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PREMIERE ISSUE!

ULTRA FAN



ZONE FIGHTER!
POWER RANGERS!
SUPER SENTAI SERIES!

PAUL ROCHE '95



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The Magazine of Japanese Fantasy Television

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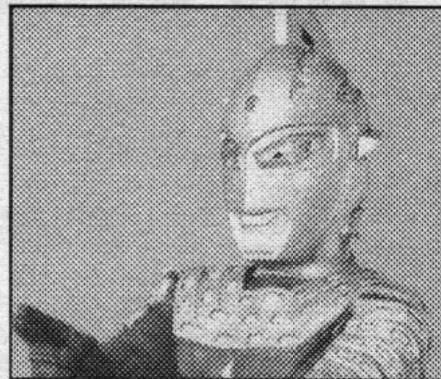
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Special thanks to: Kevin Grays, Damon Foster, Jim Cirronella, Keith Sewell, Lenell Bridges, "Yottchan", Hikari & Naoko Takeda, Carol Pfeifer, August Ragone, Shinji Higuchi and Tokyo's NAC-ARRI Club, most especially Minoru Nakano, a tip of the hat to Marsha Stone, and thanks also to Robert Biondi for suggesting the title of this zine. This issue is dedicated to the memories of Eiji Tsuburaya and his sons Hajime and Noboru.



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Next issue: ULTRA-FAN celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Ultraman series with "The History of Tsuburaya Productions" by Kevin Grays and "Ultraman Who's Who" by Lenell Bridges. Also, look for part one of a series on "Giant Robo" by Keith Sewell. Plus Ultra-news, Ultra-art, your Ultra-letters and a few surprises. All this will be winging your way in April. Shooooowt!

Introduction

by John Marshall

You can be ten years old forever.

Think I'm crazy? Well, I might be, but that's another subject entirely. Listen to this crazy guy and learn the secret of eternal youth.

It's nothing to be ashamed of. It's something to be cherished. On a cold, dreary Saturday afternoon, when the rest of the world is worrying about making ends meet, you can be a kid again, thrilling to the exploits of Godzilla and Ultraman, or secretly rooting for the latest evil scheme of that mastermind, Hordak.

And why be ashamed of that? After all, everyone else is glued to *Baywatch*.

This magazine can help you find that world of excitement once again. This magazine is a celebration of all the thrills and joys that the wonder of Japanese monsters can bring.

"But John!" you say. "I'm thirty-five years old! How the heck can I sit in front of a TV and watch Rodan slide along on a piano wire while Ghidora knocks over yet another cardboard building?"

It's simple. You do it the way you did when you were a kid. Turn on the TV, curl up with a box of Oreos, carefully split them open and scoop out that stuff in the center. ("Creme" I think they're calling it nowadays.) Pour a big glass of milk, sit back, and enjoy. You *can* go home again, even if it's only for an hour or two

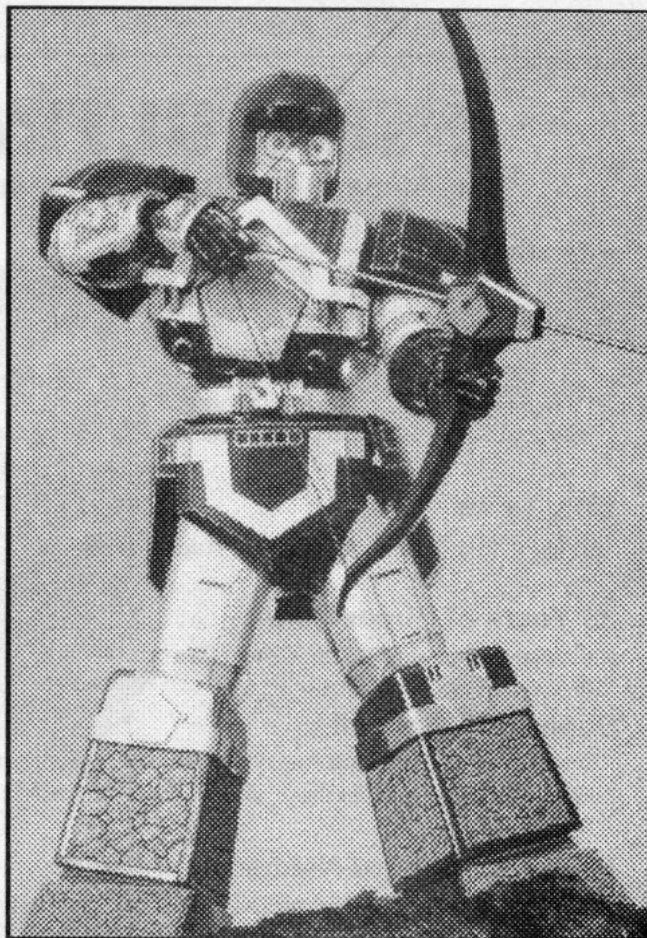
at a time.

Oh, the details may be different. It's rare these days to find a UHF station which shows the old films and TV shows. Thanks to cable TV, we have all those pseudo-UHF stations, but it's not the same: TNT reaches across the country and beyond; it could never match the esoteric quality of a Philly 17, the Great Entertainer, or any of its equivalents all over the USA. You can't match the grainy reception unless you screw with your cable box, but then that's not such a great idea.

Of course videos are available now - nice uncut pre-records of the Godzilla movies, and it's even possible now to get shows like *Ultraman* and *Spectreman* on tape. Videotape companies are starting to realize that kids who could not be

torn from the tube when Ultraman trisected Red King are now the adults of today, willing to spend money to see their old friends again.

Remembering that *Ultraman* scene reminds me of how I, like many of you, used to run home from school to catch the afternoon lineup. How many of us realized the number of



programs that were produced in Japan? The list of animated shows alone reads like a "What's what" of kiddie TV: *Astroboy*, *Gigantor*, *Kimba the White Lion*, *Speed Racer*, *Eighthman*, and later *Star Blazers*, *Robotech*, *Tranzor-Z* and more. But even more exciting were those live-action shows they saved for

later in the afternoon, so we could wait in anticipation for those classic openings. Who can ever forget counting down the seconds until that mass of blue oatmeal uncurled to reveal the *Ultraman* logo? Who can ever forget the rhythmic strum of the guitar as that mysterious, pulsating light landed on a Tokyo street to launch the latest *Space Giants*? And yes, who can ever forget the RUNCH! RUNCH! made by Giant Robo's arms as he prepared his finger missiles, eye lasers or flamethrowers?

Ultraman wasn't the first Japanese superhero show, nor the first to feature giant monsters; it was simply an amazing show in its own right, graced by the magic touch of special effects master Eiji Tsuburaya, who first brought Godzilla to life. But before *Ultraman* there was *Ultra Q*, sort of a half-hour version of *The X Files* three decades in advance.



Ultra Q boasted Toho SFX superstar Kenji Sahara (renowned for starring in *Rodan* among dozens of others), as well as Hiroko Sakurai, who next played the beautiful Fujio on *Ultraman*. Perhaps surprisingly, America would have to wait for that show to see her face: *Ultra Q* was never shown in the USA, though an English-language version of the third episode was produced. (This version was split into three sections and included as bonuses on the *Ultra Q* laserdisc series.)

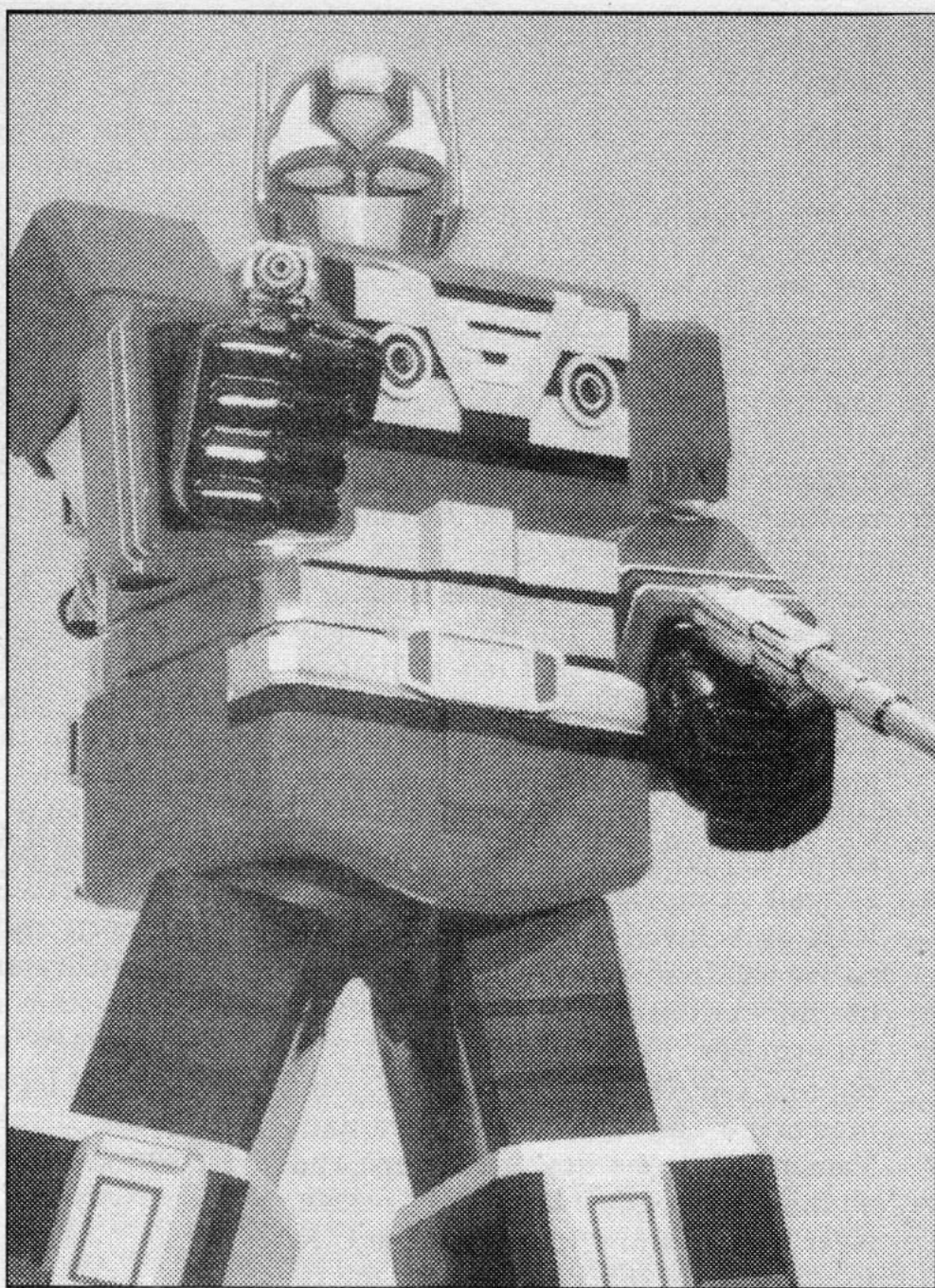
Ultra Q's popularity led to *Ultraman*, which Tsuburaya Productions first announced in the form of a stage show. As thousands of kids and patient mothers looked on, the world was introduced to the Science Patrol, several brand-new monsters and, of course, Ultraman, the alien being who shares his life essence with Science Patrol member Hayata, who is accidentally killed when his plane crashes into Ultraman's transport. With a second life comes added responsibility and a sense of alienation, as Hayata must change to Ultraman in times of crisis.

The new show proved so popular that it was dubbed and broadcast throughout the world, making the character as much an international icon as Superman, Sherlock Holmes and Tarzan. Ultraman is the best-recognized Japanese superhero in the minds of Americans, thanks to the quality of his series. With its wonderful characters, involving plots, and outstanding and innovative camerawork and direction, even the dubbed version comes across as not merely one of the great children's shows, but as one of the greatest TV shows of all time.

Probably the second-best known series from our youth is *Johnny Sokko and his Flying Robot*; certainly it is the most notorious. Everything in it is memorable because all of it is ridiculous: the monsters unbelievable, the plots ludicrous, the dialogue mind-numbing, the effects incredibly amateurish. But the show has nerve in abundance, just plowing from gunfight to narrow escape to next gunfight to zipper splitting on the monster suit.

Johnny Sokko is a young boy who winds up, through an absurd chain of events, as the only person alive who can control a giant warrior robot. (Can you imagine an average 12-year-old in 1995 in control of something like this? Be afraid, be very afraid!) He does this with the aid of a wristwatch, a fact which made wristwatches into essential accessories for all of us in the first grade.

Johnny accepts an invitation to join the organization Unicorn in the fight against the evil Emperor Guillotine and his Gargoyle Gang. Among his lieutenants: the fascistic Spider, alien scientist Botan (with the bald silver head), and the unforgettable Fangor, who was equipped with a striped leotard, balding head, a bullet-firing peg leg, a gas-shooting crutch



(which had a morse-code device in the handle) and the worst bridgework you ever saw. Fickle Guillotine goes through them like diapers at a nursery.

But my favorite of the old series is *Space Giants*, also briefly shown as *Monsters from Outer Space*. This was the story of a family of robots that could transform into rockets, and their ongoing battle with the interstellar mastermind Rodak. As with Johnny Sokko's watch, a common object linked the human boy hero to the robots: little Miko would blow a whistle to summon them, three times for Goldar the Space Avenger, twice for his wife Silvar, and once for Gam, the robot-rocket boy patterned after Miko himself. [So what if he needs all three at once? - Ed.]

But the real star of the show is Rodak,

truly the Villain You Love To Hate. He was always one step ahead of the heroes and always ready with a smartass line about how incompetent Goldar was or how stupid the humans were. When he was finally defeated after fifty two episodes it was due more to his own bad judgement than by anything the heroes did.

Maybe now it can even be better than when we were kids. No matter how many times we saw Ultraman split Red King in three, who ever knew his name was Red King? Now we have fan networks to share info like that, and we finally have magazines like this.

Ultra-Fan is going to do everything it can to fill you in, a magazine produced by fans, for fans. So break out the Oreos - it's time once again to enjoy the wonderful world of Japanese fantasy.



EDITORIAL FOREWORD

How strange it feels, just typing out that word "Editorial." I've put together everything else in the issue, so I guess I'm certifiably its Editor, but punching out the word on this keyboard (never mind putting it through the printer) is a little bit queasy-making. Such a responsible-looking word! All the responsibility and none of the salary, ah, such is the lot of a fan . . .

I don't have any business editing a magazine about Japanese fantasy television, at least so I felt at first. It was an innocent idea I pitched to John Rocco Roberto on the phone one night. At *Markalite*, where I was associate editor (*much* less responsible-sounding, no?) we covered television as well as movies, for Ultraman is at least as beloved as Godzilla in their native land, and increasingly in parts of this country as well. Daikaiju Enterprises already published the popular G-FAN; why not start a sister magazine devoted to Ultraman, Kamen Rider, the Power Rangers, and all those other guys. Little did I realize. Next thing I know John's got the O.K. from the main office in Canada, the G-Mafia is mobilized and *pow!* I'm forced on a plane to Japan at gunpoint to "gather information."

Back home again, I realized that, nonexpert or no, I did know who the experts were, and I rustled up as many as I could to contribute. All, literally all were unfailingly helpful, and I'm sorry I couldn't run everything I got, especially one or two things I'd flat-out commissioned. I regret adapting an old Damon Foster piece when I had an original right on hand, but we had a Zone Fighter cover and an ever-changing page count and deadline, so . . .

And a big hand, by the way, to Paul Roche for his cover; ditto the fine art generously supplied by Kevin Grays.

I said this first issue was more or less assembled by "experts," but remember, I'm not one, and nobody expects you, the reader, to be either. I'm as much a novice as anybody out there, so I'm not going to cop an attitude about it: I WANT CONTRIBUTIONS FROM EACH AND EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU! Articles, letters, fan drawings, and most of all, I'd like to know what *you'd* like to see in the future. This is an open forum; nobody's better than anybody else here. Hey, if *I* can get printed in this magazine, *anybody* has a shot at it.

I'd like to extend personal thanks to J.D. Lees, for trusting us to pull it off; John Rocco Roberto, for general moral support; and August Ragone, for his generosity and loyalty, and for being really the first person to directly encourage my own interest in all levels of Japanese fantasy productions.

And thanks to you, reader, for being here. I hope to see you again next time.

Mata genki-de!

Guy Mariner Tucker

P.S. I'm still not sure about that word "Editorial." Hold on a second—there, much better. Follow the leader —>





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Ultra Seven on TNT

by Lenell Bridges

Tsuburaya Productions' third program in the Ultra series (following *Ultra Q* and *Ultraman*), consisted of 49 episodes running from October 1, 1967 through September 8, 1968. Recently *Ultra Seven* was shown for the first time on American television by the cable network TNT (Turner Network Television).

Originally planned as "filler" for TNT's early-morning children's slot, *Ultra Seven* was acquired by Turner when he bought a Canadian film company back in the mid-1980s; the show was then relinquished to a film vault for nearly ten years. The highly popular and innovative show might have remained a "lost classic" if it had not been for the tireless efforts of Kip Doto, who went through the red tape necessary to get Turner to air the program.

For the first time for US fans outside of Hawaii, the second Ultraman series was here, dubbed in English. *Ultra Seven* follows the story of Agent 340 from Nebula M78, who is off mapping the vastness of the Milky Way when he comes across the Earth. He assumes the identity of Dan Moroboshi, joining the "Ultra Garrison"

in order to further study the planet. When aliens threaten Earth, Dan uses the "Ultra Eye" to become Ultra Seven, who fights a wide variety of alien monsters.

Many fans awaited the premiere of *Ultra Seven* with great anticipation, assuming that TNT would treat their Ultrahero with respect, given the success of the Japanese-originated *Power Rangers* in this country. But it turned out to be quite the opposite. TNT failed to properly advertise and promote the premiere of the show; many fans did not hear about it until after airing had begun.

The episodes were broadcast out of sequence and some skipped altogether, making the series feel disjointed and confused. Furthermore the time slot was the worst imaginable: 6 AM, a time when most kids aren't awake even on a school day (not to mention their parents). It would have been smarter to schedule the show closer to the daily airing of *Power Rangers*.

As for the treatment of *Ultra Seven*, TNT must have had a field day editing it into a proper "politically correct" format. As with the recent handling of *Power Rangers*, TNT decided to cut extensively

from the series' trademark climactic battles, as if kids (or their parents) couldn't stand the series' cartoony "violence." Many kids endure more than this day by day - reality can be harder to grasp at times. TNT's cutting was stupid, just confusing the stories for those audiences who had never before seen them.

The dubbing was better than the editing, though not up to the standard set by the original *Ultraman*. TNT's reorganized opening credits, featuring poorly-done titles and cheesy animation depicting Ultra Seven, were significantly worse. Even the Hawaiian opening credits, featuring an English-language performance of the original *Ultra Seven* song, was far better than the new TNT opening.

The original *Ultra Seven* is a wonderful show, one of my personal favorites in the Ultra series: serious-minded, fast-paced action. Many of the episodes feature good stories as well as fine special effects. It is highly recommended, if you can find it on Japanese pre-record videos and laser discs. TNT should be praised for at least airing the show (as well as their numerous broadcasts of Godzilla films), but their treatment of it has helped lead to ridiculously poor ratings. *Ultra Seven* could have been Ted Turner's ultimate catch, but as the saying goes, "they let the big one get away!"

News from the East

Compiled by August Ragone

Ultra-News

Even with the untimely passing of Tsuburaya Productions CEO Noboru Tsuburaya (on June 11, 1995), the house that Eiji built presses on, with a myriad of plans for the coming 30th anniversary of *Ultraman*.

The company has been pushing two more Ultra-ventures in overseas markets: "Chinese Version Ultraman" and *Ultraman '95*. The former prompted by the overwhelming popularity of the show after its recent run in mainland China (an Ultra-festival staged by Tsuburaya Pro drew over 200,000 fans to Shanghai its first day). Unfortunately the show has been shelved, as has *Ultraman '95*, which was to have been shot in Canada. Tsuburaya Pro will instead put its resources into an all-new Japanese series, the first since *Ultraman '80* over fifteen years ago. Part of the impetus must stem from the recent success of the *Ultra Seven* telemovies *Operation: Solar Energy* and *Land of Alien Earthmen*. Ratings were high, audience reaction excellent, and the timing was right. Gridman wasn't enough - it was time for Ultraman to return to television.

On June 26, production began on the 8-minute pilot for *Ultraman Neos*. It was made at Toho's Studio #1 and on open-air locations. Like the *Ultra Seven* telefilms, it was shot on video; it is not known whether the final series will be made on video or film.

Ultraman Neos concerns a new Ultraman, "Neos," assigned to Earth along with a partner, "Ultra Seven 2-1," stationed on the fringe of our solar system in order to take pre-emptive measures against aggressors, namely the alien Zamm and its minions. Neos' human identity is a member of the Earth Defense Team "H.E.A.R.T" (High Earth Alert/Rescue Team), whose commander is played by Hiroko Sakurai ("Fuji" from the original *Ultraman*).

Veterans working on the pilot and series include director Koichi Takano and photographer Shinichi Ohoka.

Toei Heroes

Super-Powered Task Force Ohranger keeps on impressing, finding more logical and dramatic ways of introducing new weapons and characters, and at the same time maintaining a fresh approach to the 20-year-old Sentai format. The "Oh" of the title not only stands for the Japanese word for "King," but also stands for "Over-tech Hardware."

A new robot was added to Ohranger's arsenal in episode 19 (July 7, 1995): "Red Puncher," which finally combined with Ohranger Robo in episode 22 (July 28, 1995). Other debuts on Ohranger include: a new weapon in the form of a cannon held by five men; and the arrival of a new sixth hero (or is he?): "King Ranger" wears a black suit, so is he a "good guy"? We'll have to see . . .

Heavy Armored Beetle Fighter recently saw the destruction of the villains' base, with the survivors becoming stronger, introducing the "Anti-Beetle Fighter," Black Beet. The heroes acquired a new weapon/airship which combines with their mecha to form the "Mega-Hercules," deployed from the Earth Academia's South American base. Also arriving from South America is the female character Reddle (played by newcomer Tomoe Chigusa).

Veteran director Kieta Amemiya (*Cyberninja*, *Zeiram 1, 2*, etc.) has announced his next entry for Toei Hero Festival '96: a remake of the 1972 Henshin-Hero period drama *Transforming Ninja Arashi*.

Independents

Alice 6 is a recent anthology TV series produced by TV Shizuoka (in the prefecture of that name, 150 miles south of Tokyo). So popular was this fanciful series that Sony Video will be releasing the show for all Japan to see.

Created, written and directed by the brothers Konaka, who have produced fantasy films like *Drugless* and contributed to such series as *Ultraman: Towards the Future*, *Alice 6* is the story of six girls who find themselves in different times,

places and dimensions. The series uses extensive makeup effects, model work, and a variety of video techniques. One of the many guest stars was Ren Yamamoto (Masaji in the original *Godzilla*). There were eleven episodes broadcast; a special twelfth one will be on the video release. No date set.

Video Releases

New episodes of the made-for-video series *Earth Defense Girl Iko-chan* have come out; the last entry was over five years ago. As before, many famous genre actors guest-star, including Kensaku Morita (who also produced and wrote the script) and *Godzilla* suitmation actor Kenpachiro Satsuma, as a giant destructive stuffed panda! Baby *Godzilla* actor Hariken Ryu also shows up. Two episodes from Japan Soft Systems and Morita Films, Y6000 each.

Echo-Echo Azaraku: Wizard of Darkness. Directed by Sujimaiko Sato. Based on the story by Shinichi Koga appearing in *Suspiria* magazine. Planning producer, Akira Tsuburaya. Produced by Gaga Communications/Tsuburaya Eizo. Starring Miho Kanno and Kimika Yoshino. This occult horror film took the Young Fantastic Grand Prix Award at the Yubari Int'l Fantastic Film Festival this year; now available on laserdisc with a special behind-the-scenes documentary. Letterboxed. 81 min.; stereo/hi-fi; TCLA-1007; Y7800; Taki Corp.

Jumborg Ace Perfect Collection Part 1. This 1973 Tsuburaya teleseries, about the exploits of Naoki Tachibana and his giant cyborg Jumborg Ace, have not been rebroadcast since the 1970s; now this rare series is coming complete to home video on laserdisc. The 52 episodes are being spread over two box sets, loaded with all kinds of extras. Once again, Naoki's battle cry "Jum-Fight!" can be heard again! 700 minutes, 7 discs; 26 episodes. Mono, multi-audio, CLV. Beam Entertainment SHLY-502; Y43,260.

Inazuman. This 1973 Toei hero series is available on three double-disc volumes. Thrill to battles between mutant Inazuman ("inazuma" means lightning) and the "New Human Race" of the Phan-

tom Army. Toei Video, LSTD01203 (vol.1); LSTD01214 (vol.2); and LSTD01224 (vol.3); Y9000 each. *Inazuman Flash* is coming soon.

Kamen Rider Amazon (1974) is one of the most bizarre and violent of all Japanese heroes. A Japanese orphan, lost in South America, inherits the ancient power of the Incas; but his special mystical armband, "Gigi," is one of a pair, which if put together can bring terrible power. Geddon's evil leader, the Ten-Faced Demon, owns the counterpart, which is named "Gaga," and a fearsome cat-and-mouse game begins, from the Amazon to Tokyo. Toei Video LSTD01219 (vol.1, two discs); Y9000.

Transforming Ninja Arashi is an exciting combination of Kamen Rider and sword-swinging action in feudal Japan, with the heroic metamorphosing Arashi against the vile "Blood-Wheel Clan" and their shapeshifting demons. Toei Video LSTD01234 (vol.1, two discs); Y9000.

Sanpei the Kappa: Operation Goblin. In the tradition of artist Shigeru Mitsuiki's Li'l Devil [Akuma-kun], Sanpei is another Japanese folkloric creation, a mortal relative of the Kappa (water-imp) family. He goes up against some pretty nasty goblins, spooks and assorted things-that-go-bump-in-the-night. Available on a two-disc set from Toei Video, Y9000.

STOP THE PRESSES!

Lenell Bridges tells me that Orion Home Video will release the first four episodes of *Johnny Sokko* (two episodes per tape, \$9.99 apiece) this February. Since this is part of the American-International library owned by Orion, perhaps the company will see fit to issue *Destroy All Monsters*, which it also holds. . . . Lenell also tells me that *Ultraman Taro* has been dubbed into English (for the Malaysian market), but Tsuburaya Productions has been letting the tapes gather dust in the vaults, when they could be making a lot of people in America very happy. Why not write *Ultracom* in Los Angeles and/or Tsuburaya Pro in Tokyo, suggesting that the company get off its collective butt and release those tapes to our market? - GMT

METAMORPHOSIS

The REAL Saban story

by August Ragone

I recently ran into David Yost (Billy the Blue Ranger on Saban's *Power Rangers*). He told me that the pilot was to be titled "Dino Rangers," which made me look back to Saban's initial attempt at importing a Sentai show to the U.S.

The France-based Saban Entertainment has been dealing with Japanese studios, including Toei, for more than 15 years, going back to importing *UFO Robo Glendizer* (Toei, 1976) to Europe as *Goldorak*, creating a ratings smash, over 80% share. This was followed by Toei's *Message From Space: Galactic Battle* (1978), the first live SF show Saban imported to Europe.

Fast-forward: 1987. *Starlog* magazine announces a new syndicated show from Saban, *Bioman* (Toei, 1984).

Well I was sure excited, and called Saban's offices right away to learn what they would do with my then-favorite Sentai show. Their plans were promising: "We are going to dub the show into English." Nothing added to it, or taken away either.

SIX MONTHS LATER: We call Saban once again, but this time the conversation is disheartening. "Since *Dynaman* on *Night Flight* is doing so well, we're thinking about dubbing *Bioman* with humorous dialogue." Very discouraging.

Eventually Saban all but dumps the property, claiming not to know how to handle it.

If *Bioman*, dubbed straight into English, had been a hit, then we wouldn't have to suffer the likes of *Power Rangers*. But then again, because of that show, more American fans are interested in these shows - just what veteran fans like myself always wanted, right?

Be careful for what you wish . . .

G-FAN

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Twenty Years of Super Sentai

by Jim Cirronella



Japan has enjoyed for 20 years what America has only discovered in the last two: the Super Sentai television series ("sentai" means battle team or task force). These live-action superhero epics run the gamut from serious drama to slapstick comedy, always packaged with a healthy dose of intense action and (sometimes) awe-inspiring special effects.

Every year, the Toei Company produces a brand-new 50-episode serial; each half-hour installment tells its own tale while advancing the ongoing narrative to the final conclusion. The stories, characters and background mythology will change with each new series, but the basic concept always remains the same: Earth is being threatened by a malevolent force and humanity's only hope lies with a team of warriors who attain their superpowers through fantastic metamorphosis.

Each team usually consists of a leader, a rival, a strong fighter, a spirited youth and a gentle female (although females may also fill other team roles). And in true Japanese fashion, every team can rely on its trusty giant robot when all else fails.

Without being preachy or boring, each Sentai series underlines two fundamental principles. First, Sentai teams are usually composed of ordinary people; it is their positive spirit that sets them apart. Anyone from any walk of life can be a hero. Second, although each warrior possesses special powers, everyone is considered equal. In the end, it is teamwork that saves the day. (Also prevalent in

these programs is the strong student-teacher relationship between the warriors and their mentor/team commander.)

Even the most serious Sentai series has a sense of humor; there are always many inside jokes, extending even to the names of the characters. For example, the Ranger moniker is, in actuality, from the Japanese "renja" or "rensha," which translates to "team member."

What follows is a listing of the Super Sentai shows that have entertained Japanese fantasy lovers over the past twenty years.

1975 Himitsu Sentai GORANGER (Secret Task Force Five-Ranger)

The five brave members of Eagle Japan Corps fight against the evil forces of the Kuroju Jigun (Black Cross Military). By wearing the strength-enhancing Goranger power suits, the team members become their colorful alter-egos: Akaranger, Aoranger, Kiranger, Momoranger and Midoranger. (In Japanese, aka = red, ao = blue, ki = yellow, momo = pink, and mido = green.)

1977 JACKER Dengeki Tai (JAKQ Power Attack Team)

The super cyborg warriors of JAKQ battle the international criminal organization Crime, led by arch-villain Ironclaw. Strong in the four great energies, team members Spade

Ace, Clover King, Daiya Jack (Diamond Jack) and Heart Queen respectively possess the powers of atomic, electric, magnetic and gravitational force. Team leader Big One possesses all four of these powerful energies. The team's costume design motif is symbolic of the highest trump card combination possible: Jack, Ace, King, Queen.

1979 BATTLE FEVER J

To combat the secret society of Egos, General Kurama of the National Defense Ministry assembles five warriors as the Battle Fever team. Team members Battle Japan, Battle France, Battle Kenya, Battle Cossack (from Russia) and Miss America incorporate their respective country's dance moves in their fighting techniques. (Miss America is represented by disco!) This series marked the first appearance of a giant robot mecha in a sentai program: the Battle Fever Robo, launched from the even larger flying battleship, the Battle Shark.

1980 Denshi Sentai DENZIMAN (Electronic Task Force Electroman)

Three thousand years ago, an army of trans-dimensional marauders - the Vader Royal Family - annihilated the peaceful planet of Denzi. Now, Vader's evil Queen Hedorian, loathing all things beautiful, has planned to pollute and conquer the Earth! (I guess she's never been to North Jersey.) I-C, robot-dog



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Zyuranger (Beast Ranger) including Dragon Ranger (third from left), the Green Ranger of *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*.

from the planet Denzi, selects a team of five humans who, by means of Denzi's super science, become the warriors of Denziman. With the aid of their giant robot, the Dai Denjin (Great Electronic God), the Denziman team battles Vader's monsters for the salvation of Earth. Actress Machiko Soga, who portrayed Queen Hedorian (in Japanese, "hedoro" means "sludge"), has acted as the definitive lead villainess in many a Toei series. She is most familiar to American fans as the witch Bandora in *Dinosaur Team Zyuranger*, a.k.a. Rita Repulsa in the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*.

1981 Taiyo Sentai SUN VULCAN (Solar Task Force Sun Vulcan)

Commander Arashiyama of the Earth Peace Defense Force organizes the Sun Vulcan team to fight the forces of the mechanical empire of Black Magma. Corps members Vul-Eagle, Vul-Shark and Vul-Panther command the powers of air, sea and land respectively while the gigantic Sun Vulcan Robo aids them in their battles against Black Magma's kikai seimeitai (mechanical lifeforms). Actor Shin Kishida, who portrays Commander Arashiyama, also played a recurring role on *The Return of Ultraman* as well as Interpol agent Nanbara in *Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla* (1974). Machiko Soga reprises her role as Queen Hedorian, reborn by means of an artificial heart.

1982 Dai Sentai GOGGLE FIVE (Great Task Force Goggle V)

Professor Hongo, of the Future Science Research Institute, selects five warriors to defend the Earth from the dark science empire of Deathdark. Aided by the Institute's computer kids, and equipped with several high-tech battle machines that can combine into the obligatory giant Goggle Robo, the Goggle V team clashes with Deathdark's army of gosei kaiju (synthetic monsters) and ultimately confronts the empire's supreme ruler Taboo.

1983 Kagaku Sentai DYNAMAN (Science Task Force Dynaman)

A meteor's impact on ancient Earth sparked the evolution of the Jashinka empire, an underground race of beings possessing tail-like appendages. The empire's ruling hierarchy is determined by the greatest number of tails owned; the maximum is held by the emperor Aton, who sports nine. When Jashinka schemes to conquer Earth's surface populace, Professor Kyutaro Yumeno gathers five young scientists to fight back as Dynaman. They assemble at Yumeno Invention Center, which also serves as a children's playground, concealing the location's true purpose. The team commands three battle machines that, when launched from the enormous Dyna Jupiter mothership, can combine to form the giant Dyna Robo, to struggle against the empire's

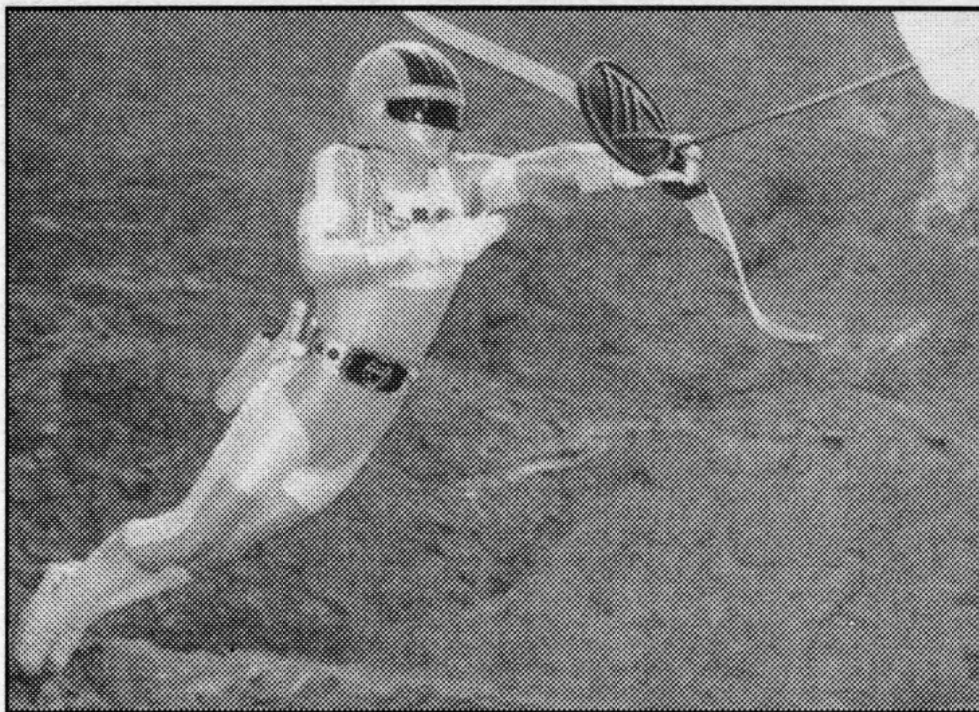
shinka-ju (evolutionary monsters). This series gained some notoriety in the late 80s when *Night Flight* aired several episodes (albeit dubbed in nonsensical and irreverent fashion).

1984 Chodenshi BIOMAN (Super Electron Bioman)

When the new mechanical empire of Gear plots the conquest of Earth, five warriors empowered with bio-particle energy strike back. Aided by Peebo, mechanical guardian from the planet Bio, and the giant Bio Robo, the team battles the evil genius of Gear's big boss, the mecha-human Doctorman. Early in the series, photographer Mika Koizumi (Bioman team member Yellow Four) is killed by Gear forces and replaced by tough fighter June Yabuki.

1985 Dengeki Sentai CHANGEMAN (Power Attack Task Force Changeman)

In retaliation to an invasion by the great star collective Gozma, Earth sends forth the mysterious Earth Force energy, engaging five warriors of the Earth Defense Team to fight as Changeman. Each utilizing the powers of one of the densetsu-ju (legendary beasts), as well as the giant mecha Change Robo, team members Change Dragon, Change Griffin, Change Pegasus, Change Mermaid and Change Phoenix battle Gozma's seemingly inexhaustible army of monstrous uchu-jushi (space beast warriors).



Yellow Four from *Bioman*.

1986 Choshinsei FLASHMAN
(Super New Star Flashman)

Five children, kidnapped from Earth by space aliens, are rescued by benevolent beings from the planet Flash. While raised by these adoptive parents, the children eventually inherit the special powers inherent to their foster planet. Now the five grown warriors return to Earth and, with the help of robot ally Mag, battle the empire of Mesu (which means scalpel). This series was the first to feature no fewer than three giant robo warriors, as Toei began to expand this popular motif.

1987 Hikari Sentai MASKMAN
(Aura Task Force Maskman)

When the underground empire Choob (in Japanese, "chubu" means center) attacks the surface world, five young people are gathered by Commander Sugata to defend mankind against the onslaught. The warriors are taught to release the powerful aura energy that is hidden within the body, and they become the invincible team of Maskman.

1988 Chozyu Sentai LIVEMAN
(Super Beast Task Force Liveman)

The armament intelligence force Balt attacks Earth from space, utilizing super-intelligence technology and an army of zuno-ju (intelligence monsters). Five young scientists from Science Academia - two younger siblings of whom were killed by Balt's aggression - join forces and become Liveman. Their advocate Professor Hoshi invents a squadron of giant battle machines, including the Land Lion, the first appearance of the now-popular animal-

styled mecha in a Sentai series.

1989 Kosoku Sentai TURBORANGER
(High Speed Task Force Turboranger)

The polluted atmosphere of present-day Earth triggers the rebirth of the Boma Hyakuzoku (Violent Evil Generation), who once again endeavor to annihilate mankind. Five high school students are given the powers of super speed by Shiron, surviving descendant of the Yusei Zoku (Fairy Race), which defeated the Violent Evil Generation some 20,000 years ago. With the help of a plethora

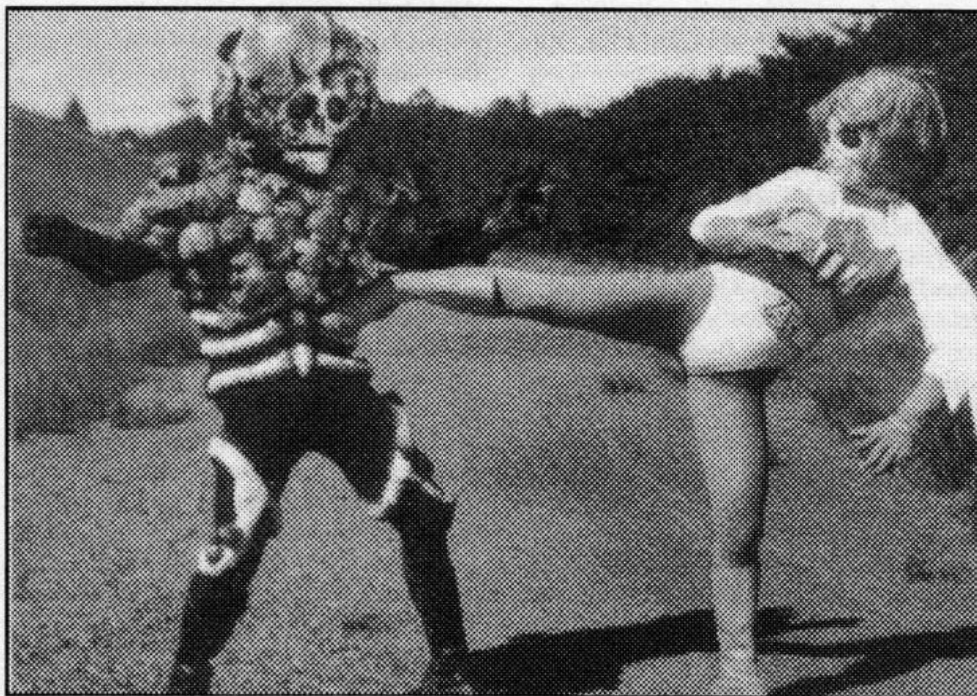
of special weapons, machines and giant robots invented by team consort Professor Dazai, the young warriors fight as the unified force of Turboranger. Even the team's secret base, when combined with the giant Super Turbo Robo, becomes an invincible battle mecha, the Turbobuilder!

1990 Chikyu Sentai FIVEMAN
(Earth Task Force Fiveman)

As the Sentai series' first family team, Fiveman are the grown children of the Hoshikawa family. While exploring the planet Shidon, the family was attacked by the galactic imperial forces of Zone, forcing Professor and Mrs. Hoshikawa to risk their lives in procuring their young children's safety. Aided by their adoptive support robot Arthur G-6, the grown warriors now fight against Zone's present threat to humanity on Earth. The team attains its super strength, increased to five times greater than normal, by means of their fivetector power-up body armor.

1991 Chojin Sentai JETMAN
(Birdman Task Force Jetman)

Sky Force's J-Project is the top-secret military development of the Birdnic Wave, an energy which enables its subjects to obtain strength 100 times greater than normal. However, as Sky Force officer Ryu Tendo is being transformed into a super soldier aboard the space station Earth Ship, the dimensional war delegation Byram materializes in Earth's orbit, commencing its plans to conquer the planet. As Earth Ship is destroyed, the Birdnic Wave Energy is sent helter-skelter through Earth's



Miss America battles Dokoro Kinoko Kaijin (Poison Mushroom "Demon") from *Battle Fever J*.

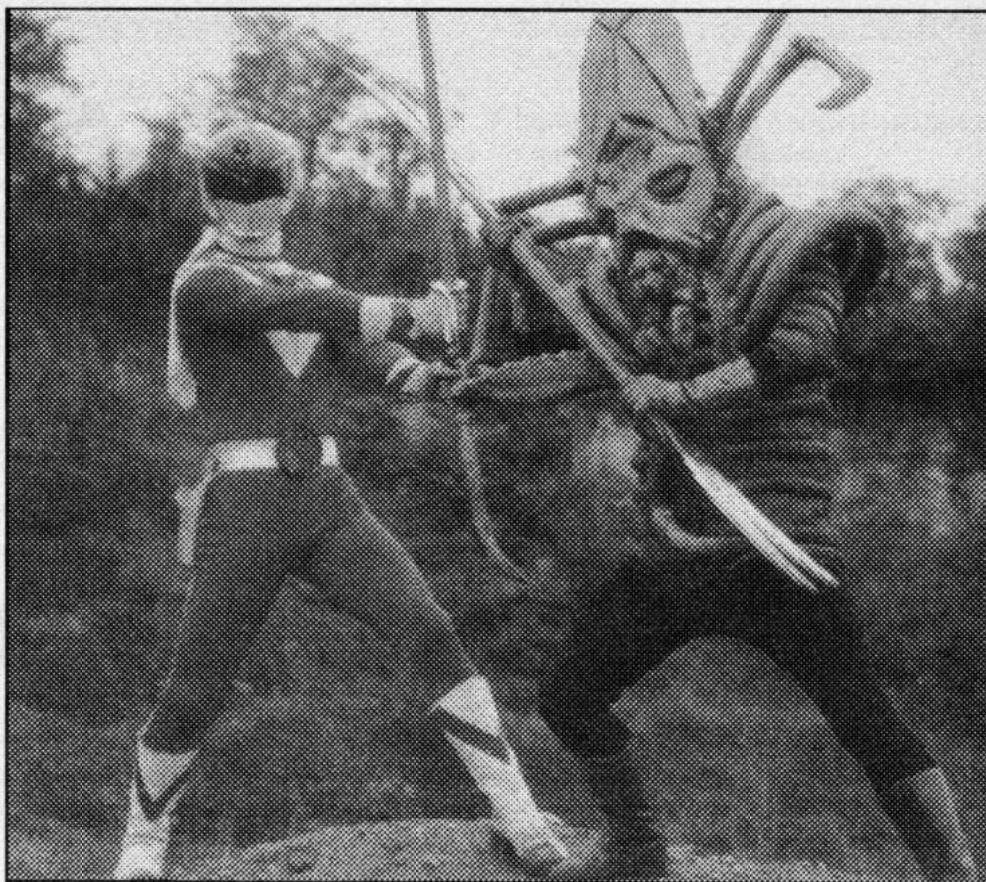
atmosphere, eventually striking four unlikely candidates on Earth: a gentle farmer, a wealthy heiress, a lively school girl, and a lone-wolf jazz musician. All are bestowed with super powers. Having survived Byram's initial attack, J-Project director Odagiri and Ryu Tendo (now Jetman leader Red Hawk) must assemble the misfit team into a cohesive fighting force to defend against Byram and their jikenju (dimension monsters).

1992 Kyoryu Sentai ZYURANGER (Dinosaur Task Force Beastranger)

When the mysterious planet Nemesis drifts into Earth's solar system, astronauts exploring its uncharted terrain accidentally free the evil witch Bandora from her centuries-old imprisonment to begin anew her reign of terror against mankind. The white-demon master Barza, having secretly kept watch over Earth for centuries, becomes aware of the imminent danger and awakens the five warriors of the ancient dinosaur tribes from their 170-million year sleep, to battle Bandora and her Doramonsters as the Zyuranger tribe (in Japanese "zyu," or more properly "ju," means beast). Machiko Soga epitomizes the ultimate of Toei-style evil, providing just the right combination of humor and ruthlessness in her portrayal of Bandora. This series saw enormous success when imported to America in 1993 as the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. Although new footage of American actors was inserted to make the series palatable for U.S. audiences, the overwhelming popularity was due to the distinctively Japanese action sequences featuring dinosaur-styled mecha and giant robo warriors.

1993 Gosei Sentai DAIRANGER (Five Star Task Force Era Ranger)

Six thousand years ago, the evil Goma tribe battled the peaceful civilization of Daos in a war in which both sides perished. Anticipating the Goma empire's present-day rebirth, Master Kaku, skilled in the spiritual arts, gathers five young people, all descendants of ancient Daos. Kaku teaches the five warriors to master the spiritual energy within themselves and stand against the impending onslaught as Dairanger. ("Dai" refers to a time or an era, the passing of spiritual power from one generation to the next.) A ten-year-old boy named Ko joins forces with the team, after struggling with Goma to gain control of his own inner powers, and becomes Kibaranger (Fangranger), a.k.a. the White Ranger on *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. A seventh member is also found in Kameo ("kame" is Japanese for turtle), a young man who transforms into the titanic turtle mecha Dai Mugen (Great Infinite), a.k.a. Tor the Shuttlezord on *Power Rangers*.



Vul-Eagle takes on Tagame Monger in *Solar Task Force Sun Vulcan*.

1994 Ninja Sentai KAKURANGER (Ninja Task Force Hidden Ranger)

Four hundred years ago, five ninjas imprisoned all the world's demonic spirits inside a sacred vestry. Now mankind's immorality and corruption have weakened the confining seal, releasing the evil spiritual energy back into the world. A group of five young warriors, utiliz-

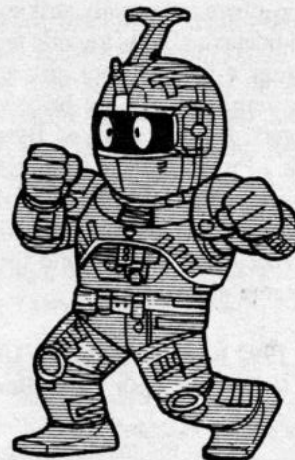
ing the powerful arts of the ancient ninjas, become Kakuranger and fight to stop the phantasmal monsters that terrorize civilization. ("Kaku" in Japanese means "concealed" or "hidden," referring to the ninja's ability to remain concealed, to confuse an enemy.) In the final battle for peace, the team must once again seal the evil deity Dai Mah-O (Great Demon King) behind the sacred door. This series featured an unprecedented twenty giant robot mecha, physical incarnations of ancient beast-gods called upon by the team in times of crisis.



Battle Cossack vs. Kodaigyo Kaijin (Ancient Fish "Demon" in *Battle Fever J*.

1995 Choriki Sentai OHRANGER (Super Power Task Force King Ranger)

In 1999, the mechanical empire Baranoia begins an invasion of Earth from space, enacting destructive assault by mashin-ju (machine monsters) and takonpas (compact fighters that sprout legs and walk on land. The word "tako" is Japanese for "octopus.") The five courageous members of U.A.O.H., a special division of the United Air Force, battle against this aggression as the Ohranger team. ("Oh," or "O," means "king," referring to the corps' elite standing within the U.A. organization.) The warriors gain their heightened abilities from the advanced technology of the mysterious 600-million-year-old monuments buried deep beneath their secret base in the southern Alps. From these ancient structures, Earth's energy is channeled through the great pyramid creating powerful TH energy (tetrahedral energy), the source of the team's super strength. **U**



August Ragone's New and Improved

SUPERHERO ROLLCALL

Key to listing of Japanese TV superhero shows - First: title in English, then Japanese, then name of production company. KEY: (1) Original broadcast dates (month/day/year) (2) Network on which the show ran (3) Number of episodes (4) Creator of show (5) Principle writers (6) Principle directors (7) Composer (8) Main cast

THE FIFTIES

[1] MOONLIGHT MASK [Gekko Kamen] - Senkosha

(1) 2/24/58 - 8/5/59 (2) KRT (nee TBS) (3) 130 (5 chapters) (4) & (5) Yasunori Kawauchi (6) Sadao Funatoko (7) Hiroki Ogawa (8) Koichi Ose, Shiro Kuno, Yoshiko Uno

[2] PRINCE PLANET [Yusei Oji] - Senkosha

(1) 11/11/58 - 9/30/59 (2) NTV (3) 48 (12 chapters) (4) & (5) Masaru Igami (6) N/A (7) Hiroki Ogawa (8) Toshio Mimura

[3] JET BOY [Shonen Jet] - Daiei TV Office

(1) 3/4/59 - 9/28/60 (2) Fuji TV (3) N/A (4) Tsuneyoshi Takeuchi (5) Hachiro Konno (6) Koshiro Sugaya (7) N/A (8) Hiroshi Nakajima, Ken Tsuchiya

[4] MIGHTY ATOM [Tetsuwan Atom] - Matsuzaki Productions

(1) 3/7/59 - 3/27/60 (2) Fuji TV (3) 65 (5 chapters) (4) Osamu Tezuka (5) Ichiro Miyagawa, Harune Ko'orogi, Isohachi Shibuya (6) Hiroshi Yoshikawa, Hideo Ohashi (7) Katsuyuki Matsuda (8) Masato Segawa, Akio Tanaka, Goro Morino

[5] PHANTOM DETECTIVE [Maboroshi Tantei] - Orikomiko Kokusha

(1) 4/1/59 - 3/27/60 (2) KRT (TBS) (3) 56 (37 chapters) (4) & (5) Jiro Kuwata (6) Ryutaro Kondo (7) Urato Watanabe (8) Ko Kato, Shiro Amakusa, Toru Ohira

[6] SPECTRUM MASK [Nanairo Kamen] - Toei

(1) 6/3/59 - 6/30/60 (2) NET (nee TV ASAHI) (3) 56 (7 chapters) (4) Yasunori Kawauchi (5) Yasunori Kawauchi, Saburo Yujo, Yoshinari Matsuhara (6) Toshiro Suzuki, Go Kirinoda (7) Hiroki Ogawa (8) Susumu Wajima (chaps. 1-4), Shinichi Chiba (5-7), Ryuichi Fujiyama, Toshiko Okada, Kenji Ushio, Midori Urano

[7] EYES OF THE JAGUAR [Jaguar no me] - Senkosha

(1) 7/12/59 - 3/27/60 (2) KRT (TBS) (3) 38 (5) Shinichi Nakai (6) Sadao Funatoko (7) Hiroki Ogawa (8) Koichi Ose, Keiko Fujita, Bin Amatsu

THE SIXTIES

[1] SUBMARINER 8823 [Kaiteijin Hayabusa] - Daiei TV Office

(1) 1/3/60 - 6/28/60 (2) Fuji TV (3) 26 (4) & (5) Ken Kuronuma (6) Nobuo Nakagawa (7) N/A (8) Nobuhiko Inoue, Sachiko Meguro

[2] IRONMAN NO. 28 [Tetsujin nijuhachi go] - Matsuzaki Productions

(1) 2/1/60 - 4/25/60 (2) NTV (3) 13 (4) Mitsuteru Yokoyama (5) Harune Ko'orogi, Santaro Marune (6) Santaro Marune (7) Junma Nakabayashi (8) Shoichi Naito, Mita Araki, Yoichiro Mikawa

[3] VIGILANTE HARIMAU [Kaiketsu Harimao] - Senkosha

(1) 4/5/60 - 6/27/61 (2) NTV (3) 65 (4)

Katsuro Yamada (5) Masaru Igami (6) Sadao Funatoko (7) Hiroki Ogawa (8) Toshiyuki Katsuki, Shoichiro Naito

[4] MESSENGER OF ALLAH [Allah no Shisha] - Toei

(1) 7/7/60 - 12/27/60 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 26 (4) Yasunori Kawauchi (5) Yoshinari Matsuhara (6) Ryutaro Kondo (7) Noboru Nishiyama (8) Shinichi Chiba, Ikio Otsuka, Akio Kaneko

[5] NATIONAL KID [National Kid] - Toei

(1) 8/4/60 - 4/27/61 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 39 (4 chapters) (4) Jusan Umino (5) Toru Tani, Chogi Akasaka (6) Jun Koya, Chogi Akasaka (7) Yasuo Fukazawa (8) Ichiro Kojima, Hideo Kimura, Midori Okada

[6] NINJA SQUAD MOONLIGHT [Ninja butai gekko] - Kokusai Films

(1) 1/3/64 - 3/31/66 (2) Fuji TV (3) 130 (4) Tatsuo Yoshida (5) Kazuo Nishida (6) Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, Hiroshi Fukuhara, Yaso Yoshino (7) Chumei Watanabe (8) Jo Mizuki, Ryuji Ishikawa, Akira Yamauchi

[7] AMBASSADOR MAGMA [Magma Taishi] - P-Productions

(1) 7/4/66 - 6/26/67 (2) Fuji TV (3) 52 (4) Osamu Tezuka (5) Susumu Takahisa, Hiroyasu Yamamura (6) Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, Sadao Funatoko (7) Naozumi Yamamoto (8) Masami Okada, Toru Ohira, Toshio Egi

[8] ULTRAMAN [Ultraman] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 7/10/66 - 4/9/67 (2) TBS (3) 39 (4) Eiji Tsuburaya (5) Tetsuo Kinjo, Hiroyasu Yamamura, Shozo Uehara, Keisuke Fujikawa, Mamoru Sasaki, Shinichi Sekizawa (pilot only)

(6) Toshihiro Iijima, Somaji Yanagase, Akio Jissoji, Hajime Tsuburaya, Toshisugu Suzuki, Kazuho Mitsuta (7) Kunio Miyauchi (8) Susumu Kurobe, Shoji Kobayashi, Iyoshi Ishii, Hiroko Sakurai, Masaya Nihei, Akihiko Hirata

[9] RED SHADOW - THE MASKED NINJA [Kamen no Ninja Akakage] - Toei

(1) 4/5/67 - 3/27/68 (2) Fuji TV (3) 52 (4 chapters) (4) Mitsuteru Yokoyama (5) Masaru Igami (6) Tetsuya Yamaguchi, Noboru Kono, Junji Kurata (7) Hiroki Ogawa (8) Tetsuo Sakaguchi, Fuyukichi Maki, Yoshinobu Kaneko, Bin Amatsu

[10] CAPTAIN ULTRA [Captain Ultra] - Toei

(1) 4/16/67 - 9/24/67 (2) TBS (3) 24 (4) Ryu Kose, Michio Tozoku (5) Susumu Takahisa, Kisel Choda (6) Minoru Yamada, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Koichi Takemoto, Hajime Sato (7) Isao Tomita (8) Hirohisa Nakata, Yuki Jonno, Ichiro Isawa

[11] LIGHT-SPEED ESPER [Kosokuji Esper] - Senkosha

(1) 8/1/67 - 1/23/68 (2) NTV (3) 26 (4) Leiji Matsumoto (Toshiba Electric) (5) Masaru Igami, Tatsuo Tamura (6) Hiroshi Fukuhara, Ken Yamada (7) Katsuhisa Hattori (8) Kiyotaka Mitsugi, Akira Hirose

[12] ULTRA SEVEN [Ultra Seven] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 10/1/67 - 9/8/68 (2) TBS (3) 49 (4) Eiji Tsuburaya (5) Shinichi Sekizawa, Tetsuo Kinjo, Shozo Uehara, Bunzo Wakatsuki (6) Kazuho Mitsuta, Samaji Yanagase, Hajime Tsuburaya, Toshisugu Suzuki (7) Toru Fuyuki (8) Koji Moritsugu, Shoji Nakayama, Yuriko Hishimi, Iyoshi Ishii, Satoshi Furuya

[13] GIANT ROBO [Giant robo] - Toei

(1) 10/11/67 - 4/1/68 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 26 (4) Mitsuteru Yokoyama, Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Hisashi Abe (6) Minoru Yamada, Itaru Orita, Koichi Takemoto, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Michio Konishi (7) Takeo Yamashita (8) Mitsunobu Kaneko, Shozaburo Date, Akio Ito, Mitsuo Ando, Matasaburo Tanba

THE SEVENTIES

[1] SPECTRALMAN [Spectreman] - P-Productions

(1) 1/2/71 - 3/25/72 (2) Fuji TV (3) 63 (3 chapters) (4) Shoji Ushio (5) Masaki Tsuji, Shoji Nemoto, Susumu Takahisa, Keisuke Fujikawa (6) Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, Koichi Ishiguro, Hiromi Higuchi (7) Kunio Miyauchi (8) Tetsuo Narita, Toru Ohira, Koji Okazaki, Takamitsu Watanabe, Takanobu Toya

[2] RETURN OF ULTRAMAN [Kaetekita Ultraman] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 4/2/71 - 3/31/72 (2) TBS (3) 51 (4) Hajime Tsuburaya (5) Shozo Uehara, Shigemitsu Taguchi, Shinichi Ichikawa, Masaru Igami (6) Ishiro Honda, Nagami Yamagiwa, Toshihiro Tomita, Shohei Tojo (7) Toru Fuyuki (8) Jiro Dan, Shin Kishida, Nobuo Tsukamoto, Hideki Kawaguchi, Ken Nishida

[3] MASKED RIDER [Kamen Rider] - Toei

(1) 4/3/71 - 2/10/73 (2) Mainichi Broadcasting System (MBS) (3) 98 (4) Shotaro Ishimori (Ishinomori) & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Masayuki Shimada, Shiro Ishimori, Mari Takizawa (6) Itaru Orita, Koichi Takemoto, Minoru Yamada, Issaku Uchida, Katsuhiko Taguchi (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Hiroshi Fujioka, Takeshi Sasaki, Shoji Kobayashi, Yoko Shimada, Emily Takemi, Linda Yamamoto, Jiro Chiba, Eisei Amamoto, Kenji Ushio, Matasaburo Tanba

[4] SILVER MASK [Silver kamen] - Nippon Gendai Planning

(1) 11/28/71 - 5/21/72 (2) TBS (3) 26 (2 chapters) (4) Mamoru Sasaki (5) Shozo Uehara, Mamoru Sasaki, Shinichi Ichikawa (6) Akio Jissoji, Nagami Yamagiwa, Hiromi Higuchi (7) Masanobu Higure (8) Toshio Shibamoto, Saburo Shinoda, Junko Natsu

[5] MIRRORMAN [Mirrorman] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 12/5/71 - 11/26/72 (2) Fuji TV (3) 51 (4) Hajime Tsuburaya (5) Bunzo Wakatsuki, Keisuke Fujikawa, Hiroyasu Yamamura (6) Ishiro Honda, Toshisugu Suzuki, Yoshiyuki

Kuroda, Shohei Tojo (7) Toru Fuyuki (8) Nobuyuki Ishida, Junya Usami

[6] VIGILANT LION KNIGHT [Kaiketsu Lion Maru] - P-Productions

(1) 4/1/72 - 4/7/73 (2) Fuji TV (3) 54 (4) Shoji Ushio (5) Bunzo Wakatsuki, Tatsuo Tamura, Toshiaki Matsushima, Tomio Shinoda (6) Koichi Ishiguro, Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, Kanya Otsuka, Hiromi Higuchi (7) Asei Kobayashi (8) Tetsuya Ushio, Tetsuo Narukawa, Bin Amatsu

[7] SUPERHUMAN BAROM-1 [Chojin Barom-One] - Toei

(1) 4/2/72 - 11/26/72 (2) Fuji TV (3) 35 (4) Takao Saito, Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Mari Takizawa, Masayuki Shimada (6) Minoru Yamada, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Itaru Orita (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Hiroyuki Takano

[8] ULTRAMAN ACE [Ultraman Ace] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 4/7/72 - 3/30/73 (2) TBS (3) 52 (4) Hajime Tsuburaya (5) Shigemitsu Taguchi, Shinichi Ishikawa, Shozo Uehara, Shukei Nagasaka (6) Kazuho Mitsuta, Nagami Yamagiwa, Toshisugu Suzuki (7) Toru Fuyuki (8) Keiji Takamine, Mitsuko Hoshi, Keiko Nishi

[9] TRANSFORMING NINJA ARASHI [Henshin Ninja Arashi] - Toei

(1) 4/7/72 - 2/23/73 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 46 (4) Shotaro Ishimori (Ishinomori) & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Susumi Takahisa, Masayuki Shimada, Mari Takizawa (6) Issaku Uchida, Itaru Orita, Minoru Yamada (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Ryuya Nanjo, Fuyukichi Maki, Kenji Ushio, Eisei Amamoto

[10] ANDROID KIKAIER [Jinzo Ningen Kikaider] - Toei

(1) 7/8/72 - 5/5/73 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 43 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Masayuki Shimada (6) Hideyuki Kimura, Yasutada Nagano (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Daisuke Ban, Mitsuo Ando, Masahiro Kamiya

[11] THUNDER MASK [Thunder Mask] -



Hiromi Productions

(1) 10/3/72 - 3/27/73 (2) NTV (3) 26 (4) Shogo Tanaka (5) Shozo Uehara, Keisuke Fuji-kawa, Maru Tamura, Nisan Takahashi (6) Ishiro Honda, Susumu Tanaka, Akira Okazaki (7) Nidai Nakamura (8) Kazutaka Sugawara, Kazumi Inoguchi, Hidehiko Kuroda, Toshio Fujii

[12] RAINBOWMAN - WARRIOR OF LOVE [AI NO SENSHI RAINBOWMAN] - Toho

(1) 10/6/72 - 9/28/73 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 52 (4) Yasunori Kawauchi (5) Tsunehisa Ito (6) Ken Yamada (7) Jun Kitahara (8) Kuni-hisa Mizutani, Eriko Ishikawa, Susumu Kuroki, Hiroshi Koizumi, Machiko Soga, Akihiko Hirata

[13] FLYING ATTACK! HYUMAN!! [Togeki! Hyuman!!] - Mo'Bleau and NTV

(1) 10/7/72 - 12/30/72 (2) NTV (3) 13 (4) Keisuke Fujikawa (5) Shozo Uehara, Keisuke Fujikawa (6) Soya Shirai (7) Kenichiro Morioka (8) Yusuke Natsu, Akihiko Nishidori, Yoshiko Tanaka, Ritsuo Sawa

[14] IRON KING [Iron King] - Nippon Gendai Planning

(1) 10/8/72 - 4/8/73 (2) TBS (3) 26 (4) & (5) Mamoru Sasaki (6) Noriaki Yuasa, Hiroshi Fukuhara (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Ko Harada, Masaji Ishibashi, Shinzo Hotta, Chieko Maki



[15] FIREMAN [Fireman] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 1/7/73 - 7/31/73 (2) NTV (3) 30 (4) Akira Tsuburaya (5) Bunzo Wakatsuki, Fumihito Imamura, Shin Kishida (6) Hiromi Higuchi, Toshisugu Suzuki, Jun Oki (7) Toru Fuyuki (8) Naoya Makoto, Goro Mutsu, Shin Kishida

[16] MAJIN HUNTER MITSURUGI [Majin Hunter Mitsurugi] - Kokusai Films

(1) 1/8/73 - 3/26/73 (2) Fuji TV (3) 12 (4) Takeo Nakamura (5) Susumi Takahisa, Masayuki Shimada, Toshiaki Matsushima (6) Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, Ichiro Harusuki (7) Yukikazu Suzuki (8) Jo Mizuki

[17] JUMBORG ACE [Jumborg Ace] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 1/17/73 - 12/29/73 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 50 (4) Hajime Tsuburaya (5) Shigemitsu Taguchi, Hiroyasu Yamamura, Bunzo Wakatsuki (6) Yoshiyuki Kuroda, Shohei Tojo, Toshisugu Suzuki, Jun Oki (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Naoki Tachibana, Jun Tazaki

[18] MASKED RIDER V3 [Kamen Rider V3] - Toei

(1) 2/17/73 - 2/9/74 (2) Mainichi Broadcasting System (MBS) (3) 52 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Mari Takizawa, Masayuki Shimada (6) Minoru Yamada, Atsuo Okunaka, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Itaru Orita, Issaku Uchida (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Hiroshi Miyauchi, Shoji Kobayashi, Hizuru Ono, Akira Yamaguchi

[19] HUMAN COMET ZONE [Ryusei Ningen Zone] - Toho

(1) 4/2/73 - 9/24/73 (2) NTV (3) 26 (4) Tomoyuki Tanaka (5) Shozo Uehara, Jun Fukuda, Juro Shimamoto, Susumu Takeuchi (6) Ishiro Honda, Jun Fukuda; SFX, Teruyoshi Nakano, Koichi Kawakita (7) Go Nizawa (8) Kazuya Aoyama, Kazumi Kitahara, Shoji Nakayama, Hideaki Ohara

[20] WHITE LION MASK [Shiro Shishi Kamen] - Yamato Planning

(1) 4/4/73 - 6/27/73 (2) NTV (3) 13 (4) Tsuneho Matsumoto (5) Koji Asama, Hideto Ishikawa (6) Noboru Uno, Koji Asama (7) Kenjiro Hirose (8) Kiyotaka Mitsugi, Shingo Seikawa, Rock Yoshikawa

[21] ROBOT DETECTIVE [Robot Keiji] - Toei

(1) 4/5/73 - 9/27/73 (2) Fuji TV (3) 26 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Shozo Uehara, Masaru Igami, Shoichi Nakayama (6) Atsuo Okunaka, Issaku Uchida, Itaru Orita (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Jiro Chiba, Yumiko Kaga, Shinichi Chiba

[22] ULTRAMAN TARO [Ultraman Taro]



- Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 4/6/73 - 4/5/74 (2) TBS (3) 53 (5) Shigemitsu Taguchi, Shozo Uehara, Mamoru Sasaki (6) Nagami Yamagiwa, Yasuo Yoshino (7) Masanobu Higure (8) Saburo Shinoda, Kiyotaka Mitsugi, Kiyoko Matsutani, Akira Nagoya, Takahiko Tono

[23] STORMCLOUD LION KNIGHT [Fuun Lion Maru] - P-Productions

(1) 4/14/73 - 9/29/73 (2) Fuji TV (3) 25 (4) Shoji Ushio (5) Toshiaki Matsushima, Tomio Shinoda, Kazuo Takagiwa (6) Koichi Ishiguro, Kanya Otsuka (7) Hiroshi Tsusui (8) Tetsuya Ushio, Kyoko Miyano, Tsunehiro Atarashii, Toru Ohira

[24] KIKAIER 01 [Kikaider 01] - Toei

(1) 5/12/73 - 3/30/74 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 46 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Shukei Nagasaka, Hirohisa Soda, Masayuki Shimada, Mari Takizawa, Fumito Imamura (6) Yasutada Nagano, Shoji Matsumura, Fumito Imamura (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Shunsuke Ikeda, Sei Matsumoto, Etsuko Shiomi, Yoshihide Gojima

[25] SUPER-ROBOT RED BARON [Super Robot Red Baron] - Nihon Gendai Planning

(1) 7/4/73 - 3/27/74 (2) NTV (3) 39 (4) Shozo Uehara (5) Keisuke Fujikawa, Masaru Igami (6) Hiroshi Fukuhara, Toshisugu Suzuki, Koichi Takano (7) Tadao Inoue (8) Hirotsuke Okada, Tetsuya Ushio, Isao Yamagawa, Hiroshi Ikaida

[26] INAZUMAN [Inazuman] - Toei

(1) 10/2/73 - 3/26/74 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 25 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Susumu Takahisa, Shozo Uehara, Hirohisa Soda, Masayuki Shimada (6) Minoru Yamada, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Shotaro Ishimori, Masaomi Tsukata (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Daisuke Ban, Koichi

[27] DIAMOND EYE: WARRIOR OF LIGHT [Hikari no Senshi - Diamond Eye] - Toho

(1) 10/5/73 - 3/29/74 (2) 26 (3) NET (TV Asahi) (4) Yasunori Kawauchi (5) Tsunehisa Ito, Tatsuo Tamura (6) Ken Yamada (7) Takaharu Iketa (8) Shiro Ohama, Hidemi Aoki, Go Fukuda

[28] IRONMAN TIGER-SEVEN [Tetsujin Tiger-Seven] - P-Productions

(1) 10/6/73 - 3/30/74 (2) Fuji TV (3) 26 (4) Shoji Ushio (5) Shozo Uehara, Keisuke Fujikawa, Kazuo Takagiwa (6) Kanya Otsuka, Ken Yamada, Toshisugu Suzuki (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Ryuya Nanjo, Tomoki Yoshida

[29] MASKED RIDER X [Kamen Rider X] - Toei

(1) 2/16/74 - 10/12/74 (2) Mainichi Broadcasting System (MBS) (3) 35 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Masayuki Shimada, Shukei Nagasaka (6) Katsuhiko Taguchi, Itaru Orita, Issaku Uchida, Katsuhiko Yamada (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Ryu Hayama, Shoji Kobayashi, Jun Tazaki, Sachiko Kosaka

[30] DENJIN ZABOGA [Denjin Zaboga] - P-Productions

(1) 4/6/74 - 6/29/75 (2) Fuji TV (3) 52 (2 chapters) (4) Kazuo Koike (5) Shozo Uehara, Nisan Takahashi, Susumu Takahisa, Tomio Shinoda, Toshiaki Matsushima (6) Atsuo Okunaka, Ken Yamada, Toshisugu Suzuki, Noriaki Yuasa, Ryuichi Okaya (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Akira Yamaguchi, Midori Hoshino, Masahiro Kamiya, Eiichi Kikuchi, Ken Okabe, Riki Tanaka

[31] INAZUMAN FLASH [Inazuman Flash] - Toei

(1) 4/9/74 - 9/24/74 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 23 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Susumu Takahisa, Shozo Uehara, Hirohisa Soda, Masayuki Shimada



(6) Minoru Yamada, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Shotaro Ishimori, Masaomi Tsukata (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Daisuke Ban, Mitsuo Ando

[32] ULTRAMAN LEO [Ultraman Leo] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 4/12/74 - 3/28/75 (2) TBS (3) N/A (5) Shigemitsu Taguchi, Fumizo Wakatsuki (6) Shohei Tojo, Jun Oki (7) Toru Fuyuki (8) Ryu Manatsu, Koji Moritsugu, Tsunehiro Arai, Miko Tominaga, So Kuroda, Yukio Ito, Yu Fujiki

[33] SUPER ROBOT MACH BARON [Super Robot Mach Baron] - Nippon Gendai Planning

(1) 10/7/74 - 3/31/75 (2) NTV (3) 24 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Shozo Uehara (6) Koichi Takano, Toshisugu Suzuki, Hiroyuki Maegawa, Shingi Hama (7) Yuhiko Takeda (8) Makoto Shimozuka, Kenichi Kosugi, Jiro Dan, Hiroshi Ikaida

[34] MASKED RIDER AMAZON [Kamen Rider Amazon] - Toei

(1) 10/19/74 - 3/29/75 (2) MBS (3) 24 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Kaoru Daimon (6) Minoru Yamada, Masaomi Tsukata, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Issaku Uchida, Itaru Orita (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Toru Okazaki, Shoji Kobayashi, Hiroshi Matsuda, Mariko Matsuoka, Hirohisa Nakata

[35] CONDORMAN - SYMBOL OF JUSTICE [Condorman - Seigi no Shinboru] - Toei

(1) 3/31/74 - 9/22/75 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 24 (4) Yasunori Kawauchi (5) Tsunehisa Ito (6) Minoru Matsushima, Atsuo Okunaka, Masako Igayama (7) Kunihiro Suzuki (8) Hitoya Sato, Kiyoshi Yamada, Rika Haruyama

[36] MASKED RIDER STRONGER [Kamen Rider Stronger] - Toei

(1) 4/5/75 - 12/27/75 (2) Mainichi Broadcasting (3) 39 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Seiji Matsuoka, Ikazuro Suzuki (6) Daisuke Yamazaki, Masaomi Tsukata, Issaku Uchida, Minoru Yamada, Itaru Orita (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Shigeru Arai, Shoji Kobayashi, Kyoko Okada, Ko Hamada

[37] SECRET TASK FORCE GORANGER [Himitsu Sentai Goranger] - Toei

(1) 4/5/75 - 3/26/77 (2) TBS (3) 84 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Shozo Uehara, Susumu Takahisa, Hirohisa Soda, Keisuke Fujikawa (6) Koichi Takemoto, Minoru Yamada, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Itaru Orita, Hideyuki Kimura, Michio Konishi (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Naoya Makoto, Hiroshi Miyauchi, Yukio Ito, Mitsuo Ando

[38] AKUMAIZER 3 [Akumaizer 3] - Toei

(1) 10/7/75 - 6/29/76 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 48 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Shukei Nagasaka, Keiji Kubota, Masaru Igami, Shigemitsu Taguchi (6) Atsuo Okunaka, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Itaru Orita, Issaku Uchida (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Jiro Chiba, Miyuki Hayata



[39] SPACE IRONMEN KYODYNE [Uchu Tetsujin Kyodyne] - Toei

(1) 4/2/76 - 3/11/77 (2) TBS (3) 48 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Keisuke Fujikawa, Shozo Uehara (6) Koichi Takemoto, Itaru Orita, Michio Konishi, Kan Wakabayashi (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Takeshi Sasaki, Yusuke Natsu, Minoru Yoshikawa, Junya Usami, Eisei Amamoto

[40] THE SHADOWSTAR [The Kage-star] - Toei

(1) 4/5/76 - 11/29/76 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 34 (4) Saburo Hatte & Toru Hirayama (5) Shiro Ishori, Minoru Yamada, Issaku Uchida, Itaru Orita, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Takao Nagaishi (7) Takeo Watanabe (8) Naoki Tachibana, Shoji Kobayashi, Eimi Hayakawa, Yuko Hamada

[41] NINJA CAPTOR [Ninja Captor] - Toei

(1) 4/7/76 - 1/26/77 (2) TV Tokyo (3) 43 (4) Saburo Hatte & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Shukei Nagasaka, Mikio Matsushita (6) Hideo Tanaka, Atsuo Okunaka, Daisuke Yamazaki (7) Akihiro Omori (8) Daisuke Ban, Kenji Ushio, Dan Kurokawa, Hiroyuki Sato, Ai Nogawa, Shinzo Hotta

[42] SUPER-DIVINE BEBYUN [Chojin Bebyun] - Toei

(1) 7/6/76 - 3/29/77 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 36 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Shukei Nagasaka (6) Yuji Saeki, Akira Kashima, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Issaku Uchida (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Shigeru Araki, Toshihiko Sakata

[43] SAUCER WAR - BANKID [Enban Senso - Bankid] - Toho

(1) 10/3/76 - 3/27/77 (2) NTV (3) 26 (4) Noriaki Takahisa (5) Shukei Nagasaka, Hikako Yanase (6) Samaji Yanagase, Minoru Kaneya (7) Kenjiro Hirose (8) Eiji Okuda, Mie Suzuki, Akihiko Hirata

[44] BATTLE HAWK [Battle Hawk] - Nac

(1) 10/4/76 - 3/28/77 (2) TV Tokyo (3) 26 (4) Go Nagai (5) Tsunehisa Ito, Susumu Yoshida (6) Ken Yamada, Keinosuke Tsuchiya (7) Akihiro Komori (8) Kazuya Tokimoto, Mimi Shinta, Eiichi Kikuchi

[45] PRO WRESTLING STARAZTECIZER [Pro-wres no Hoshi Aztecizer] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 10/7/76 - 3/31/77 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 26 (4) Go Nagai (5) Bunzo Wakatsuki, Keiichi Abe, Susumu Takahisa (6) Akira Okazaki, Shohei Tojo, Kanya Otsuka (7) Toshiaki Tsushima (8) Yoshiteru Shimamura, Akio Matsu-moto, Shohei Yamamoto

[46] VIGILANTE ZUBAT [Kaiketsu Zubat] - Toei

(1) 2/2/77 - 9/30/77 (2) TV Tokyo (3) 32 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Shukei Nagasaka, Mari Takizawa, Shigemitsu Taguchi (6) Hideo Tanaka, Atsuo Okunaka, Michio Konishi (7) Kensuke Kyo (8) Hiroshi Miyauchi, Ryuji Hayami, Nobuko Daijo

[47] GIANT IRONMAN 17 [Daitetsujin 17] - Toei

(1) 3/18/77 - 11/11/77 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 35 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Shozo Uehara, Masaru Igami, Taku Ezure (6) Minoru Yamada, Kan Wakabayashi, Issaku Uchida (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Masahiro Kamiya, Tadao Nakamaru, Wolf Osuki, Akihiko Hirata, Akira Yamaguchi, Takeshi Haraguchi

[48] JACKER - POWER ATTACK TEAM [JAKQ Dengeki-tai] - Toei

(1) 4/2/77 - 12/24/77 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 35 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Shozo Uehara, Hirohisa Soda, Susumu Takahisa (6) Koichi Takemoto, Atsuo Okunaka, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Minoru Yamada (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Yoshitaka Niwa, Osamu Tanaka, Hiroshi Miyauchi, Michi Love, Masashi Ishibashi

[49] LI'L SUPERMAN GANBARON [Chisai Superman Ganbaron] - Soeisha

(1) 4/3/77 - 9/25/77 (2) NTV (3) 25 (5) Shukei Nagasaka, Shozo Uehara, Shigemitsu Taguchi (6) Shohei Tojo (7) Miki Yoshino & Godaigo (8) Kazuto Ando, Kumi Nishijima, Susumu Ishikawa, Eisei Amamoto, Susumu Kurobe, Goro Hanawaki

[50] DINOSAUR WAR - AIZENBORG [Kyoryu Senso - Aizenborg] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 10/7/77 - 6/30/78 (2) TV Tokyo (3) 38 (2 chapters) (4) Noboru Tsuburaya (5) Keiichi Abe, Hiroyasu Yamamura, Kazuo Takagiwa, Shigemitsu Taguchi, Bunzo Wakatsuki (6) Kanya Otsuka, Shohei Tojo, Kazuho Mitsuta, Jun Oki (7) Toshiaki Tsushima

[51] UFO WAR - FIGHT! RED TIGER [UFO Senso - Takakae! Red Tiger] - Soeisha

(1) 4/8/78 - 12/28/78 (2) TV Tokyo (3) 37 (4) Kotaro Ono (5) Shozo Uehara, Shukei Naga-saka, Chitsuko Takahashi (6) Yasutaka Yoda (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Tetsuya Nakayashiki, Goro Yoshida, Annette Orell (?), Jerry Ito

[52] SPIDER-MAN [Spider-man] - Toei

(1) 5/17/78 - 3/14/79 (2) TV Tokyo (3) 41 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Shozo Uehara, Susumu Takahisa, Hirohisa Soda, Mikio Matsushita (6) Koichi Takemoto, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Yuji Saeki, Yoshiaki Kobayashi (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Hirosuke Kayama, Rika Miura, Izumi Oyama, Yukie Kagawa, Mitsuo Ando, Toshiaki Nishizawa

[53] DINOSAUR TASK FORCE KOSEIDON [Kyoryu Sentai Koseidon] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 7/7/78 - 6/29/79 (2) TV Tokyo (3) 52 (4) Ifumi Uchiyama (5) Masaki Tsuji, Keiichi Abe, Hiroyasu Yamamura, Bunzo Wakatsuki (6) Toru Sotoyama, Shohei Tojo (7) Seiji Yokoyama (8) Tetsuya Onishi, Daigo Kusano, Takako Kawasaki

[54] MESSAGE FROM SPACE: GALACTIC BATTLE [Uchu kara no Message: Ginga Taisen] - Toei

(1) 7/8/78 - 1/27/79 (2) NET (TV Asahi) (3) 27 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Taku Ezure (6) Minoru Yamada, Kan Wakabayashi (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Hiroyuki Sanada, Jiro Shirai, Shinzo Hotta, Tetsuya Yamaguchi, Tsuko Fujiyama

[55] BATTLE FEVER J [Battle Fever J] - Toei

(1) 2/3/79 - 1/26/80 (2) TV Asahi (3) 52 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Susumu Takahisa, Shozo Uehara, Taku Ezure, Hirohisa Soda (6) Koichi Takemoto (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Kenji Oba, Takeshi Ito (aka Yukio Ito), Naoya Ban (aka Daisuke Ban), Takumi Sato, Kenji Ushio, Masashi Ishibashi, Diana Martin

[56] MEGALOMAN - WARRIOR OF FIRE [Megaroman - Hono o no Senshi] - Toho

(1) 5/7/79 - 12/24/79 (2) Fuji TV (3) 31 (4) Tetsu Ganya (5) Tatsuo Tamura, Tsunehisa Ito (6) Samaji Yanagase, Shohei Tojo (7) Shozo Tozuka (8) Yuki Kitazume, Jimmy Araki, Susumu Kurobe, Yukiko Takabayashi

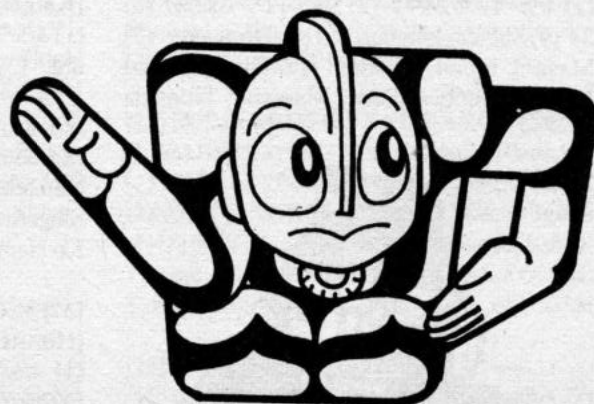
[57] NEW MASKED RIDER [Shin Kamen Rider; a.k.a. "Sky Rider"] - Toei

(1) 10/5/79 - 10/10/80 (2) Mainichi Broadcasting/TBS (3) 54 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Masaru Igami, Taku Ezure, Hisa Yamazaki (6) Minoru Yamada, Katsuhiko Taguchi, Atsuo Okunaka, Hideo Tanaka (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Hiroaki Murakami, Nobuo Tsukamoto, Shinzo Hotta

THE EIGHTIES

[1] ELECTRONIC TASK FORCE DENZIMAN [Denshi Sentai Denziman] - Toei

(1) 2/2/80 - 1/31/81 (2) TV Asahi (3) 51 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Shozo Uehara, Hirohisa



Soda, Taku Eruze (6) Koichi Takemoto, Yoshikazu Yoshida, Yoshiaki Kobayashi (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Kenji Oba, Akira Koizumi, Machiko Soga

[2] ULTRAMAN 80 [Ultraman 80] - Tsuburaya Productions

(1) 4/2/80 - 3/25/81 (2) TBS (3) 26 (4) Kazuho Mitsuta (5) Fumihei Ai, Hiroyasu Yamamura, Bunzo Wakatsuki (6) Noriaki Yuasa, Shohei Tojo, Toru Sotoyama, Samaji Yanagase (7) Toru Fuyuki (8) Hasunori Hasegawa, Hitoshi Nakayama, Masaaki Daimon, Eri Ishida, Noriko Shirasaki, Kenji Sahara

[3] X BOMBER [X Bomber] - Jin Productions

(1) 10/4/80 - 3/25/81 (2) TBS (3) 50 (4) Go Nagai (5) Keisuke Fujikawa (6) Rikuo Mikami (7) Bowwow (8) N/A

[4] MASKED RIDER SUPER-1 [Kamen Rider Super-1] - Toei

(1) 10/17/80 - 10/3/81 (2) Mainichi Broadcasting/TBS (3) 48 (4) Shotaro Ishimori & Toru Hirayama (5) Taku Ezure, Masaru Igami (6) Minoru Yamada, Atsuo Okunaka, Yuji Saeki, Michio Konishi, Hideo Tanaka (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Shunsuke Takasugi, Nobuo Tsukamoto, Yumiko Tanaka, Wolf Oski, Kazuo Suzuki

[5] SOLAR TASK FORCE SUN VULCAN [Taiyo Sentai Sun Vulcan] - Toei

(1) 2/7/81 - 1/30/83 (2) TV Asahi (3) 50 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Shozo Uehara, Hirohisa Soda, Susumu Takahisa (6) Koichi Takemoto, Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Shohei Tojo, Atsuo Okunaka (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Ryusuke Kawasaki, Shin Kishida, Akio Kobayashi, Machiko Soga, Takako Kitagawa

[6] GREAT TASK FORCE GOGGLE V [Dai Sentai Goggle V] - Toei

(1) 2/6/82 - 1/29/83 (2) TV Asahi (3) 50 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Hirohisa Soda, Isao Matsumoto, Akiyoshi Sakai (6) Shohei Tojo, Minoru Yamada (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Junichi Haruta, Megumi Okawa, Eiichi Kikuchi

[7] SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN [Uchu Keiji Gavan] - Toei

(1) 3/4/83 - 2/24/84 (2) TV Asahi (3) 44 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Shozo Uehara, Mikio Matsushita, Susumu Takahisa (6) Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Atsuo Okunaka, Takeshi Ogasawara, Hideo Tanaka (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Kenji Oba, Noboru Mitsutani, Aiko Tachibana, Shinichi Chiba, Toshiaki Nishizawa, Ken Nishida

[8] SCIENCE TASK FORCE: DYNAMAN [Kagaku Sentai Dynaman] - Toei

(1) 2/5/83 - 1/28/84 (2) TV Asahi (3) 51 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Hirohisa Soda, Isao Matsumoto (6) Shohei Tojo, Minoru Yamada (7) Kensuke Kyo (8) Junichi Haruta, Satoshi Okita, Mari Kono, Sayoko Hagiwara (aka

Noriko Shirasaki), Masashi Ishibashi

[9] SPACE SHERIFF SHARIVAN [Uchu Keiji Sharivan] - Toei

(1) 3/4/83 - 2/24/84 (2) TV Asahi (3) 51 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Shozo Uehara, Keiji Kubota, Susumu Takahisa (6) Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Takeshi Ogasawara, Hideo Tanaka, Michio Konishi (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Hiroshi Watari, Yukari Aoki, Kenji Oba, Mitsuo Ando, Toshiaki Nishizawa

[10] MACHINEMAN - THE NEBULA MASK [Seijin Kamen Machineman] - Toei

(1) 1/3/84 - 9/28/84 (2) NTV (3) 36 (4) Shotaro Ishimori (5) Shozo Uehara, Susumu Takahisa (6) Takeshi Ogasawara, Shohei Tojo



(7) Yuji Ono (8) Osamu Sakuta, Kiyomi Tsukada, Machiko Soga, Eisei Amamoto

[11] SUPER ELECTRON BIOMAN [Cho Denshi Bioman] - Toei

(1) 2/4/84 - 1/26/85 (2) TV Asahi (3) 51 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Hirohisa Soda, Kunio Fujii (6) Nagafumi Hori, Minoru Yamada (7) Tachimi Yano (8) Ryusuke Sakamoto, Yuki Najima, Naoto Tada, Hirohisa Nakata, Yukari Oshima, Michiko Makino

[12] SPACE SHERIFF SHAIDER [Uchu Keiji Shaider] - Toei

(1) 3/2/84 - 3/1/85 (2) TV Asahi (3) 48 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Shozo Uehara (6) Shinichiro Sawai, Michio Konishi, Hideo Tanaka, Minoru Yamada (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Hiroshi Tsuburaya, Naomi Morinaga, Masayuki Suzuki, Kazuhiko Kubo, Toru Yoshida, Toshiaki Nishizawa

[13] BROTHER-FIST BYCLOSSER [Kyodai Ken Byclosser] - Toei

(1) 1/10/85 - 9/26/85 (2) NTV (3) 34 (4) Shotaro Ishimori (5) Susumu Takahisa, Shigeru Sato, Noboru Sugimura (6) Shohei Tojo, Takeshi Ogasawara, Atsuo Okunaka (7) Shunsuke Kikuchi (8) Tetsu Kengo, Kenji Ushio

[14] POWER ATTACK TASK FORCE: CHANGEMAN [Dengeki Sentai Changeman] - Toei

(1) 2/2/85 - 2/22/86 (2) TV Asahi (3) 55 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Hirohisa Soda, Kunio Fujii (6) Minoru Yamada, Nagafumi Hori, Takao Nagaishi (7) Tachimi Yano (8) Haruki Hamada, Hiroshi Kawai, Shiro Izumi, Hiroko Nishimoto, Jun Fujimaki, Shohei Yamamoto, Fukumi Kuroda

[15] MONSTER INVESTIGATOR JUSPION [Kyoju Tokuso Juspion] - Toei

(1) 3/15/85 - 3/24/86 (2) TV Asahi (3) 46 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Shozo Uehara (6) Takeshi Ogasawara, Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Michio Konishi, Shohei Tojo (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Hikaru Kurosaki, Kiyomi Tsukada, Hiroshi Watari, Junichi Haruta, Isao Sasaki

[16] SUPER NOVA FLASHMAN [Cho Shinsei Flashman] - Toei

(1) 3/1/86 - 2/21/87 (2) TV Asahi (3) 50 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Hirohisa Soda, Toshiaki Inoue, Kunio Fujii (6) Minoru Yamada, Nagafumi Hori, Takao Nagaishi, Shohei Tojo (7) Tachimi Yano (8) Keita Tarumi, Kazuhisa Hirose, Sayoko Hagiwara

[17] SUPER-DIMENSION WARRIOR SPEILBAN [Cho Jiku Senshi Speilban] - Toei

(1) 4/7/86 - 3/2/87 (2) TV Asahi (3) 44 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Shozo Uehara, Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Noboru Imagawa (6) Takeshi Ogasawara, Michio Konishi, Yoshiaki Kobayashi (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Hiroshi Watari, Makoto Sumikawa, Machiko Soga, Naomi Morinaga, Michiko Nishiwaki, Ichiro Mitsuki

[18] MASKED RIDER BLACK [Kamen Rider Black] - Toei

(1) 10/4/87 - 10/9/88 (2) Mainichi Broadcasting/TBS (3) 51 (4) Shotaro Ishimori (5) Kenichi Araki, Shozo Uehara, Ryu Yamaguchi (6) Takeshi Ogasawara, Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Hiro Kitamoto, Michio Konishi (7) Eiji Kawamura (8) Tetsuo Kurata, Takahito Horiuchi, Akemi Inoue, Susumu Kurobe, Masaki Kyomoto, Taro Suganuki

[19] AURA TASK FORCE: MASKMAN [Hikari Sentai Maskman] - Toei

(1) 2/28/84 - 2/20/88 (2) TV Asahi (3) 51 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Hirohisa Soda, Kunio Fujii, Toshiaki Inoue (6) Minoru Yamada, Shohei Tojo, Takao Nagaishi (7) Goro Anami (8) Ryusuke Umezu, Yuki Nagata, Hayato Tani, Machiko Soga, Yoshinori Okamoto

[20] SUPER MANCHIME METALDER

[Cho Jinki Metalder] - Toei

(1) 3/16/87 - 1/17/88 (2) TV Asahi (3) 39 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Shozo Uehara, Kunio Fujii, Susumu Takahisa (6) Takeshi Ogasawara, Itaru Orita, Michio Konishi (7) Seiji Yokoyama (8) Akira Sano, Hiroko Aota, Hiroshi Kawai, Shinji Fujito (aka Hirotsuke Kayama)

[21] GLOBAL NINJA WAR: JIRAIYA **[Seikai Ninja - Sen Jiraiya] - Toei**

(1) 1/24/88 - 1/15/89 (2) TV Asahi (3) 50 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Susumu Takahisa, Kunio Fujii (6) Akihisa Okamoto, Itaru Orita (7) Megumi Wakakasa (8) Takumi Hashimoto, Kazuko Tamiya, Hiromi Nohara

[22] SUPER BEAST TASK FORCE: LIVEMAN **[Chouju Sentai Liveman] - Toei**

(1) 2/27/88 - 2/18/89 (2) TV Asahi (3) 49 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Hirohisa Soda, Kunio Fujii, Toshiaki Inoue (6) Takao Nagaishi, Minoru Yamada, Shohei Tojo (7) Tachimi Yano (8) Daisuke Shima, Kazuhiko Nishimura, Toru Sakai, Naoya Ban

[23] ELECTRONIC BRAIN POLICE: CYBERCOP **[Den Zuno Keisatsu Cybercop] - Toho Planning**

(1) 10/2/88 - 6/14/89 (2) NTV (3) 34 (4) Hiromitsu Muraishi (5) Kazuhiko Godo, Hiroshi Toda (6) Toshi Ohi, Hiromitsu Muraishi, Yoshiki Kitamura (7) Ichiro Niita (8) Tomonori Yoshida, Mika Chiba, Masaaki Daimon, Goro Mutsu, Ryuma Sasaki

[24] MASKED RIDER BLACK RX **[Kamen Rider RX] - Toei**

(1) 10/23/88 - 9/24/89 (2) TV Asahi (3) 47 (4) Shotaro Ishimori (5) Takashi Yamada, Kenichi Araki, Taku Ezure (6) Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Noboru Matsui (7) Eiji Kawamura (8) Tetsuo Kurata, Jun Koyamaki (a.k.a. Makoto Sumikawa), Megumi Ueno, Rikiya Koyama

[25] MOBILE-COP JIBAN **[Kido Keiji Jiban] - Toei**

(1) 1/22/89 - 1/28/90 (2) TV Asahi (3) 52 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Susumu Takahisa, Kunio Fujii (6) Michio Konishi, Akihisa Okamoto, Takeshi Ogasawara (7) Michiaki Watanabe (8) Shohei Kusaka, Kunomi Maku, Leo Mengetti

[26] HIGH-SPEED TASK FORCE: TURBORANGER **[Kosoku Sentai Turboranger] - Toei**

(1) 2/25/89 - 2/16/90 (2) TV Asahi (3) 51 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Hirohisa Soda, Kunio Fujii, Toshiaki Inoue, Maimi Watanabe (6) Takao Nagaishi, Shohei Tojo (7) Akihiko Yoshida (8) Kenta Sano, Haruna Morikawa, Keiya Asakura, Fujita Okamoto

THE NINETIES

[1] SPECIAL POLICE: WINSPECTOR **[Tokkei Winspector] - Toei**

(1) 2/4/90 - 1/13/91 (2) TV Asahi (3) 49 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Susumu Takahisa, Sho Sugimura, Hayakazu Miyashita (6) Shohei Tojo, Takeshi Ogasawara, Michio Konishi (7) Seiji Yokoyama (8) Yu Yamashita, Junko Fujino, Hiroshi Miyauchi, Masaru Ohashi

[2] EARTH TASK FORCE: FIVEMAN **[Chikyu Sentai Fiveman] - Toei**

(1) 3/2/90 - 2/1/91 (2) TV Asahi (3) 48 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Hirohisa Soda, Toshiaki Inoue, Maimi Watanabe, Kunio Fujii (6) Shohei Tojo, Takao Nagaishi (7) Akihiko Yoshida (8) Toshiya Fuji, Kazuko Miyata, Megumi Ishii, Takeshi Ishikawa, Genko Watanabe

[3] ULTRAMANGREAT **[Ultraman Great] a.k.a. Ultraman: Towards the Future - Tsuburaya Productions/SAFC**

(1) 9/28/84 (video release) (3) 13 (4) Noboru Tsuburaya (5) Terry Larsen (6) Andrew Prowse (7) Shunsuke Kazato (8) Dore Krause, Gia Vardes, Ralph Cortrell, Lloyd Morris

[4] SPECIAL RESCUE COMMAND: SOLBRAIN **[Tokku Shirei Solbrain] - Toei**

(1) 1/20/91 - 1/26/92 (2) TV Asahi (3) 53 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Susumu Takahisa, Sho Sugimura, Hayakazu Miyashita (6) Michio Konishi, Takeshi Ogasawara (7) Kaoru Mizuki (8) Yuki'ichi Nakayama, Mitsue Mori, Hiroshi Miyauchi

[5] BIRDMAN TASK FORCE: JETMAN **[Chojin Sentai Jetman] - Toei**

(1) 2/15/91 - 2/14/92 (2) TV Asahi (3) 51 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Toshiaki Inoue, Hiroyuki Kawasaki (6) Kieta Amemiya, Shohei Tojo, Taro Sakamoto (7) Kazz Toyama (8) Kotaro Tanaka, Toshihide Wakamatsu, Rika Kishida, Tomihisa Naruse, Sayuri Uchida

[6] SPECIAL RESCUE EXCEEDRAFT **[Tokuso Exceedraft] - Toei**

(1) 2/21/92 - 1/24/93 (2) TV Asahi (3) 51 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Sho Sugimura, Hayakazu Miyashita, Susumu Takahisa (6) Takeshi Ogasawara, Michio Konishi (7) Kaoru Mizuki (8) Shigeki Kagamaru, Mamoru Kawai

[7] DINOSAUR TASK FORCE: BEASTRANGER **[Kyoryu Sentai Juranger] - Toei**

(1) 2/21/92 - 2/12/93 (2) TV Asahi (3) 50 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Kenichi Araki, Sho Sugimura, Toshiaki Inoue, Susumu Takahisa (6) Shohei Tojo, Taro Sakamoto, Takeshi Ogasawara, Katsuya Watanabe (7) Akihiko Yoshida (8) Yuta Mochizuki, Aohisa Takayasu, Hideki Fujiwara, Reiko Chiba, Takumi Hashimoto,

Machiko Soga

[8] SPECIAL INVESTIGATION ROBO JANPERSON **[Tokuso Robo Janperson] - Toei**

(1) 1/31/93 - 1/23/94 (2) TV Asahi (3) 50 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Naoyuke Sakai, Takahiko Soda, Susumu Takahisa (6) Kiyoshi Arai, Michio Konishi, Hidenori Ishida (7) Kei Wakasa (8) Fujita Kagawa, Kazuji Takahashi

[9] FIVE STAR TASK FORCE: DAIRANGER **[Gosei Sentai Dairanger] - Toei**

(1) 2/19/93 - 2/11/94 (2) TV Asahi (3) 50 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Sho Sugimura, Kunio Fujii, Susumu Takahisa (6) Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Katsuya Watanabe, Taro Sakamoto (7) Eiji Kawamura (8) Kei'ichi Wada, Tatsuya Nomi, Ei Hamura, Natsuki Takahashi, Hisashi Sakai, Keisuke Tsuchiya, Tomohisa Naruse

[10] GRIDMAN: THE ELECTRONIC SUPERMAN **[Denko Chojin Gridman] - Tsuburaya Productions**

(1) 4/3/93 - 1/8/94 (2) TBS (3) 39 (4) Noboru Tsuburaya (5) Hiroyuki Kawasaki, Kazuhiko Shindo, Isao Shizutani (6) Teruyoshi Ishii, Yoshiki Kimura, Shinichiro Sawai (7) Osamu Totsuka (8) Masaya Ono, Takeshi Tsudo, Jun Hattori, Takeshi Sugawara, Naoya Ban, Masaichi Komatsu, Daisuke Gomori

[11] ULTRAMAN POWERED **[Ultraman Powered] a.k.a. Ultraman: the Ultimate Hero - Tsuburaya Pro/Major Havoc Inc.**

(1) 12/93 (video release); later broadcast 4/5/95 - 6/29/95 (2) TBS (3) 13 (4) Noboru Tsuburaya (5) King Wilder, Kazunori Ito, Hiroshi Yamaguchi, John Douglas, Bud Robertson (6) King Wilder (7) Toshihiko Sahashi (8) Kane Kosugi, Harrison Page, Robyn Buley, Rob Roy Fitzgerald, Sandra Guibord

[12] BLUE SWAT **[Blue Swat] - Toei**

(1) 1/30/94 - 1/29/95 (2) TV Asahi (3) 51 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Hirohisa Soda, Hayakazu Miyashita, Naoyuke Sakai, Shozo Uehara (6) Rei Tsuji, Michio Konishi, Hidenori Ishida, Itaru Orita (7) Kei Wakasa (8) Ko Domon, Shigeru Sano, Yuharu Shiratori

[13] NINJA TASK FORCE: KAKURANGER **[Ninja Sentai Kakuranger] - Toei**

(1) 2/18/94 - 2/24/95 (2) TV Asahi (3) 53 (4) Saburo Hatte (5) Sho Sugimura, Susumu Takahisa, Hirohisa Soda, Kunio Fujii (6) Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Taro Sakamoto, Takeshi Ogasawara, Shohei Tojo, Katsuya Watanabe, Hiroshi Butsuda (7) Eiji Kawamura (8) Teruaki Ogawa, Shu Kuwai, Satomi Hirose, Hiroshi Tsuchida, Kane Kosugi, Akira Sakamoto, Takayuki Godai

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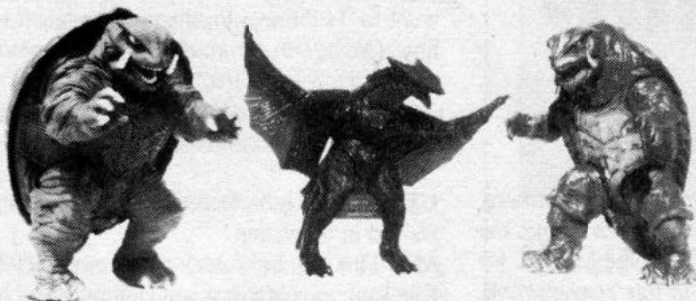
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Minoru Nakano

SPFX Tech Extraordinaire
Interviewed by Guy Mariner Tucker

Minoru Nakano was handpicked by Eiji Tsuburaya to join his staff as early as 1958, but Nakano held off until he had finished university. He is best known today for his masterful optical work on such Tsuburaya Productions shows as *Ultra Q* and *Ultraman*. I first met the now 55-year-old Nakano while doing a series of interviews in Tokyo last March, and grew so accustomed to his lively interjections that it was clear he would be a prime candidate for an interview in our premiere issue. Listening to the tape we made on the last of my eight days there, I realized it was not so much of a real interview as sort of a loose, weary but friendly bar room chat, most of which hardly bears printing. All I can do is plead exhaustion on my part and my translator's. Nakano, on the other hand - I wonder if he ever needs to sleep. His style (blue jeans, close-cropped hair, motorcycle named "Bulldog") is recognizably late-1960s Japanese macho (he would not look out of place in a Toei action movie, trading punches with Ken Takakura or Shinichi Chiba), but in fact he is

amazingly perceptive and, for a Japanese, even more amazingly outspoken about the industry he works in and its people. Alas, we only got to some of that in this conversation. Maybe next year. In the meantime, here's the best of what we did get. - GMT

MN: I'm very interested in some of you American writers. You're writing about things that are top-secret even among Japanese writers; some of what you're writing is more detailed than what they are.

UF: Really? You see so much more writing in Japan that you assume they know what they're talking about. Of course, there's been a great deal of misinformation on both sides. That's one reason a lot of us got into this field.

MN: Did you know about the SFX director of *Power Rangers*? It's Nobuo Yajima (veteran SFX director for Toei TV, as well as for the feature *Terror Beneath the Sea*, 1966). I'll be seeing him this Saturday. Tomorrow it'll be

Mr. Yuasa. (Noriaki Yuasa, director of most of the *Gamera* films.)

UF: Why was Mr. Yuasa asked to direct so many episodes of *Ultraman 80*?

MN: Well, it wasn't just *Ultraman 80*, he started in TV well before that . . .

UF: What about *Ultraman* director Akio Jissoji?

MN: Akio Jissoji was a very special director who never drew storyboards. He would only write very meticulous notes. If he was hired for a project and found there were already storyboards drawn, he would quit. "I don't need pictures on storyboards," he would say. "What I need are words."

UF: What do you remember about Eiji Tsuburaya?

MN: Tsuburaya once said that Ghidra was immovable, so I asked why he had put three heads on the monster. Tsuburaya said, "I thought it would be more interesting that way, but I think I was wrong. It's just immovable." That's why Ghidra is hardly ever shown in the first two Ghidra movies. It's hard work to operate Ghidra, both inside and outside.

Tsuburaya was a terribly inventive personality. Every time Nakajima was inside the *Godzilla* suit, Tsuburaya would ask him to create an entirely new image for each movie.

Another actor was chosen to play *Ultraman*, Bin ("Satoshi") Furuya, who had the right proportions, but knew nothing about fighting monsters in the suit. So Nakajima went to Tsuburaya Productions to teach him how. (Nakajima eventually played *Ultraman's* foe *Jirass*, a.k.a. *Kira*.)

Tsuburaya always required an image that had never been imagined before.

UF: How did it happen that Ishiro Honda got started in television?

MN: That was for *Return of Ultraman* (1971). Eiji Tsuburaya's eldest son Hajime asked him to direct the first episode, as an homage after Tsuburaya died.

UF: Is it a coincidence that Honda then did nothing but television for a few years?

MN: I'm not sure about that, but Honda's son Ryuji told me that right after *Godzilla vs. Biollante* came out (in 1989), there was much clamoring among the fans for Ishiro Honda to return and direct another movie in that series. But Honda had just about lost interest in *Godzilla*. However, a few years later, there was a project set up at Daiei to make a new film featuring *Dai Majin*. The producer offered it to Honda. Ryuji later told me that he thought his father looked very interested in making a *Majin* film. (The project is still in limbo.)

UF: That would have been wonderful, since he never made a period film.

MN: That's true. But on the other hand, he worked with Kurosawa on *Kagemusha* (1980) and *Ran* (1985), and even before that, (he worked on period films) as an assistant director in the 1930s. Of all the new Kurosawa staff, you know, Honda was the closest to him and worked the hardest with him. The new staff might see "the Emperor Kurosawa" in the morning and wouldn't dare say more than "Good morning, how are you today." It was much different with Honda.

... You know Arthur Rankin? (*producer of such Christmas-themed TV classics as Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, virtually all animated by Toei, and coproducer of King Kong Escapes.*) He was a very skillful producer when it came to communicating with a Japanese staff. He came over to Japan because it was then the cheapest place to get the visual effects he wanted. If you ever want to know how to work with a Japanese staff, just ask Arthur Rankin! My friend Raymond Chow, president of Golden Harvest in Hong Kong, where Jackie Chan makes his movies, told me, "I could never match the way Arthur Rankin can work with such a huge Japanese staff!" Rankin liked us for being cheap, hard-working and responsible.


UF: Speaking of Jackie Chan, I saw his signature on the wall of a men's room once in Shinjuku. It said in English "I came from H.K.," then his autograph.

MN: That could be. Jackie Chan loves Marui department store in Shinjuku.

UF: One last question. Was Ultraman the first Japanese superhero who did not have a human face?

MN: There was Gekko Kamen before that.

Editor's note: *Mr. Nakano visited New York this past October, where he was met, wined and dined by myself, John Roberto, and a couple of others. Among the more amazing facts he divulged this trip: that Tsuburaya Productions was originally named Tsuburaya Special Techniques Productions; but Toho so detested the word "tokugi" (special techniques), and the exclusivity it implied (that only Tsuburaya's company could provide such techniques), that Toho refused to invest any money in the venture until the offending word "tokugi" was removed. Tsuburaya agreed, the better to win Toho's backing. Toho never forgot or forgave Eiji Tsuburaya's founding a rival company; when Ishiro Honda and his staff wanted to dedicate Yog Monster from Space (1970) to Tsuburaya's memory, Toho flatly refused to allow any kind of acknowledgement to appear onscreen.*

We look forward to learning more from Mr. Nakano soon. - GMT 

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RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE

Produced by: Tomoyuki Tanaka
 Planning: Hiro Domon
 Photography: Mototaka Tomioka, Takeshi Yamamoto
 Lighting: Ryohei Ikeda
 Fight choreographer: Haruhiko Hashimoto
 Pyrotechnics: Mamoru Kume
 Wire Works: Koji Matsumoto
 Art Director: Gen Kobayashi
 Music: Go Nizawa

With or without cameos by Godzilla, this is one great show. Definitely inspired by the likes of *Ultraman*, *Mirrorman* and other Tsuburaya programs, *Zone* tells the story of a giant, android-like superhero who flies, fires beams, and, of course, battles giant monsters. The special effects feature the usual monster costumes, superimposed laser beams, pyrotechnics, spaceships and, naturally, miniatures which range in quality from superb to laughable. Many, including the Godzilla suit, were left over from the movie *Godzilla vs. Megalon*, released less than a month before the show premiered.

Most Americans might consider the look of the show cheesy, if only because its Japanese; they'd be less likely to criticize a Western production no matter how it looked. But I don't see *Zone*'s costumes and miniatures as cheap; all these props suffice, never detracting from the excitement of the show itself.

While I think *Zone* stands out from the other post-Ultraman shows, it's more or less remembered just as another *Ultraman* wannabe. But it's much more than that; with its human-sized team of superheroes taking on henchmen outnumbering them two to one, the show is actually way ahead of Toei's Sentai genre! I suspect the fights, acrobatics and shootouts of *Zone Fighter* helped inspire the likes of *Goranger* (which eventually mutated into *Power Rangers* twenty years later). But the duels aren't as clean and polished as some

ZONE FIGHTER!

EPISODE GUIDE BY DAMON FOSTER

of those later, generic tangles. In *Zone Fighter* the villains are quite acrobatic themselves; a single Garoga can be almost a match for any one of our heroes. These invaders have personalities (or, rather, invaderalities); they're not the weakling caricatures common to later programs, standing in the background until it's time to step forward and get their asses whipped.

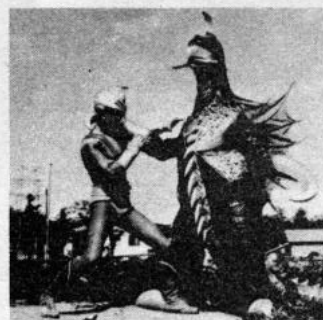
Unfortunately, the show's star Kazuya Aoyama (the kid brother from 1974's *Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla*) isn't a great martial artist. He's athletic and not afraid to go all-out, but he's obviously not from Sonny Chiba's Japan Action Club! His kicks and punches lack the proper form and specific striking points; his kicks don't look all that graceful or effective. The stuntman in the *Zone Fighter* giant-size costume more than makes up for Aoyama's deficiencies; but the little kid Akira (a.k.a. Zone Junior) spends too much time running under the bad guys' legs.

What many people remember this show for is, of course, the guest appearances of the Toho monsters Ghidra, Gigan and Godzilla. If only Toho got along better with other companies, Godzilla might have teamed up with Ultraman or Kamen Rider, the true classic heroes of Japanese TV. But Toho being Toho, the generally obscure *Zone Fighter* will have to do. At least in the shows in which Godzilla appears (episodes 4, 11, 15, 21 and 25), he looks and behaves a little differently than he does in the movie series. In one episode his breath ray is done with some kind of smoke shooting from his mouth like a firehose, in a way never seen in the movies, pretty effective.

Fights, FX, gunplay and car chases punctuate this story of the Sakimori family, righteous heroes who come from a planet called Peaceland. There seems to be a father (played by Shoji Nakayama, who played Captain Kiriya on *Ultra 7*), as well as a mother and

RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE (or *Human Comet Zone*, *Meteor Man Zone* or, simply but unofficially, *Zone Fighter*) was a 1973 television program produced by Toho Eizo Co., broadcast on Nihon TV from April 2, 1973 through September 24, 1973. Consisting of 26 half-hour episodes, it was Toho's principal effort to break into the science fiction superhero genre then popular on TV and dominated by the likes of Toei's *Kamen Rider* and Tsuburaya Productions' ever-popular *Ultraman*. Toho president Tomoyuki Tanaka, producer of the original *Godzilla* among many other movies in the same genre, was the architect behind the show; he brought in such golden age collaborators as directors Ishiro Honda and Jun Fukuda to help realize the show, as well as the special effects directors Teruyoshi Nakano and, in his first assignment as director, Koichi Kawakita (*Godzilla vs. Destroyer*).

For a more detailed synopsis of the episodes featuring *Godzilla* as a guest star, see John Rocco Roberto's article "The Lost *Godzilla* Episodes" in *G-FAN* #9.



grandfather, but it's the three youngsters who take center stage as the Zone Fighter Trio. Among their weapons are a flying car called the Mighty Liner, and a spaceship called Smokey (don't laugh! It lies hidden in a cloud of smoke until needed, okay?) They've got these little flare-like rockets they throw in the air, which have built-in tape recorders and act as life-saving messengers in each episode. And Zone Angel, being female, has that special feminine intuition.

The other two heroes are male: the irritating cute kid Akira (Zone Jr.) and the main hero, Hikaru, who can grow giant. In his spare time, Hikaru manages to be a race car driver, assuming that alien space monsters called Garoga-Baran aren't attacking at the time. The leader of the aliens is called Gold-Garoga; the nasty bunch destroyed the Zone Family's home planet of Peaceland and are now bullying the Earth. They've got the usual futuristic weapons and vehicles and giant-size sidekicks like the enormous "Terro Beasts." Some look cool, some look stupid; some have monster capsule missiles which themselves turn into Terro Beasts! Zone Fighter seems to do handsprings in their presence, resulting in double-footed drop-kicks which send the rubbery fiends sprawling.

It's still major fun to watch this series. *Zone* came out ten years before censorship ruined Japanese TV and it is superheroism at its best - this is where it's at.

[1] DESTROY THE TERRO-BEAST MIS-SILE! (2/4/73) Written and directed by Jun

Fukuda.

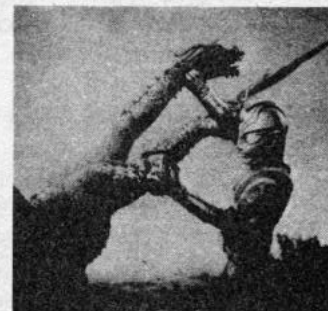
Our hero Hikari Sakimori is attacked (within the first minute) by Garogan henchmen disguised as gun-toting mobsters. For the first time, our heroes must reveal their outer space forms on Earth, and fight their way out of a dark warehouse. Giant-size Zone Fighter eventually battles the monster Red Spark and the magnetic cyborg Jikiro.

[2] BEAT DESTRO-KING! (9/4/73) Written and directed by Jun Fukuda.

A photographer accidentally stumbles across some Garogans planning fiendish plots, namely: (A) trying to kill Hikari with a time-bomb and (B) sneaking into hospitals disguised as surgeons. This relatively talky episode concludes with Zone Fighter battling the mecha-hydra called Destro-King. Guest starring Hiroyuki Kawase, child star of *Godzilla vs. the Smog Monster*, *Godzilla vs. Megalon* and *Dodes'kaden*.

[3] DEFEAT GAROGA/ES SUBTERRANEAN BASE! (16/4/73) Directed by Ishiro Honda.

Some kid's father (a scientist, what else) gets kidnapped by Garogans and held captive in what appears to be a weird dimension. Zone Fighter rescues him right before his appointment to destroy a two-headed reptilian



hunchback called Dorola.

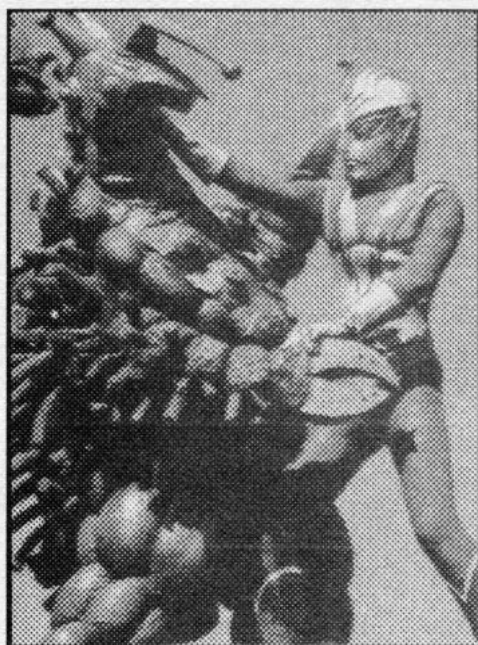
[4] ONSLAUGHT! THE GAROGA ARMY: ENTER GODZILLA (23/4/73) Directed by Ishiro Honda; written by Jun Fukuda.

Zone Angel falls for Sachio, apparently an old boyfriend from Peaceland, now a toy freak and secret Garoga spy; his toys attack people! Sachio eventually becomes the monster Spylar, who teams up with Wargilgar against Zone Fighter. Godzilla pops up out of absolutely nowhere to join in the amusing final tag-team match.

[5] BLAST KING GHIDORA AT POINT BLANK! (30/4/73) Directed by Jun Fukuda; written by Juro Shimamoto.

Even before Zone Fighter's climactic fight with KG, this immensely entertaining episode has the Zone Family and assorted Garogans fighting over a magic crystal.

[6] KING GHIDORA STRIKES BACK! (7/5/73) Directed by Jun Fukuda; written by Juro Shimamoto.



King Ghidora is still at large (pun intended), so Zone Fighter has a few more battles with him, one on a moonlike planet (a la *Monster Zero*). Another gripping scene has our hero fighting to save his kin from Garogans who've tied them up near rapidly advancing saw blades! Will Zone Fighter make it in time? Is the pope Catholic?

[7] ZONE FAMILY'S CRITICAL MOMENT! (14/5/73)

I lost count of all the fights in this one! After Zone Fighter defeats the Dragon King (no, the one from the Monkey King stories), Zone Angel is kidnapped and impersonated. Clearing this mess involves plenty of action, including the destruction of Gilmoras.

[8] SMASH THE TERRIFYING INVADER! (21/5/73) Written and directed by Jun Fukuda.

That weird little guy who played the native translator Konno in *King Kong vs. Godzilla* (Senkichi Omura) acts a cameo as a fisherman, right before Takeru and Akira get kidnapped by Garogans, resulting in another tension-filled escape from a saw blade! Also featuring the sea monster Gellderah.

[9] SEARCH FOR THE SECRET OF RED SPIDER! (28/5/73) Written by Juro Shimamoto.

This exciting entry seems to be nearly all fights, as Garoga sics its Red Spider on zoo animals. The arachnid may look something like a store-bought toy, but its poisonous bite changes an ordinary, everyday gorilla into the huge mutant, Goro Gorilla! If that's not enough for you action fans, Zone Fighter stages and all-out battle royal with Spider Uros (another giant).

[10] ZONE FIGHTER ANNIHILATED! (4/6/73)

A talky, confusing episode about "shadow monsters" Jipudoro and Shadorah. In order for Zone Fighter to defeat them, our heroes must first destroy a control panel at Garoga's underwater base. Watch for an underwater explosion I suspect to be stock footage from *Latitude Zero* (a 1969 Toho production directed by Ishiro Honda, special effects by Eiji Tsuburaya).

[11] IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE: THE ROAR OF GODZILLA! (11/6/73) Directed by Jun Fukuda

Jealous racecar driver Sasaki helps Garoga to trap our hero in a car about to be demolished, so it's Godzilla to the rescue! The giant villain is none other than Gigan, who gets beaten up first by Godzilla, then again by Zone Fighter.

[12] TERROBEAST HQ - INVADE THE EARTH! (18/6/73) Directed by Ishiro Honda.

Zone Angel and another pretty girl are kidnapped by Garogans, who are also using chickens to breed their almighty chicken monster Barakidon. Tons o' fun!

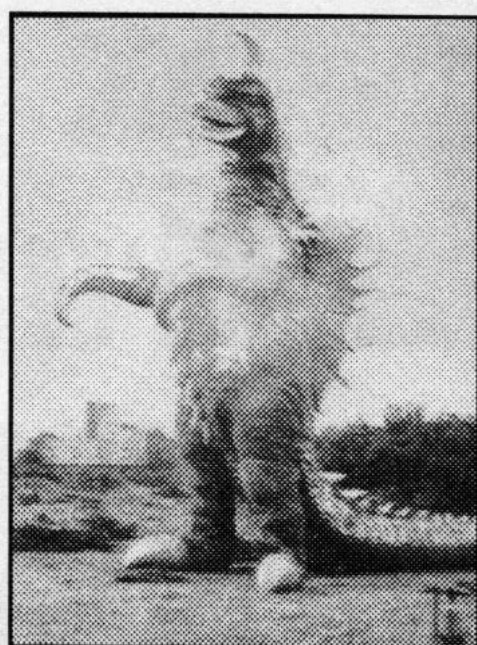
[13] ABSOLUTE TERROR! BIRTHDAY



OF HORROR! (25/6/73) Directed by Ishiro Honda; written by Jun Fukuda.

An exploding birthday cake, hypnotized baker and electric-giant Garaborg are among the instruments of destruction the Garogans use against the Zone Family in this superb episode.

[14] INSANE WITH ANGER! THE



GAROGA BOYS SQUAD (2/7/73)

One of my least favorites, featuring another obligatory scene of a kid being bullied at school. Garoga gives him a secret power formula for revenge. The liquid is also tested on a small bird, allowing for more onscreen cruelty to animals. The formula also turns kids into Garogans, before Zone Fighter eventually takes on Deadragon.

[15] SUBMERSION! GODZILLA, SAVE TOKYO (9/7/73)

Here's a weird but watchable episode, featuring a community-sponsored footrace, a funny scene where a Garoga blatantly marches in a traditional Japanese parade, a kid and his monster doll, a mysterious man in black played by Japan-born Turkish actor Osman Yusuf (the hulking henchman in *Mothra* among scores of other movies and TV shows), and even Godzilla himself. After the subterranean earthquake monster Zandolla tries burying Zone Fighter alive (after an impressive underground duel), it's Godzilla to the rescue. This was the first episode to feature different opening credits.

[16] COUNTERSTRIKE OF TERROR! GAROGA-ROBOT (16/7/73) Written by Susumu Takeuchi.

Despite a lengthy duel between Moguranda and Zone Fighter, this slow-paced tale of a crashed meteor and a possessed family is as exciting as watching paint dry in slow motion.

[17] GO! FIGHTER EMERGENCY TAKE OFF (23/7/73) Directed by Jun Fukuda.

Garoga seems to want all the Zone Family's vehicles: the spaceship Smokey is stolen and stored on a desolate planet, and they also try (unsuccessfully) to get hold of the

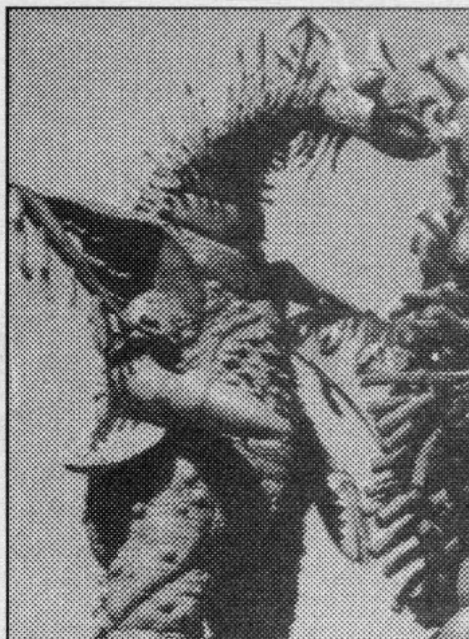
Mighty Liner. Strangely, after Zone Fighter kills Barugus to get the Smokey back, a cross and an angel's halo materialize in place of the monsters! You just gotta be fluent in Japanese to figure this one out.

[18] DIRECTIVE: DESTROY THE JAPANESE LABORATORY (30/7/73) Written by Koji Amemiya.

First of two parts. An unusual episode featuring a brief glimpse of Hiromi in a bikini, and a cameo by Daita Oiwa (Yellow Ranger on *Goranger*). Monstrous Gondargilas swallowed a powerful new bomb, so Zone Fighter is reluctant to fight him at first in case it explodes. Their alternatives to fighting are pretty silly.

[19] ORDER: CRUSH THE EARTH WITH COMET K (6/8/73) Written by Koji Amemiya.

Second of two parts, and one bizarre part it is. There's a nice fight, and Hiromi still looks good in a bikini. But before Zone Fighter's rematch with that bomb-swallowing monster, they play a game of horseshoes! Then suddenly, unprovoked, Zone Fighter tears out his new playmate's eyes! Talk about sore winners! I don't know what to make of this one; while the two giants played their little game, there's also a meteor heading toward Earth.



LENT CHARGE (20/8/73)

Our heroes get hold of one of Garoga's precious monster capsules; Garoga retaliates by kidnapping Akira. So there's an exchange: the heroes get Akira back, and the Garogans activate their giant jellyfish Jurah. When Godzilla tears one of its tentacles off, it becomes a whole new Jurah! So again Godzilla and Zone Fighter team up for another tag-team match against the two blobs. Not only that, but the two giant heroes playfully spar at the beginning, and the villains shoot several construction workers to death with machine guns. Slick episode.

[22] COUNTERATTACK! STRIKE DOWN SUPER-JIKIRO (27/8/73)

Shortly after Zone Fighter's sea duel with giant robomonitor Super-Jikiro, Hikari gets in an auto wreck. He forgives the other driver because she looks good in a bathing suit. However, their little beach frolic is short-lived because they're promptly attacked by scuba divers toting spearguns. At another point, our heroes throw scalpels in the eyes of murderous surgeons (who are yet more agents of Garoga in disguise!). All this plus romance, a ship hijack, and innocent bystanders killed by machine-gun fire!

[23] SECRET OF BAKUGON - THE GIANT TERRO-BEAST (3/9/73) Directed by Ishiro Honda.

This nifty episode features a duel of laser-firing cars and a stupendous fistfight in a field near a pond. The tale centers on a female Garoga who uses illusion to convince kiddies that an old Junkyard is actually the Garden of Eden. Giant monster Bakugon turns up, a fire-spitting cross between a dinosaur and an aardvark.

[24] SMASH THE PIN-SPITTING NEEDLAR! (10/9/73) Directed by Ishiro Honda; written by Koji Amemiya.

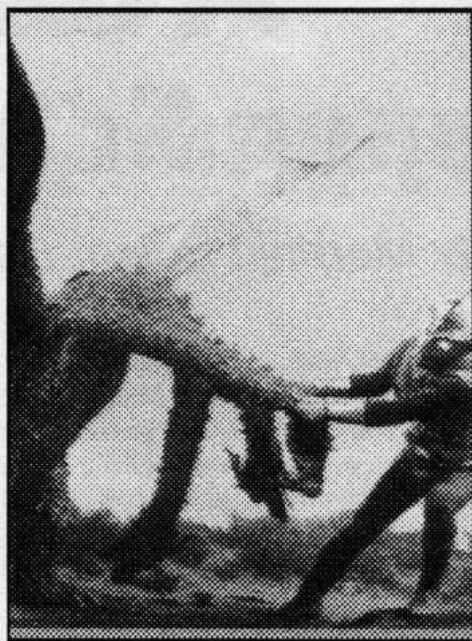
An eerie corpse found in a secluded house leads to an investigation resulting in: (1) discovery of giant monster Needlar; (2) a Garoga arsenal which is controlling local villagers; (3) good honest hatred, guns and kicks! When Needlar takes on Zone Fighter, the weird villain suffers the goriest decapitation I've ever seen in a superhero series!

[25] BLOODBATH! ZONE & GODZILLA VS. THE UNITED TERRO-BEAST ARMY (17/9/73)

Zone Fighter's girlfriend is injured, and is being nursed back to health while Garoga plants monster capsules all around a residential neighborhood. Zone Fighter manages to destroy most of the newly hatched monsters, but when Garo Borg and Spider Uros team up against him, Godzilla shows up to save the day.

[26] PULVERIZE OPERATION: GAROGA GAMMA-X! (24/9/73)

A bright-eyed agent from the elite task force of Garogan "X-Agents" blinds a child and unleashes a giant called Grotogauros. So begins the final confrontation between the Zone Family and Garoga.



[20] DESPERATE STRUGGLE! CAN YOU HEAR FIGHTER'S SONG? (13/8/73)

Kidnapped kids facing certain death by guillotine are bait for luring Zone Fighter into battle with the two-headed giant Goramu. It turns out the kids are locked inside one of the monster's heads!

[21] INVINCIBLE! GODZILLA'S VIO-



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Initially rejected by American networks, *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* has continued growing in popularity beyond comparison to any other U.S.-produced youth action adventure program in history; and the phenomenon is conquering markets in most European countries as well. This success is all the more phenomenal in light of the many obstacles placed before the show. There have been entire campaigns and petitions organized against it; all failed. Millions of loyal fans refuse to abandon the series. No mere fad now, *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* has introduced an entire new generation of American youth to the wonders of Japanese live-action programming.

Power Origins

The roots of Power Rangers lie in the long and rich history of television's sentai series, from Goranger to the present. (See Jim Cirronella's article on page 10 of this issue. - Ed.) Contrary to practice in America, a successful action show in Japan is often followed not by more years of the same, but by other shows with completely different characters and storylines, adhering to the same formula as the original.

As the Sentai concept evolved under Toei producers Takeyuki Suzuki and Susumu Yoshikawa, the popularity of Toei's TV version of Marvel Comics' Spider-man inspired an addition to the format. (This was also about the time that Marvel introduced Japanese-related characters like Godzilla and the Shogun Warriors to the American public.) Before Spider-man, American superheroes had gained little purchase in the Japanese market; it is notable that this one succeeded perhaps mainly to the very Japanese story written (by Saburo Hatte and Shozo Uehara) for his 1978 TV debut, in which Spider-man gains his spider powers from an extraterrestrial and has a giant robot sidekick named Leopardon. Leopardon's popularity led to the first incorporation of a robot into a sentai series, *Battle Fever J* (1979). Thus the sentai series came to be known as the Super Sentai series, due to the increasingly heavier powers of the giant robots that would be used against mutant villains who had the ability to grow into city-destroying giants.

Haim Saban of Saban Entertainment is reported to have been introduced to the sentai series while on a business trip in Japan. The memory of the show inspired him to spend the necessary time and years negotiating with Toei for a coproduction.

U.S. audiences had had a glimpse of the sentai show *Dynaman*, courtesy of the USA Network's music video show *Night Flight*. This version dubbed comedic dialogue over everything, ridiculing everything from the production values to the actors. Fortunately, this offense was soon cancelled. Also fortunately, making fun of a sentai show was the last thing on Saban's mind; if anything he was convinced that the uniqueness of the



Super Sentai

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers

exciting action sequences could totally captivate young American audiences, who would have seen literally nothing like it.

Saban did feel, however, that the concept should be reintegrated into a series which would star a young multi-ethnic cast that would be easier for Western kids to relate to; he would create a sentai that would work as well for Americans as Japan's did for Japanese. Toei had no problem with the idea, and the deal was made.

Henshin! From Zyuranger to Power Rangers

The program selected for the experiment was *Kyoryu Sentai Zyuranger*, or "Dinosaur Team Beastranger." (An allusion to the word "Jurassic" may also have been intended, making them "Jurassic Rangers.") Saban and his partner Shuki Levy created a version in which the Rangers would be played by young American actors capable of performing authentic martial arts stunts, inspired by the Japanese actors' work in the original. (The sentai performers have traditionally been drawn from the disciplined ranks of the Japan Action Club, founded in 1969 by



Power Rangers Sensation

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Power Rangers examined by Kevin Grays

legendary martial arts star Shinichi "Sonny" Chiba.)

Haim Saban's pre-*Rangers* career developed from a stint as a concert promoter in Israel to a career as a manager-producer in the French music industry. He successfully marketed American TV theme songs in Europe, and went on to produce music of his own for American TV cartoons such as *Masters of the Universe*. From there he expanded into producing the animated shows themselves, developing a burgeoning international company.

Saban's vision of the Power Rangers saw them all as teenage superheroes with a strong moral fiber and dedication to the martial arts. It would be emphasized that they found a greater degree of self-confidence through their dedication, yet in many ways they would also be typical high school teenagers, from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The five are chosen, by an interdimensional being that calls itself Zordon, to defend their community and the world against alien invaders. The five may call upon the spirits of ancient prehistoric creatures and are entrusted with the control of the powerful Dinosaurs.

The record-breaking ratings for *Power Rangers*, shown every day except Sundays in most American markets, created a demand for still more episodes. Saban promptly commissioned Toei for new footage with new monsters. One aspect of the U.S. version is that it has been very successful at reproducing the overall frenetic tone of the Sentai series. The monsters retain their insane characteristics which juxtapose the most bizarre bad-taste personalities with awesomely powerful, brutal abilities.

Where else could you find a snorting pig monster wearing an oversized Roman warrior's helmet, using a knife and fork as his weapons of choice while threatening to conquer humanity through starvation by devouring all the world's food supply in days? Or how about a pumpkin-headed "rapper" that raps all of his dialogue in delirious rhymes as he prepares to fry the Rangers with blasts of electrocuting energy? The monsters aren't quite as lethal as they were in the Japanese productions though, since depictions of their slaughter are edited out over here, as are any indications of death tolls racked up in the destruction of unevacuated buildings. (In the originals, the monsters are not above laughing, singing or dancing as they do this.)

The American version also retains some of the myth-like qualities of the original shows, whose stories often have roots in ancient Asian myths and legends, as well as ancient Western fairy tales, from the Greeks up to the Brothers Grimm. Where *Power Rangers* has fallen shortest of the original sentai - aside from the obvious continuity dilemmas presented by a show that uses American location shots in one scene and Japanese ones in the next - is in the overall drama.

The Japanese writers are not afraid of taking a premise as ridiculous as a giant possessed teddy bear, or an evil tomato king, and still including a fairly well-constructed subplot, perhaps involving a child who lost its parents during the villains' rampage. Subjects from self-sacrifice and suicide to child abuse have been addressed in the sentai shows; main characters have been killed, and it is not unusual for even the youngest of heroes to emerge from battles with bleeding injuries. The total absence of any of this from *Power Rangers* tends to make the battles seem easier, sometimes too easy, for the characters; it means the show's high-camp level gets more attention than it deserves.

The American stunts cannot compare with the JAC's work, but have been consistently improving, and easily surpass much of what is being paraded across the screen in many big-budget Hollywood movies. The Rangers' battles have integrated such diverse styles as karate, tae kwon do, judo, and jujitsu, also incorporated with gymnastics, acrobatics and even hip-hop dance steps.

One of the show's stunt doubles, Richard Branden, is a



Would-be galactic dictator Lord Zedd: spawning evil monsters.

nationally ranked tournament forms competitor and wu shu stylist, as well as a black belt hall of fame member and the 1992 Kung Fu Artist of the Year. Doubling for the Black Ranger and Goldar, Branden broke his leg during the shooting of one episode, tearing the membrane from the heel up to his calf. This happened while doing a back tuck, which required suspension from two wires attached to a pole above his head; a wire snapped on his third rotation. Even with such specific restrictions as absolutely-no-head-strikes, Power Rangers stunt work is definitely only for the very well trained.

Toei ships to the production all the monster and villain suits necessary for extra shooting with the American actors. Building of matching props, when necessary, is the job of prop director Mark Richards and his assistant Hunter Cressall.

Among the outdoor locations used are the Vasquez Rocks, where the original *Star Trek* sometimes shot, and Bronson Caverns, which doubled as *Batman's* 1960s Batcave, as well as a location for many 1950's science fiction films.

New special effects are assigned to Modern Videofilm of Burbank, California, under the direction of Brian Longbotham, a veteran of 22 years' special effects experience in both TV and features. He assembled a team of creative animators with little or no previous experience in professional effects production, wanting to create a unique and fresh look for the series, as well as guaranteeing a young and dedicated staff willing to adhere to a schedule as hectic as 6 PM to 3 AM, seven days a week!

The staff also includes visual effects coordinator Mickie Reuster and artists Rick Cortes, Trent Shumway and Rick Shick. On the average, a single episode of Power Rangers incorporates 16mm footage with almost three minutes worth of computer-generated and live action effects; usually some 70 effects shots per show that must be produced in a matter of hours.

Longbotham's team is responsible for such effects as Zordon's interdimensional appearance, which is achieved through a multichannel kaleidoscope composite. The disintegration of the Putties and other monsters is done in Claymation; the ever-abundant lightning effects are both hand-drawn and computer-

generated.

From Rejection to Historical Success

When Haim Saban first tried to introduce his *Rangers* concept to network execs, all that he found was one rejection after another. There is a strong consensus among these decision-makers as to what will work for American children and what won't. *Power Rangers*, they felt, was best not even considered for broadcast, had no chance of survival in the current era of glamorous high-tech multibillion-dollar special effects.

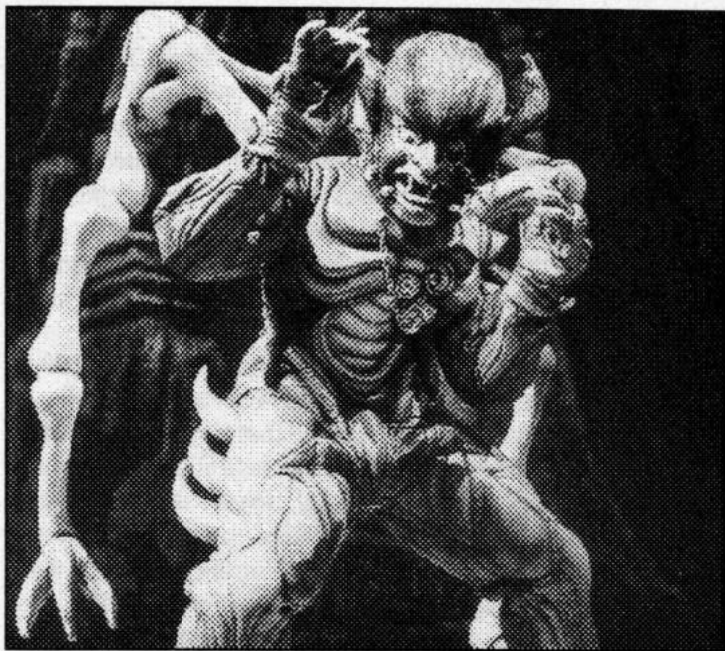
Such reasoning became the greatest stumbling block for Saban, forming a mountain that seemed insurmountable. Only after approaching Margaret Loesch of the Fox Children's Network did things begin to change.

"Everybody," Loesch said, "including my boss, has said the same thing: what a piece of junk. It may have lousy production values, but it has fantastically imagined characters." (Peggy Charren, founder of Action for Children's Television, added "It's a shame that such conceptually interesting creativity is put to the service of such a rotten program.")

Founded with the idea that kids enjoy diversity in programming as much as their parents do, the Fox Children's Network makes an effort to introduce different and unique kinds of commercial programming for young audiences, shows that range from the superhero action of *The X-Men* and *Batman: The Animated Series* to the comedic misadventures of *Tiny Toons* or *Animaniacs*. (And three cheers for Nelvana's "Dog City"! - Ed.)

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers was unique in the world of American TV for kids in that it was a live-action adventure, not another cartoon. Almost all live-action shows for kids had been gone from American TV for years; early morning TV was drowning in news, talk shows and cartoons. Margaret Loesch was already aware of the comparative wealth of Japanese kids' live-action TV and had wanted to find or create something comparable herself.

So the decision was made, and the series exploded almost overnight into one of the hottest phenomena ever to hit American



Sycophantic Baboo: constantly kissing up to Lord Zedd.

television. In its first week of syndication, *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* made ratings history. The Saturday broadcast (October 30, 1993) captured an unprecedented 11.5 rating/40 share with children of 2-11 years, and an extraordinary 13.6 rating/45 share for those aged 6 to 11. In the history of the network, no series in those key demographic groups had ever scored so high, outdoing all the competition combined as well. From the first airing, *Power Rangers* was well on its way to becoming the most popular children's show ever to air on American television!

Recent ratings find the show collecting anywhere from a 30 share to a 60 - that's sixty percent of the viewing audience. The show is off the charts even compared to much adult programming; some surveys estimate that over half of all TV-watching children in the U.S. are fans.

In two other important areas, the show broke more ground. It confounded usual network thinking about action shows being traditionally viewed only by young boys. As much as 40% of the audience for *Power Rangers* is female. And as well, though the show was marketed toward children, a surprising percentage of teenagers and even young men in their twenties will identify themselves as fans of the show, almost unheard of for programming tagged with the "kiddie" label.

Mighty Controversial Characters

When Saban originally envisioned the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, could he or anyone else have imagined that they would become the subjects of such controversy in the English-language press? They have been called literally everything from the best current live-action role models for kids to the absolute worst heroes that children of any age could have, blamed for inciting not just violence in young viewers but outright murders as well.

Some American Sentai fans have thrown accusations of racism at Saban for the removal of the original Japanese casts; yet some Japanese fans welcome their addition and voice disappointment that the American Rangers are not broadcast in their

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Foul tempered Goldar: battling the Rangers to a standstill.



Raging fire-tiger Lumitor: powerful creation of Lord Zedd.

country. Perhaps the main factor preventing Toei from having created just such a multi-racial Sentai in the past may have lain in the obvious difficulties inherent in finding non-Japanese (or non-Asian) talent capable of being able to execute the martial arts training and speak fluent Japanese at the same time.

At first glance, the Power Rangers may seem like a group born out of the ideas of American political correctness. Interestingly, even as the very notion of political correctness has come under considerable question in recent years, the Rangers have still been criticized for being not politically correct enough. Articles have appeared in TV Guide and certain newspapers accusing the Rangers of perpetuating negative stereotypes. Some of these opinions are obviously based on single viewings of not more than one, or a random handful of episodes.

For instance the Jason character, the Red Ranger, is attacked for glorifying the image of the All-American dumb hunk; never mind that he maintains a straight "A" average. And his level of "patriotism" would certainly be challenged by certain people due to his embrace of the "non-Christian" martial arts, which is shown to be far more of a way of life for him than just a hobby. More intriguing yet is that Jason debunks the common American stereotype of the sex-crazed girl-chasing jock; in fact he is the only one of the original characters never to have a love interest.

The character of Zack, the Black Ranger, has been targeted as recalling a negative African-American stereotype because he has a passion for dance, he sings, and thinks of himself as a guy who can defuse situations of conflict with smooth talk and cleverness. He tries to win over his dream girl Angela with sometimes outrageous displays (though she is not easily impressed and often leaves poor Zack standing alone in the dust).

Zack's love of music and dance is very genuine, as is his talent, and thus are true elements of his character rather than just superficial devices thrown in for distraction. Insinuations that this represents a specific view of all African-Americans are without substance. This is made perfectly clear when Zack's cousin Curtis is introduced; they mention that talents in music

and dance are prevalent and encouraged in their family, not as an attribute of race. (In several of Toei's Super Sentais, the black-costumed heroes have been characters with mystic interests, sometimes ninjutsu, with indications of a family tree that may include ninjas among his ancestors. This is especially interesting in light of Zack's fondness for magic.

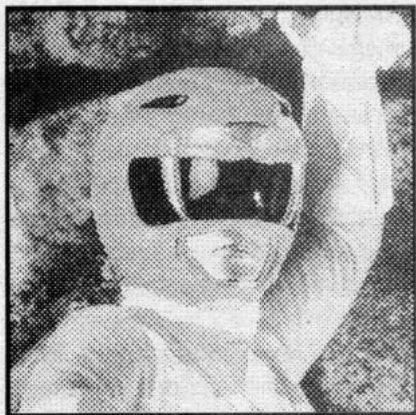
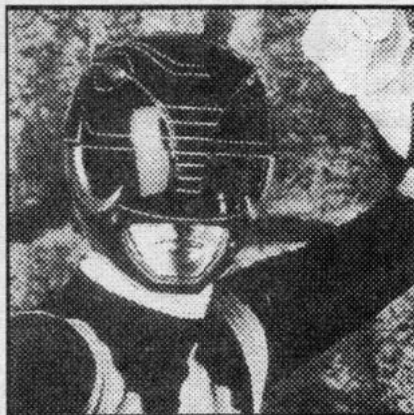
Even charges of sexism have been thrown at the Rangers, usually centering on Kimberly's Valley Girl vernacular and her love of shopping at the mall. But these are minor attributes compared to the depth of her confidence, strength and independent thought. Kimberly, the Pink Ranger and Trini, the Yellow Ranger have contributed more than their share of solutions to a variety of dilemmas, and are believed to be a major reason the show has so many female fans. (Others hold that they are watching it for the cute guys.)

The character of the Blue Ranger, Billy, has shown perhaps the most growth. Introduced as the token nerd, the kid who could never get his karate quite right, still he showed a determination never to give up. He developed from the shy, insecure brain of the group to an impressive and confident Ranger learning to improve his martial arts skills. David Yost, who plays him, observes: "The fans that look up to me are the ones who feel left out." Many such children have run up to him at personal appearances, hugging him repeatedly while thanking him just for being there for them.

All of the Rangers adhere to a code of behavior which prevents them from using their martial arts against other humans to solve personal conflicts. It was rather different in the Japanese sentai shows, which had more violent confrontations and fewer chances of peaceful resolution.

As well, they take a strong anti-drug stand (while Japanese characters are sometimes seen smoking and drinking). The American D.A.R.E. program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)

was inspired to declare the Rangers as its official National Teen Ambassadors in 1994. This hardly sat well with the critics who think the show promotes violence as a means of solving problems, but that didn't stop over 35,000 fans from showing up at a personal appearance the Ranger actors made for D.A.R.E. at Universal Studios in California. The resulting midmorning traffic jam backed the Hollywood Freeway up for miles; the ramps leading to Universal had to be blocked off because the parking lots had all filled up. The attendance was an all-time record.



The Anti-Power Rangers Movement

One wonders how insane the Asian entertainment industries might consider the bizarre paranoia with which *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* has been met in this country. The show as broadcast here is far less violent than any Toei sentai show, and those have been widely recommended to youths because of what some see as the important social lessons in the stories.

But the Toei shows have come under fire in Japan as well; some social critics raised petitions against TV Asahi and Toei for the violence of the shows, with the pressure increasing throughout the eighties. The result was a downsizing of the martial arts action, forcing the JAC to diversify into other areas of entertainment just to keep above water. Ironically, despite an often highly violent popular culture and a degree of urban crowding that is unthinkable in most of America, Japan's rate of violent crime is drastically lower, and their gun control laws notoriously strict.



While some Japanese parents are vocally worried about the effects of violent shows like Toei's, as yet they have made no equivalent to a study done at the California State University in Fullerton. There, researchers watched 52 day care students, half of whom were shown *Power Rangers* that day, half of whom weren't. Sure enough, the *Ranger*-watchers tried to imitate their heroes on the playground, including the martial-arts movements. This led to the dread pronouncement that the *Ranger*-watchers exhibited seven times as much aggressive behavior as the non-watchers, and further outcries for governmental regulation over all TV broadcasts. What sort of committee would decide on what kind of standards, is the question.

The study failed to properly indicate whether the *Ranger*-watchers were actually trying to hurt one another, or just play-acting, as children will do. ABC-TV's news show *20/20* was

moved to do a segment on it anyway, reported by John Stossel, who obviously hated the show and was clearly ignorant of the whole tradition behind the sentai series. Stossel did make the interesting point that many traditional fairy tales are based on violent acts, and that some psychologists maintain that such stories can help kids deal with their anger and feelings of powerlessness in an adult-run world. Indeed, it was reported that kids as young as five seemed to understand that the show isn't real, and that was a factor in their enjoyment of the fantasy.

Even Adam

West, TV's first Batman, got into the act. "(All I see) is a story that sets up the violence. The MTV-style cuts and the sound all heighten the impact and make it seem exciting. ... (On *Batman*) the fighting was incidental, not gratuitous." And LeVar Burton, *Star Trek: The Next*



over the head with toy ninja swords. Now we're going to see more of these types of playground incidents."

The media hysteria reached such a height that the *Power Rangers* were even tied to slave and child labor - not directly, of course: it was accused that some of the factories contracted by Bandai to produce Ranger toys used such labor. A tragic fire at one of these factories in Thailand claimed an estimated 189 lives, and it was believed that the factory locked the exits to prevent workers from stealing the toys. It transpired that the toys were actually Bart Simpson dolls (*very pos-*

sibly bootlegs - Ed.), and the incident did not in fact reach the light until Kater Industries won another contract to produce Ranger toys in China. TV's American Journal checked out the factory, sending reporters in the guise of businessmen, who saw similar terrible conditions.

Slave labor is somewhat a different issue than those surrounding *Power Rangers*; it is especially delicate in the face of America's struggling with the issue of approaching China's immense and burgeoning markets. It must be pointed out that if the *Rangers* should be boycotted, then so should all the other U.S. toy companies who use the same factories. It was as if the *Power Rangers* were being singled out as some great foreign evil that would smash American society if not somehow stopped.

One issue that repeatedly surfaces in discussing the show involves the changing definition of what constitutes violence on Western television. There is no visible bloodshed on *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, no grisly gunbattles or shootings; no humans are murdered at all. The extreme reaction seems to be to the martial arts sequences, which many Westerners seemingly cannot understand.



Apparently the ones not listening to the public service announcements the show broadcasts are adults, who also seem to be the ones who need them the most, if these extreme cases (and there are shockingly many more) are any indication.

Before the first show was ever aired, the FCC was already against it: too violent for the kids. To avoid cutting too many scenes, everyone reached an agreement: to create the public service announcements which followed the episodes, and now precede some as well. Critics, unfortunately, thought the messages were, variously, mixed and contradictory to condescending and patronizing. However, the implication that young viewers are so impressionable that they cannot tell the difference between real violence and fantasy, is more insulting than anything ever portrayed on *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*.

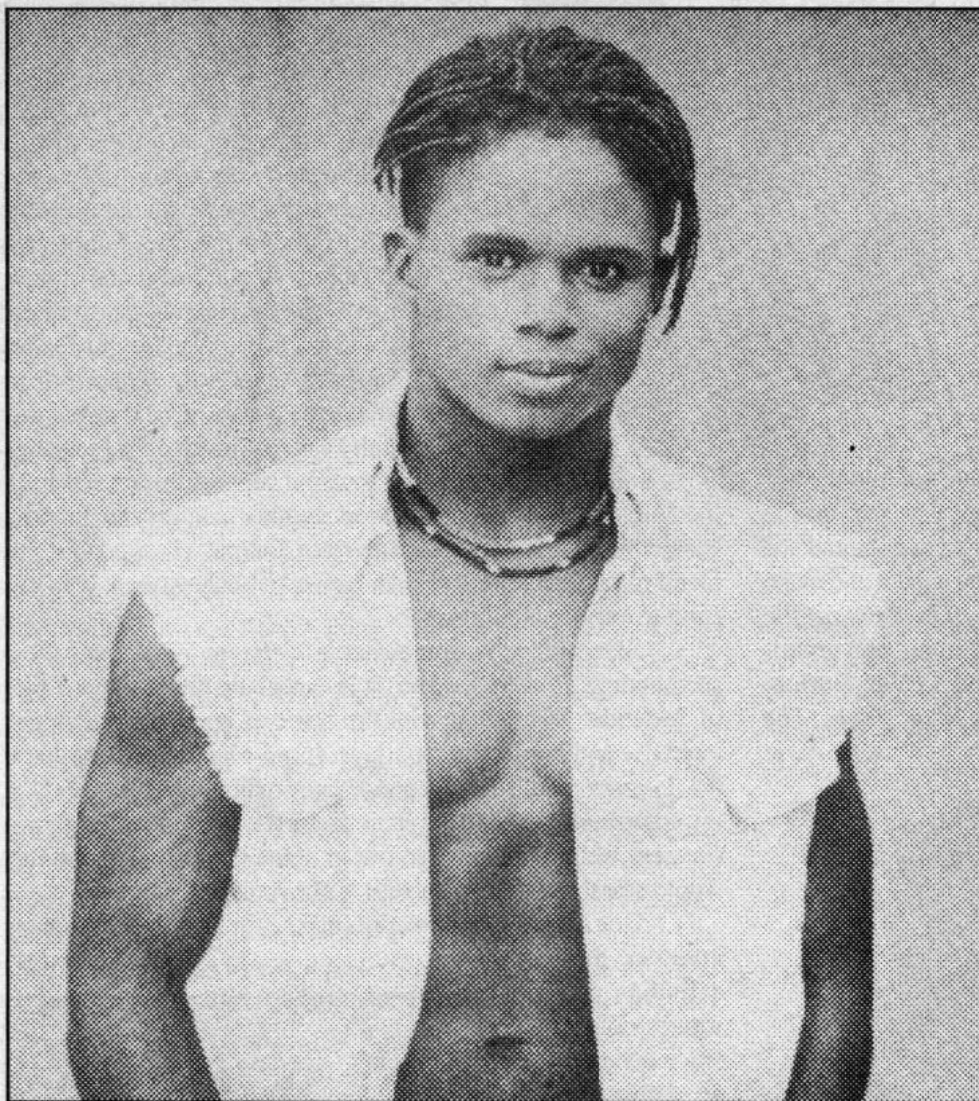


Generation's Geordi LaForge, called the show "bad role modeling and irresponsible programming."



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"It's not so much the violence that kids like about *Power Rangers*," added Peggy Charren. "It's that the show starts out with real teenagers that they can relate to. It also draws in girls who think that Jason is cute. But when the Ninja Turtles were popular, kids were hitting each other



WALTER JONES

The original Black Ranger

Profile by Kevin Grays

On Sunday, February 5, 1995, I had the honor of meeting face to face with none other than the original Black Ranger of the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers himself: Walter Emanuel Jones.

He came to visit Cleveland's 29th Autorama, a celebration of over 500 custom and racing cars, trucks and vans, held at the Cleveland Convention Center, where Jones met with fans and signed autographs. Although he was not the only celebrity present, he received perhaps the best reception, the lines waiting to see him growing to two or three times larger than the lines in front of the others. A diversity of ages greeted him as well, not just

young children at all, though they were the most predominant.

It was amusing to watch the reactions of people unfamiliar with the Rangers walking by; some would ask who was attracting all the attention and receive the reply "Zack, the Power Ranger!" Those who dared ask "What's a Power Ranger?" drew some of the dirtiest imaginable looks from the young crowd that I've ever seen in public.

Due to the size of the crowd, I was able to spend only a brief minute with Mr. Jones, but I did get to show him a recent Japanese encyclopedia in which he appears, covering the 20 years of the Sentai series and including rare full-color photos of the original casts. He was pleasantly surprised to see the book (enti-

tled Choseiki Zen Sentai Daizen-shu, or "The Super Century of All Sentai, The Complete Works," published by Kodansha in 1993 and obtainable through such Japanese specialty import stores as Kinokuniya). He autographed it for me and spent some time looking at the pictures, with interest and/or bewilderment.

Walter Jones very much seemed to be down to earth and polite, whether greeting kids or adults. A definite performer, he would also demonstrate a few dance steps and martial arts poses without hesitation. He was quick to pose with kids for countless photos. His presence and personality are far from intimidating, but the intensity of his physicality appears obvious.

A native of Detroit, Michigan, Walter Emanuel Jones was born on November 30th, 1970. His activities in high school included the drama club, the wrestling team, and vice presidency of the acting society. He was involved with the Afro-American Theatre Troupe and earned a scholarship to the United States International University School of Performing and Visual Arts in San Diego, California. He graduated with a degree in musical theater and landed a job on a cruise ship as an entertainer and assistant cruise director.

As Zachary Taylor on the *Power Rangers*, best known to millions of young fans as Zack, Walter Jones had the opportunity to display his talents in dance, the martial arts, and singing. He has trained in Tae Kwon Do and gymnastics, which he combines with dance to develop his own personal action style. (Has there ever been a better American candidate for the Japan Action Club?) Of his role in *Power Rangers*, he has commented that he feels good to have been a positive role model for so many kids, and that someday when he has kids he can tell them that their dad was a real superhero. (TV Guide and others have reported Jones' account of how his mother back home was so proud of him when he was selected for the *Power Rangers* that she would show family pictures of him to people she would meet on the bus to work.)

Although Walter Jones no longer appears on *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, his character Zack is lives on in the memories of children everywhere. Lately Jones has been making guest appearances on such U.S. network shows as *Step By Step*. With the current rise of interest in martial arts/action productions on both television and the big screen (fueled in no small way by the smash success of *Power Rangers* in both media), hopefully it won't be long before we see Walter Jones propelled into the soul of another action hero.

It would be impossible to count the number of fans (including myself) who would like to wish him the best in whatever direction he should next take in his exciting career. Best of luck to ya, Walter, always!





Kevin Gray