosaur gulping down a live goat. *** -John Grace

A SECOND OPINION:

TYRANNO'S CLAW (1994)- So far, this is only the second Korean flick I've seen (UREME #6 was the first). So, with only two films to judge by, I can safely say that I feel the Korean filmmakers are better off sticking to space-age sci-fi where their lack of technology is less intrusive. This remake of ONE MILLION B.C. with borrowings from JURASSIC PARK isn't bad, though. I found myself entertained during some parts, but bored at others. It's okay as a dinosaur film, certainly better than THE LAST DINOSAUR. For more on this film, see OC's Japanese Sci-Fi Issue. **1/2 -Jeff Goodhartz

UFO ROBO GRANDIZER (1975, 74 epi./Toei)- It was actually the third in a series of robot cartoons produced in the 1970s by Toei. The first two serieses, which were also created by manga-god Go Nagai, were MAZINGER Z and GREAT MAZINGA. These two shows started the animated robot boom in Japan. GRANDIZER comes from the days when robots were simpler, had personalities and didn't look like a mass of twisted metal and cannons like the ones coming out since the mid-1980s. In some robot shows today, you can see everything, but my friend says its just the way they hold the guns. In this series, the robot, rather than transforming or splitting up into various robots or vehicles, can fly into and out of a giant saucer. While inside, his head sticks out the front and his arms wrap around the sides. He battles a variety of "saucer-beasts" sent against Earth by evil aliens. The main link between this series and MAZINGER Z is that Koji, the pilot for Mazinger Z returns as a supporting character here. GRANDIZER was always my favorite design from the "Golden Age" of Japanese robots and for this alone I would recommend it. If you like

your robots kicking ass on monsters while getting their arms and legs ripped off, you can do no better than revelling in the action of this as well as other Go Nagai series. **** -Bob Johnson

UFO WARRIOR DAI APOLON (1976; 26 episodes)- Football geek Takeshi Nichan realizes he's a prince from the Planet Apolon and he must now use his jets, friends and robot Dai Apolon to battle the Dazan Empire (more space invaders). There's an English dub out there somewhere, but I remember this cartoon fondly from seeing it subtitled every Sunday night, when I was a kiddo. -Damon Foster **

ULTRA FIGHT- Five minute episodes where guys wear monster and Ultraseven costumes and have low budget battles in fields and backyards! Delightfully cheap, unintentional comedies (195 of them!) from 1970! They look like amateur films. -Damon Foster **1/2

ULTRAMAN (Tsuburaya; 1966)- The milestone of Japanese superhero television. Wild ideas. Brilliantly directed episodes. Innovative camerawork. And besides, I kinda' had a thing for Fuji when I was a kid. For more on ULTRAMAN, see OC's Super Hero Issue (available from DF exclusively). ***** -Jeff Goodhartz

ULTRAMAN ACE- At 52 episodes, this 5th installment (1972) of the Ultra Genre offers all the thrills of its predecessors, but with slight improvements in SPFX and action quality. In many ways, this enjoyable program could almost be considered a classic like ULTRASEVEN or the original ULTRAMAN. But it's obvious that this late in the legacy, ideas were beginning to run out, so strange new ideas for monsters were inevitable, resulting in far-fetched, sometimes preposterous creatures with too many gadgets, bordering on the laughable. But still, ULTRAMAN ACE holds its own, and is another must see for any Ultra fan who can't get enough of this amusing, often repeated formula. The opening credits are highlighted by a slick theme song, and art of monsters like Red King, Baltan, and Pigmon/Garamon, who aren't even in the series itself! Scriptwise, it's unique in that the villains are usually the result of alien invaders called Yapools. The idea that the hero is usually fighting the same group is not something that's common in an Ultra series (if you remember, all of Ultraman's foes were of separate, independent origin), and more in the tradition of a Kamen Rider series (since KAMEN RIDER was a competitor to ULTRAMAN ACE, this comes as no shock). The Yapools come from some other dimension, and can't conquer us so long as Ultraman Ace (and occasional help from his Ultra Brothers, who make cameos every now & then) is working as Seijo Hokuto (Keiji Takemine), a member of yet another Science Patrol wannabe, called the "Terrible monster Attacking Crew" (T.A.C. for short). Interesting to note that for some episodes, both

Hokuto (Hokuto means 'North') and attractive female member Yuko Minami (Minami means 'South') must combine to form heroic Ultraman Ace. A subplot about Yuko has something to do with her being descended from some ancient race of 'Moon-men', and later, Seijo gains full control and doesn't need Yuko's help to become Ultraman Ace. Here are a couple individual episodes I watched-- #46: The monstrous Daidarahoshi has some sort of built-in time-machine, which sends the TAC members on a timewarp, back into samurai times. So this episode is pretty nifty; one minute, the big monster is mashing modern buildings, and in the next, our heroes are fighting off swordsmen who want to crucify them near some huge golden Buddha statue! The climactic duel between Ultraman Ace and Daidarahoshi is amusing, they swordfight (samurai style)-- using trees!*** #47: Far-fetched tale of a rubber (meant to be real; hah!) cave-dwelling salamander who becomes a giant monster called Hanzigiran, whenever a little girl, or her deranged father plays a flute.** #48: Battling the latest giant monster proves somewhat difficult for Hokuto, since his dentist turned out to be a witch-like, Yapool agent who made him hallucinate. Not an action packed episode, but slick none-the-less! *** Series Creator: Hajime Tsuburaya, Main Writer: Shigemitsu Taguchi, Main Dir.: Eizo Yamagawa. ***1/2 -Damon Foster

ULTRAMAN: BATTLE OF THE MONSTERS (1979)- Unlike the other compilation movies (1967's ULTRAMAN, 1979's ULTRAMAN and 1984's ULTRAMAN ZOFY), this has enough new stuff to distinguish it as a separate entity. There's the original Ultraman duking it out with two Baltans and even a live version of Ultraman Joe zapping a monster. The rest is episodes from the classic 1966 series and some stray clips pasted together. Just as much fun as you'd think. *** -Christopher Elam

ULTRAMAN 80- The usual cool animated silhouettes again accompany the theme song (speaking of which, it has an English line which is either "He came to Earth from the stars", or "He came to us from the stars"), but are animated with better skill. But lead hero Takeshi Yamato (Hatsunori Hasegawa) works as a Jr. High School teacher, so it's not one of the better Ultra programs. However, the miniatures are outstanding, the sets convincing, and the rubber monsters are really cool -- better than the goofball creatures of earlier programs, anyway. The token female of the Utility Government Members (yet another high-tech squad of orange uniforms, guns, spaceships, jets, helmets, etc.) is absolutely gorgeous, but protagonist Sensei Takeshi Yamato acts too silly sometimes, so his charisma isn't real strong (he's no Hayata!). Here is how I felt about the first few episodes.....#1 (ULTRAMAN SENSEI): Takeshi Yamato has his first meeting with the U.G.M. as they unite to track down invisible monster Crescent. Crescent's destroying of build-

ings & jets is nice, as is Ultraman 80's duel with the beast, but what goes on before is unwatchable, slow-paced drama, and dull dialogue. Strangely, how Yamato got the power to become Ultraman 80 is never explained in this pilot. *1/2 #2 (SENSEI NO HIMITSU):

Gikogira attacks a city at the beginning of the episode, but before you can say "Scan Button", Yamato is off doing handstands to amuse the students, and counsels some troubled boy. Decent spaceship-against-giant-monster action, regardless. ** #3 (NATSU NA YOTSU KAI KAIHU): Some bullied kid (again!?) at school has vengeful hatred that seems to manufacture (one of several episodes where monsters are created by human "negative energy") the monster Ho, not one of the program's better costumes, nor is this one of the better episodes. 1/2 #4 (OODORA YORI AYOKO KOMETE): Obligatory problem child this week: Susumu (always riding roller skates & listening to headphones). But this enjoyable episode has not one but two winged, space-reptiles: Sandorias and Mother Sandorias. After an amusing (humorous) battle, Ultraman 80 allows both creatures to escape in time for Yamato to attend some wedding. ** #5 (MAHA ROSHI NO MACHI): Though marauding robot Meka Giras sounds like Gigan and looks like a retarded Mechagodzilla, this is one slick, fun episode! A "haunted subway" takes Yamato to a dark dimension where he battles aliens who kidnap people & turn them into automated slaves. More action than usual, and less emphasis on the twerps. *** 1/2 #6 (HOSHI KARA KITA SHONEN): Tedious talker about Akio, a boy with some strange power (i.e. he can break, uh, I mean, cause wind) and the episode can't even be saved by Ultraman 80's night-time duel with alien invader Abudorals. 1/2

#7 (TOKYO SILENT SAKUSEN): The punk in me really liked this cute little tale of airborne reptile Noizura ("noise" is the root-word), because he's cool-looking and dances to heavy-metal/surf music! Noizura is automatically attracted to all loud, synthetic sounds, so once it's realized his rampages are all a misunderstanding, he and Ultraman 80 become friends! Yamato jams in a rock band with his students, and it's the kiddies who geek-out at the end and "conform", Yamato is still cool, hip and wants to rock out! *** #8 (YOMIGA ETSU TA DENSATSU): Some mountaineer shows the UGM Members, and kids on a field trip some hieroglyphics about subterranean, hungry dinosaur Dabura, who has a powerful, frog-like tongue. In an intriguing flashback, we see a "glowing Ultraman 80" (an ancestor?) materialize to rescue cavemen from Dabura. ** 1/2 50 episodes from 4/2/80-3/25/81. Cast: Hatsunori Hasegawa as Takeshi Yamato, Gin Nakayama as Capt. Oyama, Eri

Ishida as Jyono, Daisuke Muso as Harada, Shuhei Nitta as Tajima, Yuriko Kosaka as Noriko Shirasaka/Yurian, and Masaaki Daimon as Chief Ito. ** 1/2 -Damon Foster

A SECOND OPINION:

ULTRAMAN 80- One of my favorites in the Ultra series. Lighter and more fun than some of the others. Not so much more juvenile, though it simply has a different, more refreshing atmosphere. Can't really put my finger on what makes this one more entertaining, it just is. ***** -Jeff Goodhartz

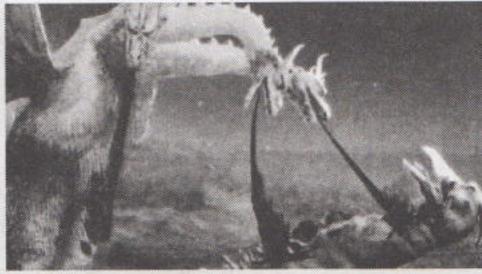
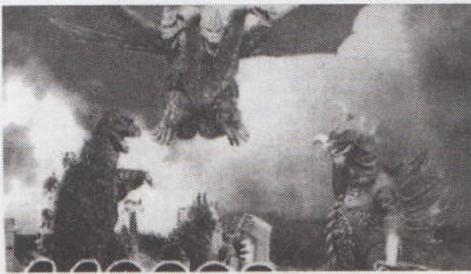
ULTRAMAN JOE (aka THE ULTRAMAN)- A variant, 1979 (50 epi.) attempt to animate the Ultras, available in the U.S. in two features: ULTRAMAN II and THE ADVENTURES OF ULTRAMAN. I prefer live action, thank you, but this is faithful to the Tsuburaya hero formula. It even revived classic monsters like the Baltans and Red King. Ultraman Joe (Space Patrol Member Hikari Choichiro) is not exactly the best loved Ultra brother, but I like his design. ** -Christopher Elam

ULTRAMAN KIDS (1986)- Animated, "super deformed" -style shit about the Ultra Brothers as kids. Comedic, and very stupid. -Damon Foster

ULTRAMAN LEO (1974; 51 epi.)- I guess them Tsuburaya boys wanted this to be as childish as ULTRAMAN TARO, but they failed. On occasion, this program can descend down to the level of TARO, but on the whole, it's not so bad. Ultraman Leo is not from Nebula M78, nor is he related to the other Ultra Brothers, he is just a good friend of the family. Plenty of cool monster battles (the first episode even has a team-up with Ultraseven), special effects and action make this series highly entertaining and amusing. Creator: Shigemitsu Taguchi, Writer: Shozo Uehara, Dir.: Koichi Takano, Music: Yuhiko Takeda, Starring: Makoto Shimozuka. -Damon Foster ***

ULTRAMAN STORY (1984)- The life and times of Ultraman Taro, from ultra brat, to





acting. *1/2 -Christopher Elam

ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO (1994)- Oh, god no! How can we (the U.S. that is) screw something like this up so badly? I've only seen the first two episodes and I intend to keep it that way. Needless to say, it's my least favorite Ultra series. 1/2 -Jeff Goodhartz

A SECOND OPINION:

ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO (aka ULTRAMAN POWERED)- The costumes are magnificent and I thought the cast was pretty good. However, this loose remake of the original series is frightfully dull. It's badly paced with none of the charm of a legitimate Ultra show. They even bungled the monster fights! How much worse can you get? *1/2 -Christopher Elam

ULTRAMAN: TOWARD THE FUTURE- This inferior Australian adaptation is also known as **ULTRAMAN GREAT.** The monster costumes and miniatures are cool, but this program is generic, under acted and boring. The Aussie cast & crew really suck! The music stinks! On the whole, it's a miss, but worth checking out if you have absolutely nothing to do for thirty minutes. The only reason I would watch it is because actress Gia Carides appears to have decent hooters. Tsuburaya; 1990, in Association with The South Australian Film Corp., Starring: Dore Kraus. {For more on this show, see OC's Robot Issue}. -Damon Foster **

ULTRA Q (Tsuburaya; 1966)- Pretty interesting variation on the U.S.'s **TWILIGHT ZONE** and **OUTER LIMITS** programs. Yet with its giant monsters, it takes on a distinctly Japanese flavor. Cool stuff, but with the mucho dialogue, an English translation of some sort sure would have helped. Broadcast on TBS, Starring: Kenji Sahara and Hiroko Sakurai. *** -Jeff Goodhartz

A SECOND OPINION:

ULTRA Q- The first Ultra series, and definitely one of the best. There's no giant superhero in this show, but it doesn't need one. Picture a combination of **TWILIGHT ZONE**, **THE OUTER LIMITS** and **THE X-FILES** with giant Japanese monsters thrown in. You'd have to work really hard to fuck this formula up. Not all the episodes are classics, but some, like 1, 3 and 4, represent the best tokusatsu has to offer. If you don't like it, then you're not a good person. **** -Michael Keller

ULTRA Q: THE MOVIE (1990)- Limp remake of the TV series about the investigation of weird things. This film drags on forever, and if there's a point, I missed it. The giant monster Bagira appears briefly and does his giant monster thing. Other than the gratuitous rampage, the only reason to stay awake is to check out the plethora of cameos by old favorites. * -Christopher Elam

ULTRASEVEN (1967-'68)- The immediate sequel series to **ULTRAMAN** and regarded by many as the finest Ultra series. Giant hero Ultraseven and his helpful kaiju prevent the invasion of our world by a mind-boggling line up of evil aliens. There's a fairly serious approach in evidence here, which is probably lost on those people only aware of the English dub. It's a bit, er, less than respectful, but I thought it was amusing. *** -Christopher Elam

ULTRASEVEN: SOLAR ENERGY STRATEGY (1994)- The first shot-on-video TV movie with the revival of Eleking. Ultraseven spends most of the running time zonked out, but when he returns to full strength... whew! Lot's of old friends appear in various roles, adding to the nostalgia value. Only a person who dislikes everything could hate this movie. ***1/2 -Christopher Elam

ULTRASEVEN: EARTH ALIENS UNDERGROUND (1995)- The second TV movie, with the return of Dan Moroboshi himself. The Metron aliens have returned and this time they're not kidding around. Seven follows them and aids the TDF in the struggle against them. Simply a great little mini-movie with nice effects. ***1/2 -Christopher Elam

UNRIVALED ROBO TRYDER G-7 (1980/50 epi.; Sunrise). Young Wuta Shacho pilots Tryder G-7 against the Robot Empire from the planet Gabalu. This cartoon has a touch of comedy thrown in. -Paul Haberman **

UREME #1- A Korean comedy that reaches new levels in stupidity, and lead star Shim Hyung Rei is proof that the mentally retarded can serve a useful purpose in our society. Looking like a penniless, amateur film by our standards, this ridiculous cheapie deals with superhero Esperman, his spaceship Ureme (Thunderhawk), and animated giants, not unlike something you would expect in a Go Nagai production. The animated inserts often seem out of place in an otherwise live action film (Japan's **AIZENBORG** comes to mind), but all the **UREME** flicks except for #2 seem to have them. Producer: Kim Chung Gi, Asst. Prod.: Kan Do. * -Damon Foster

UREME #3- Shim Hyung Rei returns to play Esperman again and he and his sexy co-pilot Dae-Illi (Kim Jong Ah) are battling it out with aliens who have ridiculous afros-- but then, ridiculous can be applied to every aspect of this flick! Oh well, it's entertaining, for better or worse, full of: stupid comedy, childish antics, a little martial arts, some goofy

ultra teen to ultra hero. It's a talky movie that's entirely in Japanese and yet proves watchable. It's never really boring in spite of lots and lots of expository dialogue. Most of the other ultra family members appear and clips from all of the old series are utilized. There's also a brand-now climactic confrontation with the impressive Grand King. *** -Christopher Elam

ULTRAMAN TARO (1973; 53 epi.)- The fifth **ULTRAMAN** sequel turned out not to be quite as inferior as I said it was. I was somehow of the impression that this was an incredibly childish program, but what I found are several entertaining 30 minute episodes! Sure, it's infantile at times, but so long as we get to see Ultraman Taro and his brothers fight monsters (even if they're dumb-looking), I'm satisfied. A Tsuburaya series, broadcast on TBS (4/6/73-4/5/74), Writer: Shigemitsu Taguchi, Dir.: Eizo Yamagiwa. {For more on **ULTRAMAN TARO**, see OC's Ninja Issue.} -Damon Foster ***

ULTRAMAN: THE ADVENTURE BEGINS (1987; aka ULTRAMAN U.S.A.)- Three American jet pilots are saved from certain death by being merged with Ultra beings from Nebula M78. They must then make sure some newly arrived aliens don't make our world the late great Planet Earth. Sound familiar? This Hanna Barbera cartoon is actually astoundingly good compared to most U.S. adventure cartoons, but I still found it boring. I must also be in the minority when I say that I didn't care much for the voice

FX, and of course, giant animated robots, ala' Mazinga, etc. Script: Cahe Dong Gun, Video Release: 10/11/88. ** -Damon Foster

UREME #4- As is always the case in an UREME farce, the first half is pointless, untranslated comedy geared toward idiots who speak Korean. But the latter half really wakes us up with plenty of FX and action! The story is fairly interesting, and this 1989 edition is definitely a major improvement over the first three! *** -Damon Foster

UREME #5- The fifth film is great stuff! It's incredible how much FX, costumes, monsters, miniatures, cartoons, robots and other stuff they can cram into a single movie. The common rule is that the later the film, the better the production values. The evil invaders in this movie are okay, even if their leader has a rotten pumpkin for a head, and the remainder look like rejects from some abandoned Sid & Marty Kroft production. Regardless, Esperman's climactic duels with these monsters and robots are pretty damn entertaining. Esperman's motive is to rescue the commander of some "Space Cruiser Yamato"-ish spaceship also seen in #4. *** -Damon Foster

UREME #6 (1990)- If other Ureme films are as much fun as this one, I'll definitely have to see more! Shot on next-to-no-budget, this sci-fi actioner takes on a naive, toy-like quality (as evidenced by the cartoon robot vs. the store bought, mechanical dinosaur scenes) that I found strangely pleasing on the eyes. Equally pleasing on the eyes in an anything but strange way is the actress playing Dae Illi. She alone makes the film worthwhile. But don't get me wrong, it's still plenty entertaining even without her. **** -Jeff Goodhartz

UREME #7?- Not available for review.

UREME #8- It's all highlights & stock footage from the other movies, hosted by some animated robot shaped like a tea kettle. This disappointment tries to be a documentary, but comes off as more like the GAMERA SUPER MONSTER of Korea's UREME series. Oh well, I suppose watching all them fights and hilariously bad FX again won't hurt us. ** -Damon Foster

VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE (1958-1962)- If all you've seen is the hacked up, "Power Rangered" U.S. version of this Toho flick, do yourself a favor and seek out the far better Japanese original. You may be shocked by the vast differences between the two. US version: *1/2. Jap. version: ***. -Jeff Goodhartz

VIDEO WARRIOR LESARION (1984/45 epi.; Toei)- Takashi Katori, a young boy who loves computers, creates his own giant robot program. He gets to pilot it for real, when the Earth Defense Force asks for his help against alien invaders in this cartoon. -Paul Haberman **1/2

VOLTRON: DEFENDER OF THE UNIVERSE (Syndicated; 1985-'88)- Fantastic robot battles

combine with dubbing and editing that would make Sandy Frank proud. Three different series were released under this name, all the familiar robot-battle '80's anime. This one's for people who can't grasp that they've seen it before, and better. **1/2 -Lewis Smith

VOLTUS 5- Toei's 40 episode cartoon (full title: "Super Electron Machine Voltus V") from 1977, about another heroic robot was a big hit in the Philippines before then-President Markos declared it "too violent" (I guess he should know). I've never seen it, so I'll hazard a guess: A team of human heroes pilot a robot (Voltus V) to fend off an invasion from outerspace. My god, how do I do it? I must be psychic! Hell, I'll hazard another guess and give it two stars. ** -Damon Foster

VOYAGE INTO SPACE (Toei; 1967)- This is the movie compilation of Toei's JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT series. Lord Guillotine & his nefarious Gargoyle Gang are out to (dare I say it?) conquer the world, using an army of giant monsters, but are beaten every step of the way by the tireless heroics of young Johnny Sokko, his giant robot, and the super agents of Unicorn. Zowie! Most people who grew up on the TV version don't much care for this truncated compilation, but I do. Good though the original series is, most episodes are long and boring (viewers figure out the plot of any given episode 20 minutes before the heroes do), whereas this feature moves at a rapid clip, never giving you the chance to get bored. *** -Frank Strom

WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS- I don't like this sequel to FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD as much as the first movie. Russ Tamblyn looks like he's about to turn to the camera and ask for his paycheck. His acting performance is almost as bad as one Kevin Costner would give (well, not quite that bad). Then there's the song "Feel In My Heart", sung by Kip Hamilton. It's good enough to be a Madonna song. Yes, it's that awful. On the other hand, the monsters are good, and the special effects are great (with a few exceptions of some tanks with obvious toy soldiers glued on top and a couple other things). The climactic battle is worth the whole movie. This would have been better without the annoying humans. *** Michael Keller



A SECOND OPINION:

WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS- A direct sequel to FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD, and I like it more. The good older brother (Sandah) tries to save his bad younger brother (Gailah), then has to stop him from destroying the city and eating everyone. Guess Sandah got tired of Gailah's "see food" diet. Russ Tamblyn stars in this one. It's still better than Hammer's movies. ***** -David McRobie

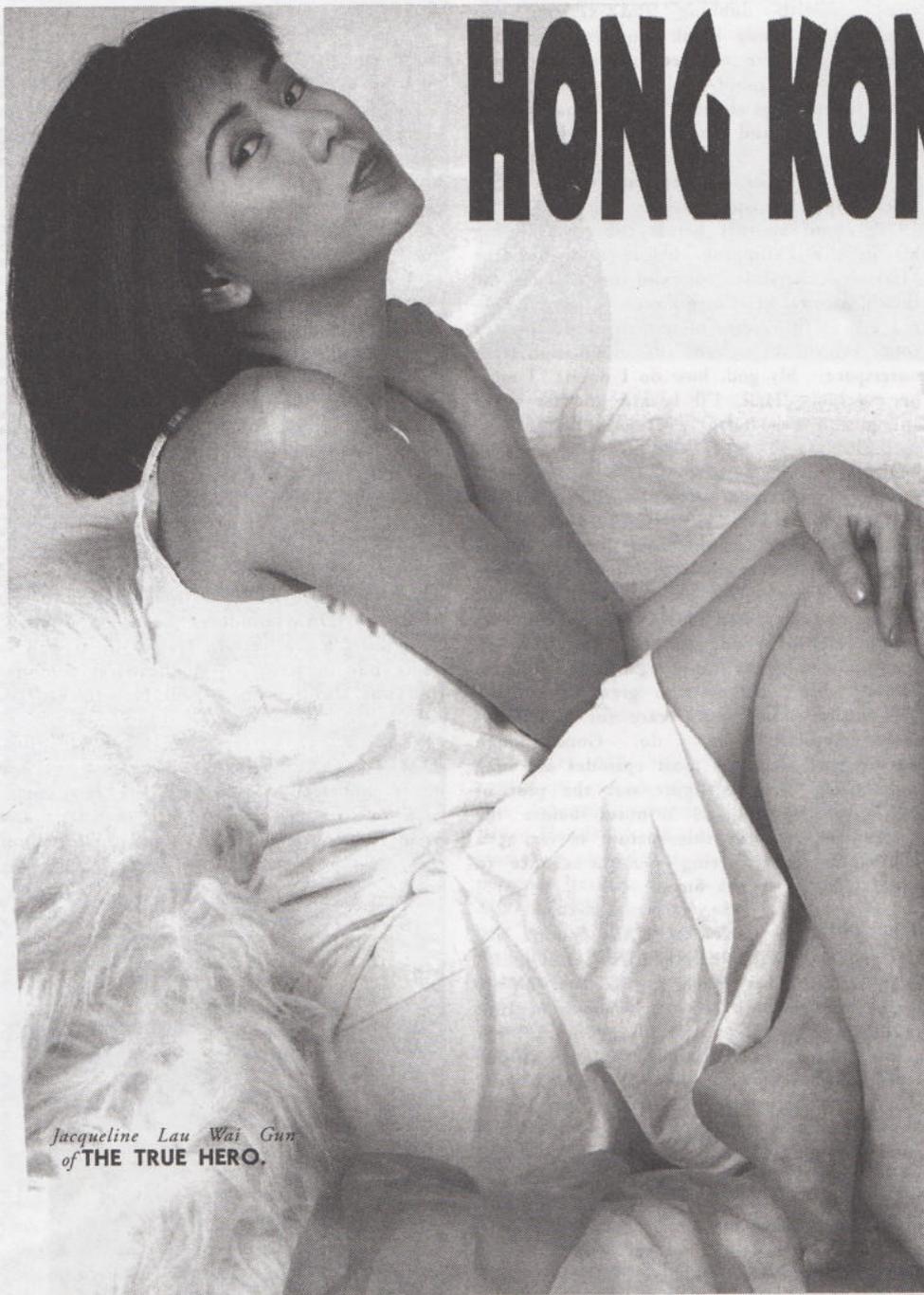
WAR OF THE MONSTERS- Some say this is Gamera's best movie, but not me! Gamera takes on Barugon, hatched from a giant gem. Lots of villains, only the native woman is admirable. Too much like real life. It's fun, but a little talky and not enough of the monsters. On the plus side, there are no damn little kids in this one! *** -David McRobie

XABUNGLE (1982; 50 epi.; Office Academy)- Another hit ("Combat Mecha Xabungle") from GUNDAM producer Yoshiyuki Tomino. This series has a western feel to it, as well as being not so serious. A theatrical compilation was also released. -Paul Haberman ***

YAMATO TAKERU (1994)- Boy meets girl, boy meets monsters, boy gets killed, boy comes back to life, boy meets more monsters, and wanders around aimlessly in this tedious (continued on inside back cover)



HONG KONG HEROES



Jacqueline Lau Wai Gun
of **THE TRUE HERO.**

1970s

CHINESE HERCULES

Produced by: people, Directed by: The Film's Director, Featuring: Chen Hui Min and Yang Sze, Reviewed by Jeff Goodhartz

Talk about misleading! You've seen old advertisements or previews for this one, you're lead to believe that Yang Sze (aka Bolo Yueng) is the lead actor and focal point. Hell, the title even refers to him, doesn't it? Well, forget it. He's merely a villain of the flick and not even the main one. The actual star is Michael Chan Hui Min who's been in more of these early 1970s chop sockeys than I realized. As for Yang Sze, his screentime

amounts to less than his self-titled film Bolo (at least in that film, he got to play second lead hero) and just slightly more than in ENTER THE DRAGON. This looks like a real oldy, probably made in 1971 or '72. The fights are more direct and karate-like. They're not bad, but I've seen better films from this time period. This is definitely no FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH! For the most part, it reminds me of an even grimier version of Bruce Lee's THE BIG BOSS (FISTS OF FURY). The main difference however, is that this film doesn't have Lee in it and that's the only thing that saved the other film. At least it does have Yang Sze; and his fights in the second half are easily the best ones.

The plot of this disappointing film ironically starts off promisingly. A fighter

(Michael Chan) has been training hard in order to defeat his girlfriend's obnoxious brother. The brother, drunk, discovers Chan and his sister together, though innocently (yeah, right!), and, in a drunken rage, challenges Chan. In the ensuing fight, Chan accidentally kills the jerk. Horrified, he runs far away. Arriving on a beach, he smashes his hands with a big rock (ouch!) and goes into self-imposed exile. So far, so good. Unfortunately, this was only the first ten minutes. It was the other eighty or so minutes that I had a problem with. You see, he then goes to work at this ship-yard. It seems his co-workers are being harassed by these big-shot mob dudes. Chan (as is usual with this type of film) refuses to fight. Instead, it is a co-worker, in an identical situation (he also accidentally killed someone) who stands up to the stereotypical bad dudes. Although he wins the initial fight, he is later killed by the head gangster's henchman (Yang Sze). Even this bit of nastiness, however, is not enough for Chan to resume cracking skulls. Instead, it's his girlfriend (finally tracking him down) who convinces him, telling him that he didn't kill her brother after all. He just knocked him out (thus rendering over an hour of this film meaningless). Chan can now kill Yang Sze and his boss with a clear conscience. Cough! Ah, well, not a bad flick. About average, just a little on the dumb side. ** -Jeff Goodhartz

A HARD WAY TO DIE

Eternal Film Co. (H.K.), Director: Hwa I Hung, Edited for TV by Larry Benski, Starring: Billy Chong, Louis Neglia, Carl R. Scott, Joseph Jenning, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Every chop-sockey farce is entitled to offer unintended laughs, but the ridiculous A HARD WAY TO DIE abuses the privilege! No wonder it appeared as "Dog of the Week" on an old episode of SNEAK PREVIEWS back when the show was new. I'm not claiming to have respect for Siskel & Ebert, but in the case of this absolutely stupid kung fu laugh-fest, their criticisms are entirely just. Not only is the script (or lack of it) ultra typical, but much of the acting (especially that of young black guy Carl Scott) just plain sucks, and sucks hard! Yet no matter how bad the acting is in this cheapie (was the budget financed by panhandlers?), even worse (can you believe it?) is the English voice dubbing. My god, were the dubbers drunk? On drugs? Do they sniff Super Glue 24 hours a day? From beginning to end, the dubbing is hilariously bad, with inappropriate voices abounding, awkwardly broken sentences galore, and dialogue that seems to have been

written by a moron's moron. Other lines are just all-out bizarre, making no sense at all, almost making me wonder if at times, they were trying to make it into a comedy, ala WHAT'S UP TIGER LILLY. I just can't figure out the following conversation between Billy Chong and a fellow Chinaman, set in a bar: "What brings you to the States?" "My grandfather." "Are you sleeping with him?" "No, I can't find him." I watched this scene several times to make sure my hearing wasn't bad, but this seems to be exactly what they're talking about, though there's no implied incest or homosexual tendencies anywhere else in the film.

But if you can restrain your laughter at all the insanely stupid voices, accents and moronic choice of words, you may discover an enjoyable little kung fu western in its own cute way. Nobody not carrying a white cane will deny that Billy Chong (KUNG FU FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE, KUNG FU ZOMBIE) and Carl Scott (SOUL BROTHERS OF KUNG FU) are excellent kung fu fighters. With talent like this, this late 1970s (or probably early 1980s, though the chop sockey genre itself is still considered more of a 1970s thing) romp definitely offers its share of thrills & excitement. Yep, the fights are great, and since this is a kung fu movie, that's all that matters. Billy Chong is most commonly known as a Jackie Chan imitator, because of several "Eagle-Shadow-training-films" he cranked out after Jackie founded that whole genre in the late 1970s. Though Billy Chong still dresses (and has the same hair style) as Jackie at the time, and some of his kung fu moves are definitely Jackie-inspired, he seems to be borrowing heavily from older Bruce Lee moves as a change of pace. His mannerisms are for the most part, better than that of Bruce Li or Bruce Le, and the way he combines Jackie's "Eagle Shadow/Snakefist" techniques with Bruce's Jeet Kune Do stances seems to succeed, he's mastered the best of both worlds. The tedious "Jackie training ripoff stuff" is left to Carl Scott, and even then, it's fairly brief.

A HARD WAY TO DIE seems to have no possible era, no set time period. At first, it appears to be a western, with cowboys, horses, a saloon, etc. But some of the people wear fairly modern attire, they do have electricity, and too many American "cowbody"-types seem to know kung fu. Perhaps it's actually suppose to be set in modern times, and is in some isolated hicktown, where rednecks peacefully mingle with Chinese immigrants (at the beginning, we see them

all at some railroad, like when they were building it hundreds of years ago), some of which wear oldfashioned Chinese attire. For the record, it was filmed on location in Arizona's mountains, near Phoenix, and I believe once or twice we see the Gland Canyon, or whatever the hell it's called. I've never been to Arizona, so as far as I know, it's chalk-full of hicks, ghost towns, Chinamen, and has no modern conveniences like cars-- so they still ride horses. Needless to say, A HARD WAY TO DIE seems to have to specific setting, probably due to budgetary restraints (though if they could afford plane tickets in & out of HK, couldn't they have afforded cowboy hats?).

Despite the Arizona setting, most of the caucasians (Joseph Jennings, Louis Neglia, etc.) are evil, as we all know. Ah yes, each morning I wake up and look in the mirror and



say, "Damon, you evil son-of-a-bitch, you. What do ya' say we go out and harass some Chinese kung fu experts?!" But seriously, the villains wish to buy land that's not for sale again, this time, it's a farm owned by poor (and poorly dubbed) black folk, looking like characters right out of SOUNDER, or the beginning of Steve Martin's THE JERK. The villains kill the unfortunate family, and only Carl Scott escapes to learn kung fu to get revenge later on. Meanwhile, Billy Chong is the new stranger who's drifted into town, and it's not long before he too makes new enemies to fight. If there's really anything more to the script than this, it's too pointless to waste your time, so let's just say Billy Chong & Carl Scott win their battles and this fun little unintentional (?) comedy ends. *** - Damon Foster

1990

WILL OF IRON

1990, Dir.: John Chiang, Starring: Michael Wong, Maggie Cheung, Crystal Lee Kwok, Jacky Cheung (conveniently, the first names match the characters in the film; except that is, Crystal is Carol), Reviewed by Diane Zentner

I enjoyed some of the camera angles, and things like the home-movie sequence, and a dream that you at first think is reality. The subtitles are the usual (i.e. "Even a child knows that drug addicting is wrong!"), and at times, hard to read.

This is almost a morality play in some ways; but don't worry, it has beatings, guns and other violence, too.

As the opening credits go by, you see home movie-style scenes of four friends having innocent fun at a birthday party, then smoking pot for the first time and making funny faces, and even fishing. The scenes end with the wedding of one of the couples. That was all in the past. In the present, the movie starts with Maggie coming back to visit after having moved to Canada. Michael, her fiance, plans to join her in Canada once he makes his fortune. His expensive suits show that he is well on his way. When Maggie asks about Jacky and Carol, Michael says he doesn't keep in touch with them. He claims he tried to reach them for Maggie's visit, but that they must be out of town. Jacky is a graphic artist, but he can no longer create and spends most of his time pursuing his next line of coke. Every other day or so, drug dealers come by to wreck the apartment and beat him up because he owes them money. When Michael sweeps in to save him, you find out he is a drug dealer. He doesn't want Maggie to see any of this situation, so he asks Jacky to take Carol on a little vacation and get out of town. But Maggie runs into them at the mall, and Carol is delighted to see her, so no vacation... The main bad guy is named Same, and he clearly enjoys his work. One of Sam's drug runners dies, when one of the condoms full of cocaine in his stomach breaks. Sam whistles calmly as he cuts to open the dead man to retrieve the unbroken condoms. In the violent climax, Jacky, who was forced to swallow two drug-filled condoms, gets hit repeatedly in the stomach. So does his two months pregnant wife. Let's just say the survivors understand the importance of getting your life together! ***1/2 -Diane Zentner

THE TRUE HERO

New Prima Film Prod. Ltd., 1994, Released on video by Tai Seng Video Mkt. Ltd., A Joe Cheung Film, Cast: Simon Yam, Anita Yuen, John Tang, Derek Yee, Cheung Ton Shui, Austin Wai, Ching Tung & Wicky Hung, Jacqueline Law, Reviewed by Doug Weldy

Mildly entertaining, semi-interesting. Alright, it kind of, basically sucks. Tear jerking re-make of TO SIR WITH LOVE, with action scenes. A good movie for kids to watch, if you don't mind them seeing mindless violence mixed into a story about someone who learned to care for others. I mean, who the hell am I suppose to recommend it to? Too hokey for me to really enjoy, but then, there is violence present, but not in excess, shucks. One of my least favorite Simon Yam films.

Ah Wing (Simon Yam) is a hitman. After his release from prison he becomes serene and takes a job as asst. teacher. He ends up taking over the worst class, full of despicable rowdy students, after their cowardly teacher leaves. *1/2 -Doug Weldy

MY FATHER IS HERO

1995; Exec. Prod.: Charles W.E. Keung & Jimmy W.E. Keung, Dir.: Yuen Kwak, Prod.: Wong Jing & Tiffany Chen, Story: Wong Jing, Screenplay: Barry Shaw, Cast: Jet Li, Anita Mui, Sik Siu Loong, Reviewed by Doug Weldy

Wow, this flick starts out with a couple fight scenes and some cool stunts, and that's the first ten minutes. Kung Wei a semi-serious Jet Li, is a chain smoking criminal, but wait, he turns out to be an undercover cop. Don't worry, this is revealed in the beginning, so I didn't spoil it. So don't whine about it, loser.

How nice, included for our entertainment are scenes of blood spitting, one of those vomiting scenes that are always deemed necessary, a fight between Jet and some most regretful dogs, a bizarre yo-yo kid sequence and an above average gun fight.

Hey look, it's Anita Mui as a bad ass cop named Inspector Fong. I like her in this role better than the wimpy store owner she played in RUMBLE IN THE BRONX. She gets to beat some butt this time, and swing her long legs around. Very cool flick. I give it zero snores and 4 stars. See this one on the big screen unless you're quadrellic. **** -Doug Weldy

THE GREEN HORNET

(1995) Director: Lam Ching Ying, Starring: Chin Ku Lok, Kwan Wing Ho, Yu Wing Kwong, Lam Ching Ying, Reviewed by Frank Strom

Brother you just couldn't imagine what high expectations I had for this new theatrical version of that old chestnut GREEN HORNET. Unlike other longtime Asian entertainment afficianados, I still catch myself thinking positive thoughts about well-worn genres that have admittedly seen better days. When I saw this movie given primo shelf space in the Chinatown video shops, my excitement was piqued-- could a switch to American-style superheros give the Chinese chopsocky industry a much-needed shot in the arm?

Could a Chinese Green Hornet spearhead a stylistic movement away from all that Jet Li/wires-and-wushu/BRIDE WITH WHITE HAIR shit? Could a Chinese Green Hornet kick off a sensational wave of frenetic superhero epics that would finally give them Japanese a run for their money??? Don't be a fuckin' idiot. Of course not! Any reasonable person with half a brain would realize this immediately. Obviously, I must not be a reasonable person with half a brain. God help me, I had hopes-- which can only tell me that I'm not nearly as jaded and cynical as I had suspected.

So in the end, this not terribly thrilling epic is a letdown. Had this been a straight action feature, I would have been disappointed, but since it held the promise of hair-raising superhero hijinks, it's doubly disappointing. I sat around for weeks in a dazed stupor wondering what went wrong with this unexpectedly mediocre film. Well, okay-- maybe more like minutes. The cast is okay on the whole, and so are the fight scenes, but this never rises above being a grade-C cops & robbers movie. You'd expect something more action-packed from director Lam Ching Ying.

The picture opens with some dastardly criminals kidnapping children to sell into slavery. Their fiendish plans are thwarted by the flying fists and feet of costumed crime fighter Green Hornet (actually, he wears a "Kato" costume, but let's not be picky). A lady reporter from Hong Kong stumbles on to Green Hornet while covering a story in Mainland China, then devotes herself to uncovering his secret identity (and a few other things) as she has fallen helplessly in love with the masked heartthrob. Green Hornet secretly lives on a farm with two goofy sidekicks, who try to keep him pure and sex-free, as women have been the downfall of many past Hornets (supposedly, this Hornet is part of a long G.H. dynasty, spanning centuries). Here's where a lot of humorous shenanigans come into play, having nothing to do with the rest of the film (as is typical of so many HK films, the middle reel is nothing but a time-killing divergence from the main plot). When we finally reintegrate with the main story, the villains from the early portion of the film sell stolen firearms to a gang of caucasian terrorists. Once the deal is finalized, a climactic duel ensues with the Hornet, his sidekicks and his "Lois Lane" beating whitey's ass. ** -Frank Strom

GOD OF GAMBLERS' RETURN

A Win's Movie Prod. (1994), Dir.: Wong Jing, Cast: Chow Yun Fat, Wu Sien Lin, Sik Sui Loong, Ching May Yau, Tony Leung Kar Fei & Ng Hing Kwok, Reviewed by Doug Weldy

Beat up the kids, kill Grandma & Grandpa, strangle the puppies, rape some beautiful girls, sound familiar? It's the plot of any basic action flick. The first fifteen minutes has animal abuse, old man shooting, a mistreated pregnant woman, etc.

Ko Chun (Chow Yun Fat) resides in a mansion in France with his wife (who's name I don't know. All I know is she was "Purple" SEMI-GODS AND SEMI-DEVILS). Mr. Chau, a bad guy gambler, wants to play cards with

Ko. Ko refuses, so Mr. Chau kills his wife and unborn baby. As Ko's wife is dying, she asks him to promise not to gamble for a year. The story, to save us from boredom, picks up 11 months and 15 days later. Ko meets some uniquely distracting individuals and slyly acts out his revenge.

Two snores for recurring waltz fantasy that luckily wasn't drawn-out as long as hokey scenes usually are. **** -Doug Weldy

RUMBLE IN THE BRONX

Golden Harvest; 1995, American version: 1996, Dir.: Stanley Tong, Released by New Line Cinema, Starring: Jackie Chan, Anita Mui, Francoise Yip, Bill Tung Pui, Cameo: Yueh Hua (or some guy who looks like him), Reviewed by Damon Foster

Well, it finally happened; Jackie Chan has hit big time with the American mainstream! No thanks to his crappy American films like THE PROTECTOR and CANNONBALL RUN! RUMBLE IN THE BRONX is a Hong Kongese flick with Jackie in complete control, and it's by far his most successful movie shown in America. For once the general, American movie-going public has taste, and is willing to be entertained by a HK action film they realize should put Claude Van Damme, Steven Segal and all them other watered-down, half-assed American "action" stars to shame. It was such a unique feeling for me to go down to a local, suburban multi-plex theatre (in Hayward, of all places) and actually see Hong Kongese Jackie Chan & Anita Mui on the big screen! No big name American credits, just the same HK crews that I, OCs elite readers and writers have been watching for years! Hell, I intentionally avoided renting the Chinese-language tape of RUMBLE IN THE BRONX (which came out quite some time ago), knowing this one would (amazingly) get an actual English dubbing and get a major release in American theatres!

Speaking of English dubbing, it is, of course, rather poor, as many a critic noted. There are no "but stills", but the choice of words gets pretty embarrassing at times, and the fact that the acting & writing pretty much sucks doesn't make the dialogue & situations any more logical. The scenes of "serious" drama are so damn cliché-ridden (i.e. that whole sappy, annoying subplot about some chick supporting her handicapped brother was predictable and downright irritating) that I was expecting a parody, something hilarious seemed as though it were to happen. On the subject of humor, there are a couple chuckles, and the suburban audience I saw RUMBLE IN THE BRONX with seemed to enjoy a lot of these gags, even though the jokes weren't something unfamiliar to the Three Stooges or old Bugs Bunny cartoons. Yep, the humor is pretty naive, even for Jackie Chan, but at least it's never boring.

Naturally, the high point in any Jackie film is the action, and considering that the audience is more used to the weak action of equally weak American films, it's understandable as to why they were completely in awe by Jackie's kicks, stunts, and occasional acrobatics. Considering that this movie is comparable to lame American actioners, I'm giving it three whole stars. However, if I were com-

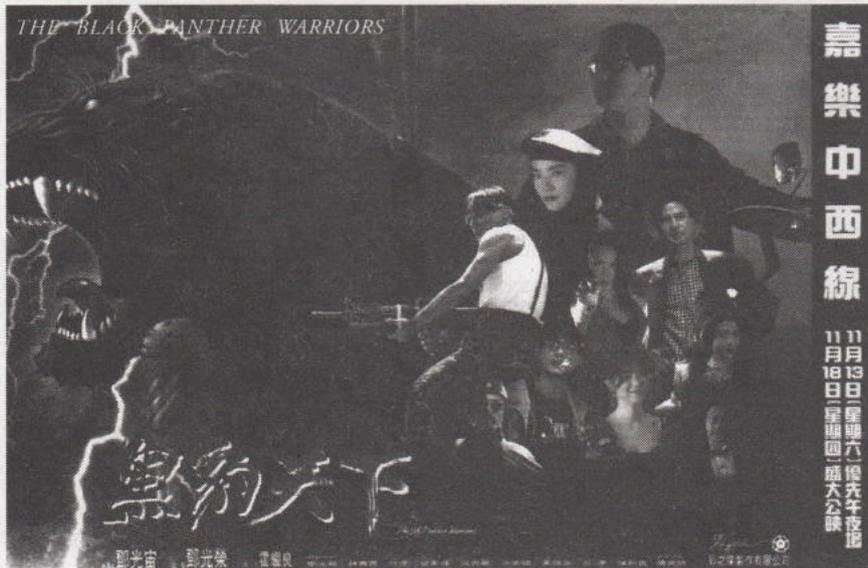
paring it to some truly outstanding Jackie Chan classics (i.e. DRAGONS FOREVER and POLICE STORY 2) from HK, it would be lucky if it only received one star. There's no way someone Jackie's age could get better and improve at this point, so I don't expect him to go back and do PROJECT A-style heroics. His prime is behind him, and although I'm sure he's got plenty of exciting stunts planned in films to come, as far as I'm concerned, the classic, Golden Years of Jackiedom were the 1980s. For one thing, RUMBLE IN THE BRONX has far less actual kung fu than the older classics, and instead, we get a long, dragging climax involving a hovercraft.

My real complaint is the "punk" aspect to the villains in this film. Though I don't doubt that there are plenty of bikers and punk rockers in the world who make trouble for others, perhaps a little realism would have made RUMBLE IN THE BRONX seem far less stupid. In the scene where Jackie raids their clubhouse (or warehouse, whatever), they're dancing to music by Ministry. I'm not the world's greatest fan of Industrial disco, but Ministry doesn't strike me as the sort of band who incites its listeners to cause chaos. The "gang" (hah!) should have been listening to Snoop Doggy Dog or some such artist, the types of upstarts who admit to being "Gansta" rappers, and whose music is the choice of listening for many New York gang members, from Bloods to Crips. Choosing punk rockers, grungies & metal heads to be the villains is an old, unjust stereotype, and one I thought became outdated with CLASS OF 1984! Hell, I really don't think a death rocker would be so rowdy, is it might smear his lipstick.

Ironically, though RUMBLE IN THE BRONX makes it a point to consider anyone who wears a leather jacket (or has the guts to express individuality) to be basically skum of the Earth, they seemed only to happy to include a ripping, cool rock tune by Ash called (appropriately) "Kung Fu", toward the ending credits, accompanying the outtakes. This tune, all about Jackie Chan, was one of my favorite things in the film, even though I always considered Ash more of a Nirvana clone; their music always struck me as little more than typically weak, Seattle grunge. Though I like some grunge, I'll take the faster, post-punk stuff over it any day.

Jackie himself dubbed himself in English in what seems like basically a remake of RETURN OF THE DRAGON, only this time, it's Jackie, not Bruce Lee who leaves HK to go beat up white people. Also, it's not Italy, but New York (though obviously shot in Canada). Instead of Nora Miao's restaurant being hassled by gangs & mobsters, it's Anita Mui's store being hassled by gangs and mobsters. Anyway, the course of this tale has Jackie running from (and occasionally fighting) the most ri-

dulous bunch of "gang members" (yeah right) I've ever seen, while finding time to be humorous and romance a gorgeous babe played by Francoise Yip, who plays her part (as a gorgeous babe) quite well. Later on, there's a change in the plot, something to do with mobsters and FBI agents after a small bag of diamonds. Anyway, there are indeed a couple cool fights (as well as enough blood, ass-shots and an occasional obscene word, to get an R Rating-- in fact, all this surprised me in a Jackie film, but I guess the R Rating is a gimmick to insure box office results), stunts involving vehicles and household objects before a rather disappointing climax. The scenes of the hovercraft go on a little too long, and although the scene of Jackie doing water-skiing (with no skis!) is exciting, that whole sequence of the craft rampaging the city, and later a Golf course, is just plain pointless. *** - Damon Foster



THE BLACK PANTHER WARRIORS

In Gear Film Prod. Co. Ltd., Released by Tai Seng Video Marketing Inc., Prod.: Rover Tang, Exec. Prod.: Alan Tang, Screenplay: Tsang Kan Cheong, Dir.: Ford Clarence (Clarence Fok) Orig. Music: Lowell Lo, Cinematographer: Arthur Wang, Jingle Ma, Gigo Lee, William Yim, Cheung Tung Leung, & Eric Chu. Cast: Alan Tang, Lin Ching Hsia, Simon Yam, Tony Leung, Dicky Cheung, Carrie Ng, Chen Ming Chen, Elsa Chan, Yuen Wah & Melvin Wang, Reviewed by Doug Weldy

What's happening here? Mushroom trip, man. Floppy skin hanging, brains exposed. Ziglets are the actuality level here. Where there's this group, gang, fellowship, or whatever term you use, which is brought together to pull off a robbery. Each person has a unique ability such as rapid fire card throwing, gymnastics, or computer programming. Everyone hams it up throughout. Simon Yam breast feeds a spastic pacifier-sucking computer nerd. When the men get bored they attempt to rape one of the women. She soundly beats them off with a vacuum cleaner.

There's a lot of new words in the subtitles: Boombs, which I guess are exploding breasts

and words like "mondy" and "pretent". 50 snores, I previewed after watching two other videos, but I still think it was an entertaining movie deserving three stars. I saw this movie in its entirety, after the above review, and it was still strange. The computer nerd is by far the oddest character doing an intellectual rap and having a breast fetish. There's a cool body explosion too. *** -Doug Weldy

NO MORE LOVE, NO MORE DEATH

1992, Starring: Carina Lau, Jacky Cheung and Rosamund Kwan, Reviewed by Diane Zentner

This movie starts with a beautiful assassin (Calina Lau) gaining entry to a restricted floor by telling the guard she wants to whisper something in his ear, and then slits his throat with a razor blade in her mouth. If you like movie plots with a pleasantly gruesome twist, this may do the trick.

Jacky Cheung plays a professional killer named Prince. His father, called Tiger Pak, trained him to be a hitman from his earliest years. The primary reason, to have him eventually kill the Green Dragon. His father claims the Green Dragon took his mother many years ago. Well, that part was true. But Tiger Pak isn't really his father. His real father is the Green Dragon. Tiger Pak kidnapped him long ago, so he could have the Green Dragon killed by his own son, in the ultimate revenge. When Prince gets his first chance to take a shot at the Green Dragon, he does something he never did before, leave a witness (Rosamund Kwan) alive. He's convinced that she is the woman he always sees in a dream. She, obligingly, also falls in love with th killer. Of course the climax has spraying bullets, betrayal, and a car explosion. And yet another twist of identity! **** -Diane Zentner

THE TRAGIC FANTASY TIGER OF WANCHAI

1994, Art Dir.: Nelson Cheung, Music: Lau Yi Tat & Tommy Wai, Script: Lo Sing, Leung Yan Tung, A Regal Films Co. Ltd. Prod., Released by Tai Seng Video Mrkt. Inc., Prod.: Steven KS Lo, Exec. Prod.: Charine Chan, Line Prod.: Patricia Yew, Cast: Simon Yam, Lau Ching Wan, Wan Yeung Ming, Cheung Y.U. Yeung, Chan Ka Ling, Chan Miu Ying, Yung Hung, Chik King Man, Lam Kwok Bun, Ho Ka Kui, Law Lit, Reviewed by Doug Weldy

For some unexplained reason, Simon Yam appears in just about every other video I watch. This time he's Hing, the leader of a gang of four, not to be confused with the band. The box synopsis (bullshit) says it's about illegal street car racing, but the only illegal street race is at the beginning. And why are there subtitles when nobody is speaking? People must be mumbling or politely whispering inside the nightclub, because no audible conversation is heard, but you see subtitles that are always

written in bad English, such as: "Why do you wear like this?" and "What kind of taste is it?". Meanwhile, in one rather jolly good scene, Hing and his buddies are drinking at this karaoke bar. A drunk bothers them so Hing grabs homefish and chops off a few of his fingers. Don't you wish you would do this to

every asshole that ever has or will interrupt your existence?! I do.

Another two-tape rental, the bastards. Plain old greed gives us four previews which I don't mind, and three commercials, which I do mind. Hey, go get mom, there's even a handy cooking lesson that has a lady cooking what looks

like brain. Thanks, but I'll just stick to cranium helper myself.

25 snores, because I helped do inventory at a camera store in 100 degree weather hours before watching. 2.5 stars. Not worth the price of two vids, but if you like Simon Yam, and find it all one one tape, rent it. ** -Doug Weldy

吳孟達

戲多財多被逼與社會脫節 影迷多女性非份要求拒絕

NG MAN DAT:

A LOT OF MOVIES, A LOT OF MONEY, SEPARATED FROM SOCIETY, MOST FANS ARE FEMALE, AND HE REFUSES UNREASONABLE REQUESTS



The reporter went to Shaw Bros. Studios to interview Ng Man Dat. He looked very tired, with more white hair, and kept smoking. In 1992, he was asked to appear in more than 20 movies, but he only took about 16 movies, having declined more than 10 movies. It's not that he didn't want the money, but he just didn't have enough time and energy to do more. Presently, when he films a movie, he can only give about 20 days, sometimes only ten. Therefore, a lot of movie directors film all his parts together so they can finish on time. "Because if we pass due, not only do we have to reschedule, we also have to spend more money; both sides lose", he said.

As always, HK people like to follow the trend, so does the movie industry. Whatever is popular, people follow. Like Ng Man Dat, most of his movies are comedies, not just two to three movies, but ten movies a year. He is scared about this situation. "What I am afraid of most is that the producers are out of ideas to make movies more fresh. Whatever they come up with isn't creative any more, and it's difficult for actors to play. When we played in comedies before we always added something new, so that viewers found little surprises, and we felt satisfied, but now, we feel tired of our roles."

The reporter asked: "Are there ways to improve?" "Of course there are some, but we need time. Before, when I was not too busy, I could take a bus or subway, and observe other people's behavior. By joining in with the ordinary people, I can know what our society was really like, what

people wanted. When this is put in the movies, it's more realistic. But now, I am too busy, and movie companies have private cars picking me up, so I don't have a chance to get in touch with the community anymore."

Although Ng Man Dat knows where the problem is, he couldn't change it; why? "Because when a person has only three hours to sleep per day, how can he have the strength to change? When we film out of town (like in Taiwan or Singapore), we only have one film to make at a time. We use up eight to ten hours per day, then we can go back to our hotel and rest. Our life is positively normal, but when we come back to HK, our time is out of control again."

Everybody wants to make something for oneself, like Ng Man Dat. He was in TV for many years. Finally, he made his place in the movie industry, thus, he is the best supporting actor. The reporter of this article feels that Ng Man Dat does not have any competitors right now, actors with similar roles like Chan Ba Hsing and Feng Tsui Fan have their own businesses, they don't concentrate on making movies. Therefore, most movies look for him. Ng Man Dat feels the same, but he doesn't see any problems with it. Because if he can, he would want to make more.

Although Ng Man Dat is well over 40 now, he still has some loyal fans. They range from kids to people around 35. Most of them are female. The reporter asked him how those female fans express their admiration? "Usually buy food, or handicraft, like little boxes, or decorations". Reporter: "How do you handle relationships between you and the fans?" Ng Man Dat: "The most important thing is to keep the distance. Especially since I'm a male actor, when facing female fans, I have to be extremely careful. Fortunately, I am not an idol, my fans aren't obsessed with me."

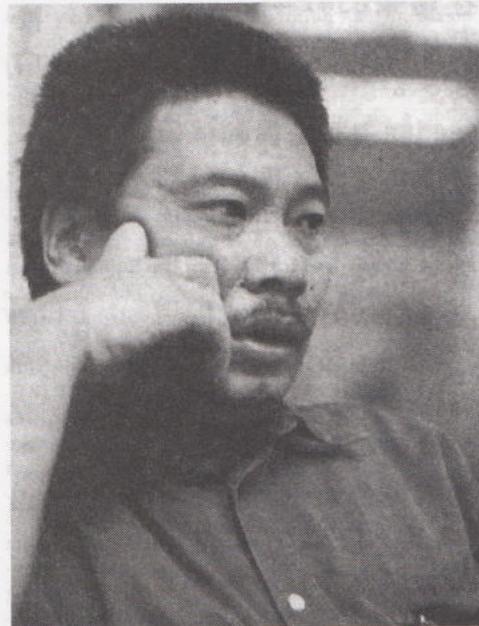
He said, "There was one time a female fan mailed me a letter with her picture, she wanted to be my adopted daughter. There was another time a male fan telephoned me, asking me to look for his dog. I just

laughed and let it go." Compared to harassing phone calls, these are small things.

What happens is that his home phone often rings at midnight, wakes up his family, but when he picks up the phone, there was no sound. Therefore, he doesn't know what's the purpose of the other party. Reporter: "Did you ever think of changing the phone number?" Ng Man Dat: "No." Reporter: "Why, you just let whoever it is harass you?" Ng Man Dat: "Because I have a good phone number, I hate to change it. So when I am not home, I take the phone off the hook. Otherwise, I don't have any other solutions."

Ng Man Dat knows he has been too busy for the past two years, it hurts his health. Because he uses his brain too much, he has a hard time sleeping. He was worried about it once, but after he took a complete physical checkup, everything was normal, he is relieved.

The preceding article was translated by Hong Lin, and originally appeared, in Chinese of course, in some Hong Kongese magazine from two or three years ago. -DFI





Well, it looks like them bastardized Power Rangers are finally (thank God! But then, what does old Zilla have to do with this?) running out of power. It's becoming more & more common to see dolls, games, coloring books, etc. of these mutant hybrids marked down in stores, now available in the "50 % off aisle". Hopefully, the hype is fading away, and we Japanese superhero fans can eventually hold our heads up high again, proud to collect Japanese Sentai books & videotapes. In other overrated pop-culture news, I finally got coerced

KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE

into sitting through Disney's THE LION KING. Better titles for this typically sappy cartoon would have been "The Lyin' King", or better yet, "Kimba 1993"! Why the hell didn't them Japanese sue Walt Disney Productions for this absolutely blatant ripoff of the old Japanese cartoon program?! The heroic young lion in THE LION KING is called "Simba", for Christ sake! Fortunately, the other renamed characters are less obvious: Daniel Baboon is now called Rafini, Caesar is Musaffa, and Polly is Zazu. I'll never understand how they got away with this. For the record, in case anybody gives a damn, here's what I thought about the film on its own: Beautiful art & animation, but the god-awful songs gotta' go! The only worthwhile scene is an incredibly brief scene of a baboon fighting off hyenas, and he uses Bruce Lee-like kung fu tactics. Otherwise, the film sucks like shit, and you're better off watching the original



Japanese cartoon KIMBA ("Jungle Emperor" in Japanese), the long forgotten originator that inspired it.

SAILOR MOON

Dic; 1995, Based on original "Kodansha" comicbook SAILOR MOON by Naoko Takeuchi, Dir.: Junichi Sato, English Adaptation by Louis Hurtubise, Mycheline Tremblay, Gary Paxton, Lisa Lumby, Casting by Trish Dynes, Nicole Thault, Production Creative Consultant: Fred Ladd, Performers: Dennis



風雲ライオン丸



Okayama, Karen Bernstein, Kirsten Bishop, Tony Daniels, Original Music: Kazuyo Sato, A Toei Animation Prod. Co., Reviewed by Damon Foster

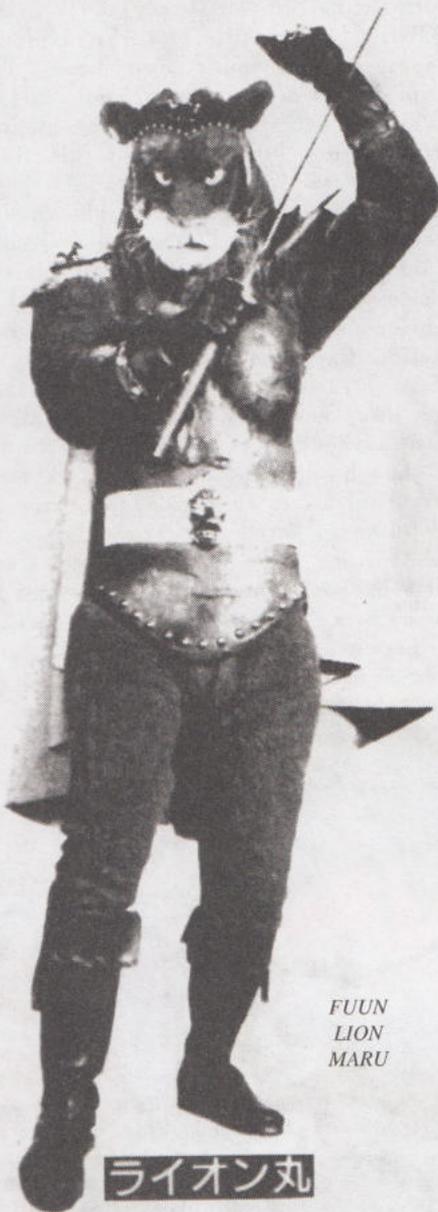
Them Nips over in Nippon are at it again, cranking out yet another cartoon for overweight, sex-starved congeeks to whack off to. I'm sorry, I shouldn't be so nasty to people who've never done me harm. Though I'm only trying to be funny, I'll at least be Politically Correct, and will never again refer to the average anime fan as an "overweight, sex-starved con-geek". From now on, I'll call them "Horizontally Challenged, Sexually Independent Individuals". So welcome to my review of SAILOR MOON, a program which seems geared toward little girls, but I'm sure there are plenty of Horizontally Challenged, Sexually Independent adult fans of this program too. As such, SAILOR MOON isn't a whole hell of a lot different than other Japanese animated programs involving heroic females. But for my taste, the only worthwhile series about animated females was the classic CUTEY HONEY program, a program with enough violence & sleaze to keep me awake, which SAILOR MOON doesn't.

So the slim babes of this cartoon are now role models for little girlies of America? Uh-oh, expect an epidemic of anorexia, scalp problems caused by excessive hair bleaching, and in the case of African American girls, plenty of skin-bleaching, just like Michael Jackson (or whatever her name is) did-- oops, I forgot, Jackson said the skin lightening was the natural result of aging and/or some skin condition (yeah right; and Santa Clause visits Isreal). It's the same old stereotype caused by Barbie dolls, etc., once again, the media is telling American spoiled bratdom that, to be cool, you gotta' look like a model. SAILOR MOON prepares them for tragedies like Ultra Slim Fast, BEVERLYHILLS 902-whatever, Dexatrim and BAY WATCH (which isn't so bad, if the sound is turned down). Anyway, other than the different hair styles, all the heroines in this ultra-typical program look identical-- same sexy legs, some bodies, etc.

The artwork is on the whole, decent, typical Japanese stuff. There are occasional beautiful colors, but on the other end, there are backgrounds of cities that look cheap, like first-draft pencil sketchings. Either the use of this crude artwork was for budgetary reasons, or perhaps it was for some artsy effect. As is always the case in Japanimation, the characters have outrageously large eyes, not only bigger than any Japanese person's, but much bigger than any caucasian's eyes. So facially, these characters more closely resemble fish. Another thing I can't stand are the ridiculous facial expressions whenever a character gets embarrassed or falls in love or whatever. These quirky, sappy drawings are suppose to be cute & funny? No person's face, not even Jim Carrey's can do all that, thank god!

I'm sure this juvenile program was better

in its Japanese version. This inferior, hap-hazard English dub is suspiciously lacking in violence, and finding a Japanese superhero cartoon without a little violence is like finding an Andy Rooney (the old guy from 60 MINUTES) center spread in *Playgirl*. So through fancy editing, obvious cuts & repeating shots, intercutting miscellaneous pieces at random, and awkward computer-



generated transitions, they manage to sloppily remove whatever decent action scenes this formerly Japanese series had to offer. It still comes off as Japanese, however, there's no avoiding it. Because of its urban Tokyo setting, there are plenty of Japanese language signs all over, right in plain sight. There's absolutely no way they could disguise this program's Japanese setting!

I also wonder if American kiddies are confused as to why everyone wears uniforms to school. Now, they could dub this show as taking place at a Catholic School, but since Japanese school uniforms resemble sailor uniforms, perhaps it ties in with the title.

Who knows? If this show is a big hit, maybe kiddies will want to wear identical uniforms to school-- hell, that would cut down on needless killings caused by who's wearing the wrong 'gang' colors, etc. But to be truly cool, the youth of today will also need cosmetic surgery to make their eye-openings the size of Baseballs. If by now you've noticed I'm straying too much from the subject, and think I simply don't take cartoons seriously, you're quite perceptive.

Okay, what's next? Why don't I just skip to the plot and get this damn review over with, so I needn't sit through this only remotely amusing series again. A team of superheroes from space come to Earth and battle alien monsters called the Mega Force. Our heroines, when they're not trying to romance some guy called Darian (who, secretly, is also a superhero, the mysterious phantom Tuxedo Mask), they go to school, talk to their pet cat Luna and become superheroes like Sailor Moon (Serena, when out of costume), and Sailors Venus, Mercury, Jupiter & Mars. The "battles" are short and consist of magical powers, most action & violence has been removed to keep kiddies from being violent and to convince girls their place is to look pretty and not be too tough or feisty. Unlike CUTEY HONEY or SPEED RACER, this is no classic of Japanese cartoonime, and although I didn't hate it and have seen worse things (a rotten pile of vegetables, for example), I would say that this series is a big disappointment. -Damon Foster

FUUN LION MARU

["Stormcloud: Lion Knight"] Produced by P Productions, Broadcast on Fuji TV from 4/14/73 to 9/29/73, Consisting of 25 episodes, Creator: Shoji Ushio, Main Writers: Toshiaki Matsushima, Tomio Shinoda & Kazuo Takagiwa, Main Directors: Koichi Ishiguro, Kanya Otsuka, Music: Hiroshi Tsusui, Cast: Tetsuya Ushio, Kyoko Miyano, Tsunehiro Atarashii, Tohru Ohira, Reviewed by Damon Foster

The "fuun" in this excellent program's title is basically pronounced "foon", or "fewn", but we may as well take out one of the U's and call this show "Fun Lion Maru", because this follow-up to the previous season's KAIKETSU LION MARU (see review in OC#14; 1992 edition) is so damn much fun! KAIKETSU LION MARU was quite an entertaining program too, but from what I've seen I really feel this sequel series is an improvement. So FUUN LION MARU is every bit as exciting as its predecessor, if not more so. A few episodes are genuinely action packed, and even the slower ones are worth checking out. So yet again, it looks like I've got nothing but praise for yet another live action, Japanese TV show from the Golden Age of Japanese Superheroes, the 1970s. I swear, I'm not being biased here; I'm not automatically praising any superhero program just because it was from a particular decade. Believe me, if ever I see a 1970s

Before and after shots
of the mysterious
BLACK JAGUAR.



series that sucks (i.e. Toei's KYODINE), I'll trash it mercilessly.

FUUN LION MARU is low budget yet resourceful, it rarely gets overly far-fetched for a Japanese hero series made for limited funds. Fortunately, it's all done quite well (cheap or not), because it's the work of one of Toei's top competitors of the early 1970s, P Productions. These are the same masterminds who brought us other enjoyable programs on shoe-string budgets: KAI KETSU LION MARU, DENJIN ZABOGA, SPECTREMAN, and even SPACE GIANTS, which for their standards, must come off as a blockbuster. Where as SPACE GIANTS saved money by using the same monsters in several episodes, and SPECTREMAN insulted our intelligence with some of the cheapest, makeshift sets possible, FUUN LION MARU usually takes place outdoors (i.e. forests & deserts), and since the course of the program has our protagonists traveling the Japanese countryside, no continuity is ever lost, it's all comparatively believable (other than the obviously impossible concept of flying, swordweilding lions, etc.) by Japanese superhero standards. However, nonfans will scoff at a few of the corny-looking villains (though most look fairly slick & intimidating) and minor flaws such as the ever likely, visible suspension wires, sometimes fairly obvious during flying and high jumping scenes.

Though I preferred the Sergio Leone-esque theme song for KAIKESTU LION MARU, both programs tend to have that post-spaghetti western flavor of theme music. Ennio Moricone was a definite influence on both program's scores, plenty of tunes sound like

tributes to the likes of FIST FULL OF DOLLARS and FOR A FEW DOLLARS MORE. You might not believe it, but these types of "Dick Dale's surf meets Country Western" songs apply just as well to a samurai setting as they do to any cowboy setting! Needless to say, the music is slick, cool, a charismatic way to show the might of our heroes, and a lot more fun than the synthesizers and symphonic crap that ruins most scores today.

Fantasy samurai programs such as this and HENSHIN NINJA ARASHI (Toei; 1972) are what I personally consider to be the successor to your average jidai-geki, aka chanbara. They've got the same basic stuff as in any old Akira Kurosawa samurai farce: Samurais, swordplay, old settings & ninjas. But there are added bonuses: Monsters, demons, pistol packing prawns, and sword-swinging cats! SEVEN SAMURAI was never this thrilling! I'm not knocking the old, so-called "classics" of Japanese samurai cinema, since there was a time in my youth when I absolutely loved the likes of YOJIMBO, SANJURO, RASHOMON, etc. But once I saw the action packed superhero fantasy of Ninja Arashi and both Lion Maru's, there was no going back, I was spoiled! This is not to say that I think HENSHIN NINJA ARASHI is in a league with FUUN LION MARU (what few NINJA ARASHI's I've seen were rather slow), but I think I've made my basic point, sort of. The likes of FUUN LION MARU bridge the gap between action hero and that Japanese samurai tradition, and as such, such programs are must-sees for both audiences.

Taking a tip from Toei's KAMEN NO NINJA AKAKAGE ("Red Shadow-The Masked Ninja"; 1967) TV show, FUUN LION

MARU also has an unconventional tendency to throw in doses of modern/futuristic technology into its scripts: Jet packs, maybe a motorcycle or two, an occasional armored tank and other gadgets predated by the old-style setting. But hell, when I want historical accuracy, I watch cable TV's The History Channel, but when I want over-the-top fun and nonstop (or rather, "rarely stop") action, I get out my tapes of FUUN LION MARU. Strangely, Lion Maru only seems to use his jet-packs as part of his transformation from human to hero. I don't recall any episodes where he flied around purely for transportation needs.

Having seen only the first few episodes of FUUN LION MARU, I'm still a little confused about the plot. I was of the impression that the original Lion Maru died in the final episode of KAIKETSU LION MARU, yet his human form Shishimaru (Tetsuya Ushio) seems to be alive in this series, now becoming the light brown hero, Fuun Lion Maru. Hell, later episodes even had a team up, the ghost of the original, Kaiketsu Lion Maru returns to help his younger predecessor. So obviously, not until I've done complete episode guides for both programs (assuming that ever happens) will I know the full story. So anyway, like I said, Shishimaru, or maybe his twin brother of the same name, is back in action as Fuun Lion Maru. His enemies are the usual demonic swordsmen types, this time commanded by some strange warlord called Aguda, who in turn gets his commands from a huge face, a subterranean oracle called the Mantle God. When Shishimaru (aka Fuun Lion Maru) isn't crossing swords with the henchmen and monsters (Nezuma, Shyagon, Gamujin, Barachi, etc.) of this monstrous empire, he's proecting young Sankichi and his attractive sister (played by Kyoko Matsutani) in leather pants; the two of them are in some covered wagon, on some sort of mission or quest. Another supporting character is co-hero/rival hero Black Jaguar, who fills in the "guest hero" role occupied by Tiger Joe in the first program. Though Black Jaguar got killed off in episode #11, he was definately a charismatic hero, the guy was worthy of his own series. ***** -Damon Foster

Right: Shishimaru
(Lion Maru in human
form.)





ASIAN ODDITIES



(see last issue's Letters Section) at U.S.A.'s martial arts movies, sent in by Charles Floyd Rhodes. -DFI Charles Floyd Rhodes here! Anyway, hold your nose, for here's the U.S. martial arts movies checklist part two:

YOUTH RUNS WILD (1943): Val Lewton produced a flick about an ex-soldier who teaches ju-jitsu? Afraid so.

EXPERIMENT IN TERROR (1962): Blake Edwards must have a thing for martial arts, he had such in most of his "Pink Panther" movies including that 1993 dud. **EXPERIMENT IN TERROR** has a martial arts class scene that involves an oriental woman (I don't know the actress's name) and a man. Some how the scene where Red Lynch (Ross Martin) makes a woman strip down to her underwear and walk into a cob-webbed closet is more exciting. In today's movies, she'd be lucky if that's all he made her do.

FOR THOSE WHO THINK YOUNG (1964): This techniscope beach party movie has a lot of plugs for Pepsi, and a scene involving a rolodex reveals a character named Annabelle Mosie being a judo expert.

THE SILENCER (1966): I think all of Dean Martin's Matt Helm movies had "chops, flips, leaps & kicks" martial arts moves, this one is a bit randy as it had a lot of partial female nudity, including a complete, bare-butt of a blonde female assassin, she also briefly flashed her pubes in non-TV prints. There are exploding buttons, a cartoon-cel animated nuclear missile, a deadly laser, Victor Buono as a blatantly gay villain, and mass sexism.

DEATH WALKS IN LAVEDO (Italy; 1966): A spaghetti western

with a martial arts master called Lester (James Shigeta).

FIVE MAN ARMY (Italy; 1969): One of them is a Japanese swordsman who is credited with skills that work in a short amount of time. Though I've never seen a book mention him, I believe the actor is Tetsuro Tanba.

STRANGER IN JAPAN (Italy; 1969): It includes samurais.

H-BOMB (1971): Actually a Thai/HK co-production released to the U.S. about 1977, included here because this was released as U.S. product [on video] because Chris Mitchum plays a U.S. secret agent.

IDF here. Welcome to another edition of that bizarre, sometimes out-of-place, "Anything Goes" column, Asian Oddities. The goal of this wacky segment is to officially open the doors to any genre not often covered in the regular Asian-fanzine-circuit. For example, for quite some time now, I've been trying to expose & promote an immensely entertaining series of Italian martial arts capers called the "Three Fantastic Supermen" series. It's unique, East-meets-West co-productions like this which indirectly led to the birth of "Asian Oddities". But finding such films, especially their elusive English dubbings, is more difficult than retaining a hard-on while attending a Whoopy Goldberg film festival. Strangely, it's slightly more possible to obtain memorabilia (stills, lobby cards, posters, etc.) from such productions, as is the case with **THREE SUPERMEN IN TOKYO**, known in Spain as "Three Super Hombres En Tokio" (see photos included herein). So again I ask, is there anyone out there who has this impossible-to-find movie, preferably in English? But for now, on to a somewhat less exciting topic: Among other things, this portion has also included that most dreaded of action movie, the American Martial Arts Film. So before getting into the obligatory reviews of Japanese & Filipino flicks, the remainder of this intro is another indepth look



CON
DICK GORDON
WILLY NEWTON
GLORIA PAUL
DIRECTOR:
BITTO ALBERTINI
EASTMANCOLOR



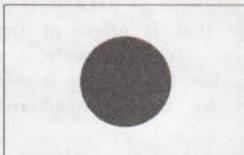
A MAN CALLED AMEN (Italy; 1972): Horacio (Luc Merenda) is "a sharp-shooting, kung fu fighting rouge", according to Tom Weisser's book on spaghetti westerns.

FIGHTING FIST OF SHANGHAI JOE (Italy; 1973): Chen Lee is Shanghai Joe, this is supposed to be gory, as is the sequel, RETURN OF SHANGHAI JOE (Germany; 1974).

KUNG FU BROTHERS IN THE WILD WEST (Italy; 1973): Jason Pai Pao and Pa Chih Leo are the kung fu brothers.

(Charles's filmography continued on into the mid-1970s and 1980s, but by then, the genre became less colorful and more stagnant, since 1973's ENTER THE DRAGON officially brought kung fu into the international mainstream. I was, however, particularly impressed to see there were so many early Italian martial arts movies (i.e. KUNG FU BROTHERS IN THE WILD WEST, AMAZONS AND SUPERMEN, FIGHTING FIST OF SHANGHAI JOE, MR. HERCULES AGAINST KARATE, A MAN CALLED AMEN, etc.) in existence back then. I must confess, I think next to Asian films, Italian ones have always been a favorite. -DF/

From Japan:



FIST OF THUNDER
1994 (?), Based on a character created by: Go Nagai, Starring: Jushin "Thunder" Liger, Reviewed by Frank

Strom

Now here's a real Asian oddity. A live action movie that's a star vehicle for the Japanese pro wrestler Jushin Liger. Some background: Cartooning legend Go Nagai was hired to create characters & designs for an animated LIGER TV series a few years back. The series was basically a variation on Nagai's 1970s style giant robot cartoons, only not anywhere near as good. LIGER ran its 52-week course, but wasn't a big success. Meanwhile, the television network that owned the show approached the New Japan Pro Wrestling promotion with the idea of having a wrestler perform as Liger. New Japan chose Keiichi Yamada for the job. Yamada was already working for New Japan, but was considered too small to be a major star for the promotion. However, as Liger, Yamada became a huge success-- so much so that New Japan built an entire Junior Heavyweight division around him. The success of the real-life wrestling Liger far eclipsed that of its original source material, and eventually led to this film.

While Japan is generally not known for

Pro Wrestling movies, they've produced at least two in the past few years (the other being Chigusa Nagayo's RING RING RING). FIST OF THUNDER is not unlike a traditional Mexican-type wrestler movie, though it has more to do with Pro Wrestling than your average Santo outing. FIST is essentially an action-packed melodrama with some "horror" overtones. While this is certainly one of the best wrestling movies ever (that's not saying much, as there haven't been many good ones), it falls short delivering the action. The three featured fights would have been enough to carry the film, but they're filmed & framed in a poor fashion that waters down the excitement. Liger is known for his inventive and elaborate high flying moves-- unfortunately, all these spectacular movies are filmed in close-up, and thus missing the bulk of these spectacular flips & dives. Over all, it's a decent-enough time-killer.



The plot: Wrestling star Jushin Liger is plagued with fits of dizziness & fainting spells. He continues to have bizarre mental flashbacks to his dimly remembered childhood, when he was chased through the woods by evil demons! At the same time, a sinister (and more than a little monstrous) American wrestler (named Ric "Stinger", if I hear correctly) arrives in Japan to participate in a three-man wrestling tournament. Stinger displays his wickedness by killing one of his opponents in the ring (smashing his foe's head over his rock-hard kneecap!). Liger's match with Stinger turns vicious during a ringside brawl, when both wrestlers glow & pulsate with energy. They run from the arena at supersonic speed, eventually ending up in an abandoned building, where they both transform into scaly demons! The demons rip into each other with punches, kicks, and the occasional wrestling maneuver, until De-

mon-Liger emerges victorious. *** -Frank Strom

From America:



ROADHOUSE

Released by MGM/USA Home Video, Rated R, 1 hr. 55 min., Starring Patrick Swayze, Sam Elliot,

Kelly Lynch, Ben Gazzara, Reviewed by Peter Huston

Why isn't ROADHOUSE considered a legitimate martial arts film? I mean, it's not exactly a major question like, "Are we alone in the universe?" or "Why did mankind learn to walk upright?" Still, it always confused me. Perhaps, it has something to do with the fact that it stars none other than Patrick Swayze, teen pin-up dreamboat and star of such syrupy trash as DIRTY DANCING and GHOST. But why judge harshly? Acting is a tough profession and it's unlikely that Swayze can choose quality films like ROADHOUSE all the time. Probably he just did DIRTY DANCING and GHOST to pay the bills, right? Swayze, GHOST really sucked, but don't worry! I forgive you!

So is this a martial arts movie or what? I damn well think so! Lots of good music, particularly blues in the bar, lots of brief flashes of T&A all over the place; lots of bimbos in tight skirts (unless of course you use BAYWATCH standards or something), good fights, and a heck of a lot of beautiful one liners that bear repeating at inappropriate social occasions.

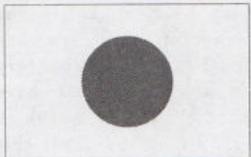
ROADHOUSE starts out at a smokey club somewhere in New York. Swayze's a "cooler" named "Dalton", sort of a "chief-bouncer". And he's tough. In fact, he knows martial arts. He never uses anesthesia. And he reads philosophy books. Suddenly a mysterious stranger comes in and offers him an outrageous sum of money if Swayze will diddlebop on down to Missouri and clean out all the trash who are ruining his bar. Swayze, after all, is the best at what he does and what he does is bounce at bars. So, the next thing you know, faster than Swayze can say, "Where's Missouri?", he loads up the truck and he moves to Beverly. His mission is to chase out all these beer drinking slobs who are stinking up the joint. First thing, he wanders in, has a cup of coffee and leans back to check out his new home. The local white trash break their beer bottles over each other's heads and fondle one another's breasts. "No problem", he decides. He can handle it -- he's Dalton.

Next night, he comes back, organizes the staff, and beat some people up. Still, it's okay and all moral-like because they're not very nice people and sometimes you just have to kick people like that around. And kick them around, he does. In my opinion, this movie has some of the best fight scenes I've ever seen. Lots of martial arts, a la Norris,

Thorrock and others. Swayze, for instance, uses a variety of low kicks to the knee in a realistic fashion. These are mixed together with some high kicks to keep things interesting and the action flowing. The fights, by the way, were choreographed by Benny "The Jet" Urquidez, who makes a cameo appearance in the monster truck car crashing scene. I also suspect that he may have actually done a few of Swayze's fancier kicks for him in a couple of the scenes, but I just really couldn't tell as the camera was just a little bit out of focus in those parts when I rewound to double check. (Hmmm? Does he or doesn't he? only his choreographer knows for sure...). Next, Swayze dusts himself off and starts firing people from the bar staff, but it's okay, because they're not very nice people and sometimes you just have to fire people like that. But wait, the corrupt and sleazy, embezzling no-good bartender doesn't feel that way! He's pissed. He wants his job back! And his uncle (played by Ben Gazzara), well heaven forbid, his uncle runs the entire town. This uncle owns half the stores and all the liquor distributors! He collects all the taxes! He owns the police and the sheriff, so Swayze can't run to them for help! And, naturally, he keeps his own band of thugs around. In reserve, he's got this real mean bodyguard who likes to kick and hurt people, particularly people who upset the evil uncle.

The uncle, in short, is not a very nice man, and now he doesn't like Swayze and all of Swayze's new found friends. These include the local doctor, a nice-looking blond played by Kelly Lynch (Lynch, by the way, soon follows Swayze home, where they disrobe and give each other check-ups). Meanwhile, we get to look at her breasts, and all four cheeks on both their butts (not that I looked very carefully at Swayze's butt, of course...I mean you know, I tried to close my eyes immediately to prove I was strictly a hetero-ogler, but those buttocks just flashed right up there and there was nothing I could do. I'm not a homo or anything). Naturally, Swayze remains stubborn and good and pure, so evil Uncle ratchets up the atrocities until Swayze has no choice but to react. Well, you can guess what happens next: Swayze calls his best friend, played by Sam Elliot to come on down to Missouri and watch his back. Naturally, Elliot does, because a man has to help his friends. Wa la, roll on to the crescendo, beat more people up, some explosions, some fires, lots of destruction of all sorts, the climactic scenes and so on without let up or disappointment. Hurrah, hurrah! More beer! -Peter Huston

From Japan:



CHUSHINGURA, THE 47 RONIN
 {Toho; 1994} Producer: Kon Ichikawa, Cast: Ken Takakura, Kiichi Naki, Rie Miyazawa,

Ruriko Asaoka, Hisaya Morishige, Koji Ishizaka, Koichi Iwaki, Ko Nishimura, Re-

viewed by John Emma

This is a hard film to categorize. It's a chanbara, and it features what could arguably be heroes, and they way it's written makes it an Asian Oddity. Of course, Japanophiles already know this story well, but for those who don't, here's some background. The story of the 47 Ronin is true, and these men are considered real heroes in this country. And it's good enough to be good fiction too. Basically, the story goes like this: An evil Daimyo named Kira in Tokugawa Era Japan engineers the disgrace of a rival Daimyo, who is forced by the Shogun to commit seppuku. This daimyo was well loved by his retainers, and they vow to avenge his death, against Lord Kira. And amazingly, against overwhelming odds, they succeed! And then, what made them famous, they all commit seppuku. This gives them a gloriously honorable death, and a place in history. If this sounds like it would make a wild flick, you're right; it would. And has, many times.

But not this time! This is a real snoozer. This author chose to emphasize the leader of the 47's search for financing for their little escapade. Now I'm sure to a historian, one who understands Japanese, this is a fascinating angle. But I don't understand Japanese, and this chatter fest drones on for over two hours! But if you set your alarm to get up for the final 20 minutes, it's worth the wait. This is what we readers of OC long for. Nonstop fighting as the 47 ronin hack their way into Kira's home and give him the old slice & dice. In the climax, Oishi Kuronosuke, the leader of the 47 ronin, has a one-on-one sword fight with Lord Kira. Kira new of their coming, but laughed at the attempt. But now he's just a sniveling pansy as Kuronosuke confronts him. Although he finally grows some balls for a few moments, he is quickly gutted by the ronin leader. And then, in a scene to satisfy the most blood-thirsty of you out there, he saws Kira's head off while he's still alive!

The final touching scene has his pregnant girlfriend (Rie Miyazawa) happily awaiting his return, unaware of his actions and suicide. This is particularly interesting as Rie-Chan is one of a current crop of air-head beauties here who become famous for doing nude books, the fancy glossy kind. And a year or so ago,

She was dumped by fiance Takanoha the Yokuzuna Sumo star when she wouldn't become a perfect little wife and stay home and be a house-slave, Japanese style. I guess she really knows how to pick boyfriends. Well, now it's ratings time. For any of you Japanese speaking historians out there, I give it five stars (****); it's an interesting approach. But for the other 99% of you who like more than a little action in your chanbara, I give it only one (*) star. That's all it's got, a little action. But if they subtitled this thing so I could understand what the fuck is happening in the first two hours, I might give it two. Try the ghost story version, at least

CHUSHINGURA is chopped down to a manageable ten-minutes or so of interesting action. Well, gotta' go; some irate critic is coming with a sword. * -John Emma

From Mainland China:



SHANGHAI TRIAD

Starring Gong Li,
 Reviewed by Peter
 Huston

China in the thirties, and Shanghai in particular, were not happy places. And SHANGHAI TRIAD shows this. In this setting, it's easy to die, but it's not easy to live. The star of the film is Gong Li, one of China's most famous actresses. Like her recent films, THE STORY OF QIU JU, HANG THE RED LANTERN and FAREWELL MY CONCUBINE, this is a saga of people struggling to take control of not only their own lives, but those of the people who surround them. It's an unpleasant story of constant social intrigue, one upmanship, and the human tendency to compensate for one's own weaknesses by inflicting them on others.

SHANGHAI TRIAD is not a happy movie. Like FAREWELL MY CONCUBINE and its ilk, it's depressing and it moves slowly. It contains much violence. It is well done, with good camera work and high quality sets & effects. Yet the true strength of SHANGHAI TRIAD is the portrait that it offers of the lives of the characters. It's an unpleasant portrait, but it makes for a haunting movie that will most likely by long remembered by those who see it.

To the Chinese, Shanghai in the 1930s was like our Chicago in the 1920s. A surprisingly modern city, it had a large underground economy based on the bloody opium trade. Li portrays Xiao Jibao (Little Jewel), a singer in a nightclub owned by a prominent mobster. Due to her looks, Jibao is now the gangster's concubine and frequent public companion. Vain and cruel, as he controls her, she controls others around her. Through his power, she humiliates and terrorizes the servants and gangsters who come and go in the building where he keeps her. She controls her fellow men, but lacks the power to live freely.

Tang Shusheng is a fourteen year old boy brought in from the countryside assigned to be a servant for this domineering and merciless woman. Unhappily, he set about his duties. As he becomes accustomed to his new position in life, he learns about the harsh and violent realities of gang life. Shusheng and Jibao, innocents both, become caught up in a violent gangwar. They watch as people they've come to know die with an utterly meaningless randomness. As he comes to understand the motivations of this woman, Shusheng realizes that, really, he and his domineering mistress are not so much different from one another. -Peter Huston

From America:



LOST FAITH

Presented by Joel D. Wynkoop; 1996, Produced, Written & Directed by Joel D. Wynkoop, Asst. Dir.:

Sean McCarthy, Starring: Joel D. Wynkoop, David Bardsley, David Lurry, Christine Schearer, Bill Sims, and Melisa, Reviewed by Damon Foster

The videobox of this amateur, shot-on-video martial arts flick actually boasts "In the tradition of KILL AND KILL AGAIN and THE LAST DRAGON"! Joel D. Wynkoop considers this a recommendation for his 90-minute video?! Though KILL AND KILL AGAIN offered a chuckle or two (at best), I think most of you will agree that THE LAST DRAGON is a completely useless piece of shit, and that any flick, amateur or otherwise, that dares imitate it isn't exactly a masterpiece itself! Sorry Joel, I appreciate the free review tape, but in a world full of excellent martial arts movies, you're taking your inspiration from bottom of the barrel crap!!! Yet again I find myself trashing an amateur martial arts video, and having produced such productions myself, it's always disheartening when I must negatively criticize the product of one of my fellow filmmakers. I'm not saying my videos are any better (it's up to the individual, a number of people have panned my videos too), but I quite simply gotta' be honest and say the truth: I think LOST FAITH sucked big time, I hated every minute of it!! I had hoped so much to enjoy this video, I had high expectations of it, yet as is always the case with no-budget videos (including a few of my own), it was a major disappointment. Perhaps I'm not one to judge amateur videos, since OC is suppose to concentrate on professional movies from Asia.

The cheap, synthetic music is terrible, the movie is paced incredibly slow, and some of the acting is god awful. Some of the acting appears to be attempts at humor, at least I think so, since the video box mentions "zany humor in this high-impact action/comedy adventure!". Now, if "zany" means pointless and stupid, they've succeeded. It's actually hard to judge the acting (except for the main villain; his acting is staggeringly bad), since it's the writing that really seems to fowl everything up. From start to finish, LOST FAITH strikes me as a long, drawn-out, boring, incredibly uninteresting waste of video-

tape. It's scenes of "serious" drama (i.e. the religious overtones) are what comes off as humorous, though unintended humor it most definitely is. But again, this entire review is written from my point of view exclusively! Here's what other magazines & people had to say about LOST FAITH....

"This movie kicks ass!"-Subgenre Mag.

"A pretty damn good action/adventure flick!"-Ken Kisch

"If you like martial arts films, see this movie!"-Independent Video

"Kicks, chops, punches and refreshing comedy!"-Salvatore Cangemi

So am I in the wrong again? Is my unique opinion of the minority? Hell, even the magazine Video Wasteland found nice things to



say about it. So pay no attention to my personal opinion; if you like no-budget karate flicks, give LOST FAITH a chance; you may order LOST FAITH for \$20, make check or money order out to Joel D. Wynkoop. Mail your orders to: Wynkoop Productions, P.O. Box 2407, Fort Pierce, FLA., 34954. You be the judge. Also inquire about other available videos, including CREEP and STAY HUNGRY: THE MAKING OF 'LOST FAITH'.

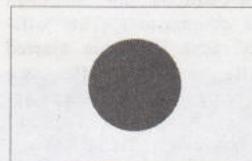
There are two good (sort of) things about LOST FAITH. By now everyone knows I'll always mention pretty girls if they're in a movie, and LOST FAITH definitely has a few. I was also impressed by some of the martial arts skills of Wynkoop and a couple of his enemies. Even available photos indicate Wynkoop and his buddies know their stuff, their kicks have the potential to be quite decent. But again, LOST FAITH was obviously influenced by bad American martial arts films, so the choreography and staging of these battles is incredibly poor, even worse (can you believe it?) than your average Chuck Norris or Claude Van Damme snore-

a-thon! I'll never understand how a martial arts duel can come off as bewilderingly dull, but these LOST FAITH dudes seem intent on staging & taping some of the slowest, most unexciting martial arts I've seen in quite some time. This is a real shame, since I can tell Wynkoop is a good martial artist -- but believe me, it's really hard to tell, amid some truly poor action scenes.

Perhaps the real problem is that there's a major difference between real sparring and shooting fight-scenes on film. At least four of the actors in LOST FAITH could handle themselves in a real fight, but when it comes to making such skills look thrilling on video, they've got a lot to learn. Hopefully, they'll improve in time, since somehow, I don't think it could get much worse.

For what it's worth, Joel Wynkoop (producer, writer, director, etc.) Nekoda, who is trying to rescue his wife who was kidnapped by some martial artists who can't act worth a damn, and, like several other pretty women (their acting pretty much stinks too), is being held captive in some forest. After plenty of slow-paced meandering (Wynkoop goes around asking questions, time to use the Scan button!), our hero finally locates the hideout where the women are kept. Among the various fights, at least two have them have our hero fighting a couple ugly, out-of-shape, slow-moving fat people; my god, where do they find these people?! Anyway, after nearly suffering defeat at the hands of a villain who overacts both horribly and mechanically, he decides to become a born again Christian. So he asks god for help, and help is what he gets; he defeats his adversary. How sweet. -Damon Foster

From Japan:



RANPO

1994, Rampo Production Committee (Producers), Director: Kazuyoshi Okuyama, Cast: Masahiro Motoki,

Noto Takenaka, Michiko Hada, Mikihiro Hira, Teruyuki Kagawa, Kirin Kiki, Kazunori Kishibi, Shiro Sano {porno sequence listed as: "an actor and an actress?"}

Reviewed by John Emma

Well, here we go again. Another wonderful contribution to the film world. Right. This thing was advertised as some kind of ghost story, and the previews looked pretty good. But guess what? RANPO (aka "Rampo") (continued on page inside back cover)

TERRARORVANKI

Intro by Rob Dagg

For fans of Japanese sci-fi/fantasy, 1995 was generally a good year, depending on who you talk to. The POWER RANGERS burst into everyone's homes and singlehandedly revived interest in Japanese-based live action shows. While Saban has been taken to task for its butchering of KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX and the various Toei Sentai shows, at least these shows have made it over here legitimately. I personally don't like any changes to Japanese based shows, they should be dubbed or subtitled in my opinion.

For fans of Ultraman and Godzilla, 1995 could have been a lot better. It has now been five years since the so-so ULTRAMAN: TOWARDS THE FUTURE ran on limited release on American television. Godzilla in legitimate film form has not made it over here since GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE for about the same number of years. The long completed ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO has suffered from lack of interest by American distributors for good reason-- boring action scenes and not enough episodes to strip run the series weekdays. The new Toho Godzilla movies are reportedly available for a huge, unreasonable amount of money from Toho and thus far American companies have balked at any deals. Toho insists that they are looking for a distributor. Why are they even looking? Toho has an office based in L.A. and is an active member in the Hollywood scene. There is no reason that Toho couldn't release their new movies on their own video label: Toho Video, and distribute them in the U.S. themselves! This move would kill a couple birds with one stone. First Toho would give the American fans of Godzilla the opportunity to own the cool new series. Second, they would clean up the "black" market video sales it has complained about for years. Toho must realize that fans of its Godzilla series are seeking out these films from various sources. By releasing their movies on video, everybody wins, Toho and the fans. The frustration fans have over lack of legitimate good quality movies and videos is warranted! Fans will simply seek out these films from people who can get them.

Tsuburaya's U.S. based Ultracom, Inc. has been the target of several fan complaints. The "official Ultraman fan club" that Ultracom started ceased publication of its newsletter after two small issues. The fan club raised fans' expectations but devastated fans with broken promises. Original series on video? ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO on television? Ultraman products and toys? Revival of Questclub, watch your mailboxes? Sorry, Ultracom, the only thing Ultra fans got stuck with was the fucking horrible "Canadian-Let's-Make-A-Joke-of-it-and-Chop-up-the-Fight-Scenes-- Ultra 7". Then when fans write to complain or get answers we get blown off like "fanboys". Hardly a way to run a company that is suppose to be catering to what the fans want! Get a clue, Ultracom, or hire someone who does.

To sum it up, 1995 was a so-so year. Good in some ways, horrible in others. We often hear new shows are coming out (i.e. butchered

KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX), a new Ultra show will hit TV (ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO) and movies are being worked on (Tristar's GODZILLA). If the American corporate heads don't know what the fans want, get out of the business. We don't need your broken promises and lame-ass ideas. Get someone in there who knows what the fuck they're doing. Hopefully in 1996, someone will finally "get it". -Rob Dagg

Right & center:
GENOCIDE:
WAR OF
THE
INSECTS



こんちゅうだいせんそう
昆中大戦争

GENOCIDE: WAR OF THE INSECTS

[Japanese title: KONCHU DAISENSO, which means "Great Insect War"] A Shochiku Production. Released November, 1968, Color/Widescreen (Shochiku GrandScope)- 85 Min., Producer: Tsuneo Otsuno, Dir.: Kazui Nihonmatsu, Screenplay: Susumu Takahisa, Based on the Story "Konchu Daisenso" by Tetsumi Amada, Music: Shunsuke Kikuchi, SPFX Dir.: Keiji Kawakami & Shun Suganuma, Optical FX: Satoshi Ishikawa, Cast: Keisuke Sonoi as Dr. Yoshito Nagumo, Yusuke Kawazu as Joji Akiyama, Emi Shindo as Yukari Akiyama, Reiko Hitomi as Junko Komura, Cathy Horlan as Annabelle, Rolf Jessup as Commander Gordon, Chico Roland as Charlie, Franz Gruber as Doctor, Mike Daning as Aircraft Captain, Harold Conway as Commander, & Christopher Elam as the Person Who Reviewed This

Ugh! "War on the Viewers" might be a better title. This movie is really dreadful. The plot seems to center on yet another "military operation gone horribly wrong". Yep, us wacky Americans have screwed up again. It looks like

we've somehow turned the bugs of the world into crazed killers. At least I think that's the premise. I didn't see much in this one that counteracted the heaviness which afflicted my eyelids.

Probably the most amazing thing about this disaster movie (in every sense of the word) is that it was made by people responsible for good sci-fi. Director Kazui Nihonmatsu also directed 1967's excellent monster opus THE X FROM OUTER SPACE. Several cast members from that movie are on hand here. Franz Gruber and Mike Danning have small parts, but Keisuke Sonoi (Dr. Shioda, the guy with space sickness) is the main star. Top-lining with him are two nice-looking Japanese girls and some weird-looking guy playing a character named "Joji". This Joji person appears to be pretty tired or just plain bored, even when he's holding a foxy female form. Maybe he was stoned or he read the script. I'd imagine the effects of both are identical. Also worth mentioning is the score of superhero music master Shunsuke Kikuchi. It's good, but not nearly good enough to make me contemplate watching this thing again.

An interesting sidenote, which almost earns this movie a half star, is the familiar presence of several foreign actors with whom we're all very familiar. Cathy Horlan, Mrs. Neal from BODY SNATCHER FROM HELL, is Annabelle, a beautiful yet treacherous woman. She's quite sexy, but, never mind, she ends up as bug chow. Rolf Jessup, who plays the Seatopian leader's (Robert Dunham) right hand man in GODZILLA VS. MEGALON, and also got attacked by New Guinean mutants in LAST DAYS OF PLANET EARTH, plays Commander Gordon. Gordon is the stereotypical movie American military guy - barking commands, slapping people, just being a jerk. Better fun (though not much) can be had watching Chico Roland overact up a storm. He was the Wester Island envoy in GAMERA VS. MONSTER X /I haven't seen a lot of other black actors in Japanese films, but I suspect he's also in Sonny Chiba's THE EXECUTIONER and Hiroshi Fujioka's HIGH SEAS HI-JACK. -DF/ and that performance seems positively restrained compared to his stuff in GENOCIDE. He's way over-the-top as Charlie, who I think might be partially responsible for the mess posing as the plot. Oh, before I forget, Harold Conway is in there too, remember him in the likes of MOTHRA, THE MYSTERIANS, and KING KONG VS. GODZILLA? Well, he looks pretty bad in his all-too-brief appearance. This may have been near the end of him, I hope not.

Amazingly, this movie got a subtitled U.S. release in 1969. It sounds like fun, but I'm warning you that it's not. Not only does it suck, but

it's also depressing and downbeat. If you're in the mood for a nihilistic Japanese disaster movie, look for THE LAST DAYS OF PLANET EARTH instead. At least that movie well-made and available translated. *In fact, it's ONLY available translated!* The original Japanese version of it, called *NOSTRADAMUS NO DAIYOKEN*, was banned in Japan for the same reason as *ULTRASEVEN #12*, because of Hiroshima-weary Japanese who still get upset by stories of radio-active mutants! *DF/ GENOCIDE* is 100% in Japanese (even the foreigners are badly dubbed in Japanese) and should be avoided. -Christopher Elam

YOKAI HYAKU MONO GATARI

("The 100 Monsters") Produced by Daiei Movie Co. in 1966, Written by Tetsuro Yoshida, Dir.: Kimiyoshi Yasuda, Special Effects: Mr. Kuroda, Starring Jun Fujimaki and Mika Miyata, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Another Daiei horror/fantasy/drama from the 1960s, again set in period times. But don't expect another MAJIN MONSTER OF TERROR or YOKAI DAISENZO. This one is slow-paced and just plain way too talky. At times it bored me to tears, but I suppose it's my fault for expecting it

to be as amusing, exciting and over-the-top as its successor YOKAI DAISENZO. There are indeed similarities between the two flicks, in fact a number of the same ghost props (i.e. that cute little "Umbrella Ghost") are used in both films. I suppose one could be considered a sequel to the other, but both films are based on the same old Japanese legends, so that may explain the similarities. Regardless, both movies are basically considered part of the same series, though I can't confirm for a fact that the two stories are directly related.

Normally, I'm up for any wacky farces about Japanese ghosts, but unless they're really eye-catching (like YOKAI DAISENZO), they're of little interest without any English translation. Have any of them handy bootleggers ever subtitled YOKAI HYAKU MONO GATARI yet? Probably not, as there's no bondage, rampaging reptiles, gunplay or major bloodshed. Anyway, the scenes (few though they are) of the muppet-like spirits are okay, but since it all takes place at night, and lighting seems to be a problem, you don't really get a good look at them unless you're watching a crystal-clear laserdisk on a huge-screen TV. The other scant points of interest are a couple brief

fight, like when Jun Fujimaki (who played Kogenta in MAJIN MONSTER OF TERROR) judo tosses a samurai or two.

Storywise, it's similar to that of MAJIN MONSTER OF TERROR, with an evil warlord hassling the local townsfolke again. Only this time, the characters aren't as well defined, we never get a real feel for just how mean the bad guys are supposed to be. Meanwhile, there seems to be some nearby forest that's haunted, a number of things happened: 1. Early in the film, some man's blood is sucked by a monster. 2. Despite warnings, two foolish fishermen catch & eat a fish from a haunted pond, so they get killed by a long-necked woman. 3. My favorite scene is where a goofy artist called Shinkichi paints a ghost-umbrella which comes to life! This cute little creature is probably the only nice demon in the tale, and dances around the room with Shinkichi. There's also a subplot about Jun Fujimaki's character, it seems he's trying to thwart the corrupt magistrate's oppressive hold on the village, but there's really no sense of adventure. Finally, at the end of the movie, the spirits get mad, gather up and kill the lead villain. None of this is especially good. *1/2 -Damon Foster

GIGANIC GIANTS & TITANIC TITANS FILMOGRAPHY cont...

period piece set in mythical Japan (as opposed to boring old "real" Japan). Don't get your hopes up expecting something offbeat from this non-Godzilla Toho fairy tale movie sorely lacking in the fanciful/magical/whimsical department. Yeah, the monsters are passe (especially the super-groovy lava demon)-- Koichi Kawakita's special effects are imaginative and substantial, a far cry from his generally lackluster work on the current Godzilla series-- unfortunately, everything between the FX sequences are a big bore. ** -Frank Strom

YAMATO TAKERU the animated series- Fantasy adventure based on the famous Japanese mythological legend. The release of this show (1994; 37 epi.) coincided with the release of the live action, theatrical film. -Paul Haberman **1/2

YOG, MONSTER FROM SPACE- A great South Seas Island adventure. The Astro-Quasars ride Helio 7 down into our planet and make several normal critters grow giant: A squid (Gezora), two (count 'em!) crabs (Ganime), and one turtle (Kameba, who unlike his Daiei counterpart, actually looks like a turtle!). Our heroes have to figure out a way to stop the aliens before they take over the earth. Can they do it? Toho; 1970. Cast: Akira Kubo, Akihiko Hirata. **** -David McRobie

YONGARY, MONSTER FROM THE DEEP (1968)- Haven't seen this Korean/Japanese co-production in years. But between the age of 8 and 18, I must have caught it at least half a dozen times. I remember it pretty good, but hated the ending! Watching the slow, needlessly painful death of Yongary was thoroughly unpleasant. ** -Jeff Goodhartz

YUUSHA RAIDEEN ("Brave Thunderbolt")- This 50-part, 1975 Japanese cartoon from Tohoku Shinsha and Sunrise graced local TV with English subtitles on a weekly basis (Sunday nights at about 8:00 P.M., as I recall) twenty years ago, and although I was only a twerp (and still am, at least, mentally) at the time, my memories of this excellent, animated adventure are quite vivid. Cool artwork, catchy music and interesting characters add fun to this exciting series of Hibiki Akira, who controls the giant robot Raideen as they battle an empire of sadistic devils. *** -Damon Foster

X FROM OUTERSPACE- A group of astronauts is enroute to Mars when a UFO leaves spores on their spaceship. One of those spores hatches into the monster Guilala, which is usually described as a giant chicken. It's not a chicken, but it is one weird-looking critter. This is one clever and imaginative film, so it's too bad that Shochiku didn't make any other giant monster movies. **** -Chris-

five minutes within two hours of udder boredom. I'll give you the good stuff now. For car chase fans, there's a brief chase ending in a hallucination in a shrine. For any 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY fans, a brief light-show affect at the end. And for violence fans, a scene where a Count of Monte Cristo wannabe (in a black cloak) rides his horse off a cliff and dashes himself (and the horse) to pieces on the rocks below. Now, fuck the actor; who cares? But that poor horse. They probably never told him he'd have to smash his guts out for this shitty film! The highlight, for you sex fans (who ain't one?), a strange porno within a porno, within a porno scene. But it still rates only a limp dick, it's shot in very high contrast B&W, so you can't really see much.

Now at last, the plot. Such as it is, Rampo/

topher Elam

ZANBOT 3 (aka "Invincible Superman Zanbot 3")- Produced by Yoshiyuki Tomino. More kids in giant robots protecting the Earth from alien invaders, but this cartoon is a little more serious. 1977, 23 epi., Sunrise. -Paul Haberman **

ZERO TESTER (66 epi.)- Three pilots use advanced mecha to battle the evil Amanoid Aliens in this 1973 cartoon from Japan. -Paul Haberman **1/2

ZETTAI MUTEKI RAIJIN-O (1991/51 epi.; Sunrise)- School kids control giant combining robot against alien invaders. In this one, the whole junior high school transforms! Followed by an OVA. -Paul Haberman **

ZYU RANGER- The Japanese title means "Dinosaur Task Force: Beast Ranger", but the rest of the world knows this sorry series as MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS. Sure, the infantile American version sucks, but so does this original Japanese version. Oh well, this stereotypical, cliché-ridden, completely devoid of originality, superhero show has all the usual Sentaï crap: Weak martial arts, gaudy special effects, and of course, giant robots (only this time, the robots are shaped like dinosaurs). 1992, 50 epi., TV Asahi, etc. -Damon Foster **

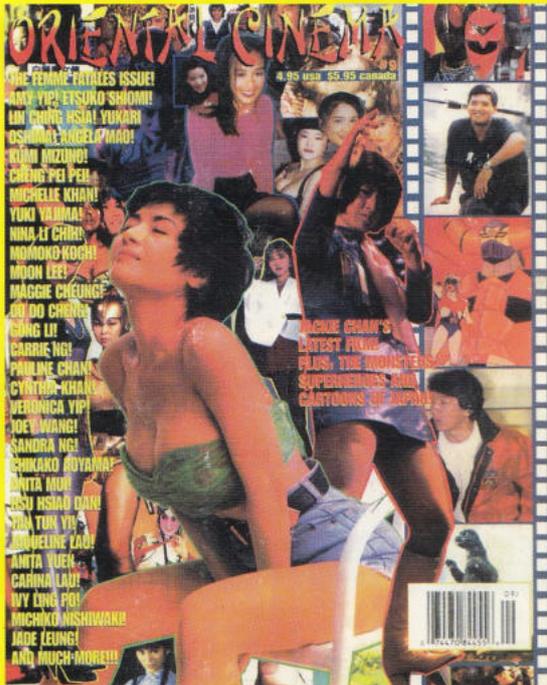
Rampo is a writer. While he's working on a novel, his characters begin coming to life. I know what you're thinking: How original! Well, Rumphole falls in love with the female lead in his book. Seeing her on the street, he follows her in a taxi. This leads to a hallucination that puts us into the book's story. In this part, we get the death scene and the sex scene. Tadpole snaps out of it, to finish the story, and discovers he's written in his honey's suicide. This, after she locked her boyfriend in a trunk. Why the trunk? Who the fuck knows? Suckhole now rushes to her rescue, the mansion in the story having become real, and we get the lightshow. Finally, we get the closing credits, absolutely the best part. I give this 1/2 a star, unless you speak French. Then go fuck yourself and have a good time. -John Emma

ASIAN ODDITIES CONT...

ain't no RAMBO. It's not even on a level with a steaming pile of dog shit! Now if this were the kind of mag whose writers used a lot of fancy French phrases in their reviews, I might say something a little nice about this thing. But this is OC. We assume our readers, like us, like a little action in their films. Well fuckin' forget that here. No ghosts. No swords. No monsters. No shit! Why, I wonder, can't these "new wave directors" understand we don't give a flying fuck about their personal philosophies, hand ups, etc. When we watch a movie, we want to be entertained. I'll say that again. Entertained!!!!

Now, lest you readers think I'm a total asshole (I am), I will say there are a few very entertaining scenes in this thing. But it adds to only about

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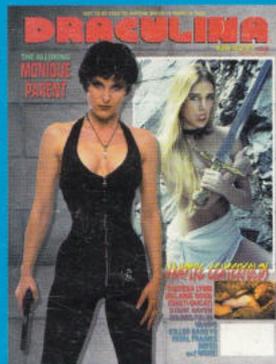
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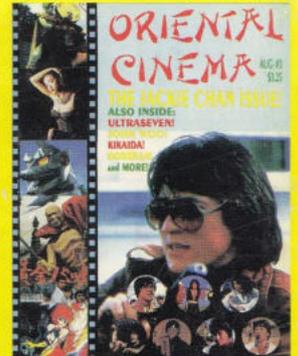
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