

Xenorama

#42

Fall 2022

The Journal of Heroes and Monsters



PREMIERE ISSUE!

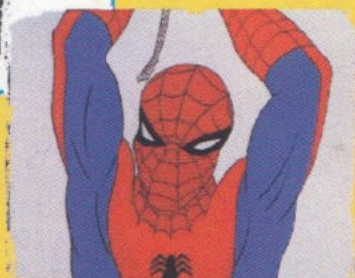
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XENORAMA

Journal of Heroes and Monsters



The 30th Anniversary Issue!



Xenorama

The Journal of Heroes and Monsters
Presents

The 30th Anniversary issue!



Legal

Started 5-1-2022

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Xenorama is a Celtic Kaiju ® publication

This issue is dedicated to all the people who have been involved with the publication of Xenorama over the last 30 years, friends, family, and otherwise.

"Nature has a way sometimes of reminding man of just how small he is. She occasionally throws up the terrible offspring of our pride and carelessness, to remind us of how puny we really are in the face of a tornado, an earthquake, or a Godzilla. The reckless ambitions of man are often dwarfed by their dangerous consequences. For now, Godzilla, that strangely... innocent and tragic monster has gone to earth. Whether he returns or not, or is never again seen by human eyes, the things he has taught us, remain..."

- Steve Martin in Godzilla 1985

InTakes:

If anyone had told me that I would still be publishing *Xenorama* 30 years after that very first issue way back in 1992, I am not sure how I would have responded. I probably wouldn't have believed it, since it was kind of a wild hair that got this fanzine started. I had no idea what I was doing at all. I was inspired by *Monster! International* when they were digest-sized, along with a few other zines.



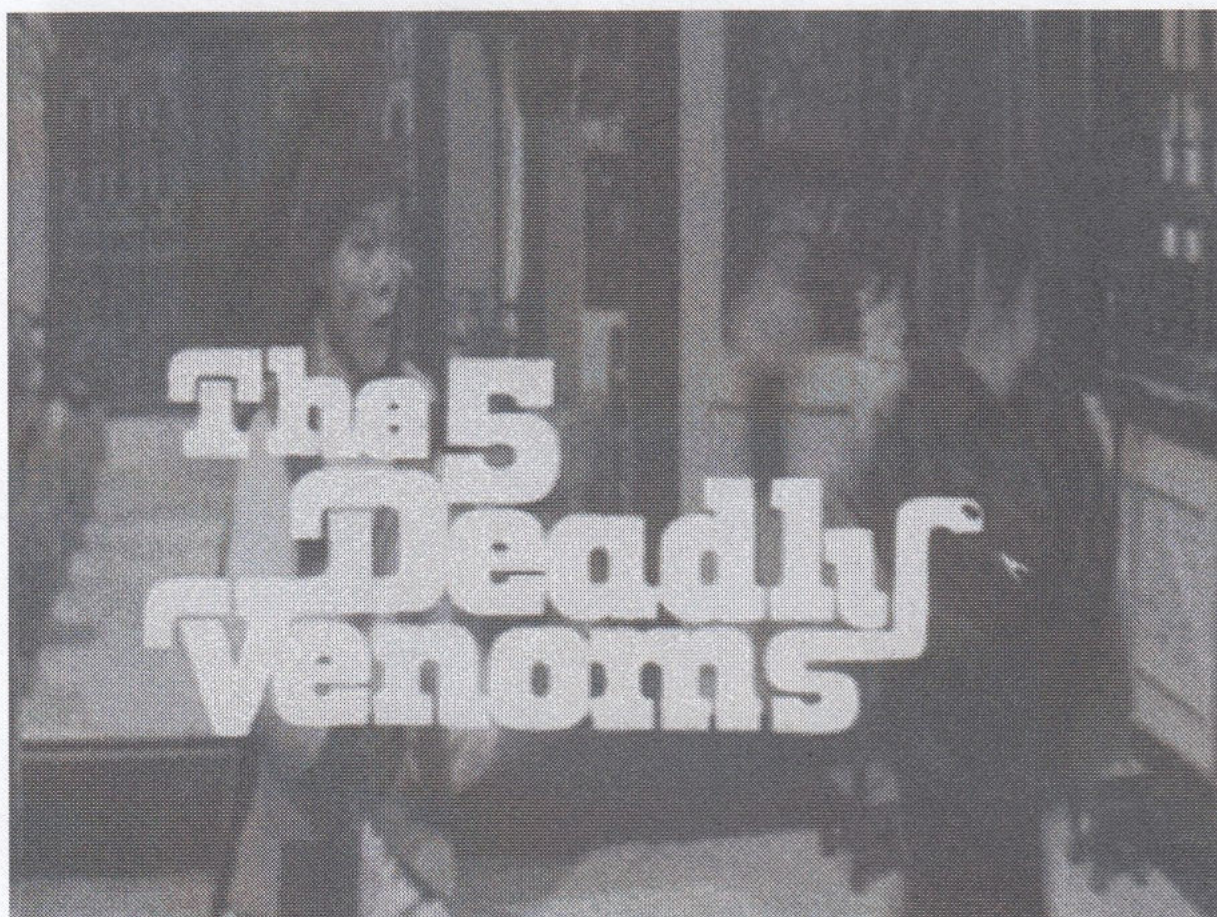
Go, Godzilla!

Armed with that scant knowledge, but really wanting to try this fanzine thing away I went. I started with an electric typewriter and copies of pictures from other magazines and books. I had started getting old movie ads from newspapers as well, but the quality of these pictures was never as good as I would have liked.

When computers got to be more and more common, the format of the zine and the pictures improved in quality.

The contents of that first issue were all over the place as well. This issue is going to be in a similar tone. I am astounded that I had a hand-drawn logo on the cover, though I think it looks pretty good.

Xenorama has been blessed with many fine contributors, both in written form and in art. I want to thank all of them. I am not going to list names, since I am also sure that I will forget someone inadvertently. You all know who you are, and I appreciate everything you have contributed to the fanzine. So, thanks to everyone who has supported *Xenorama* in any form.



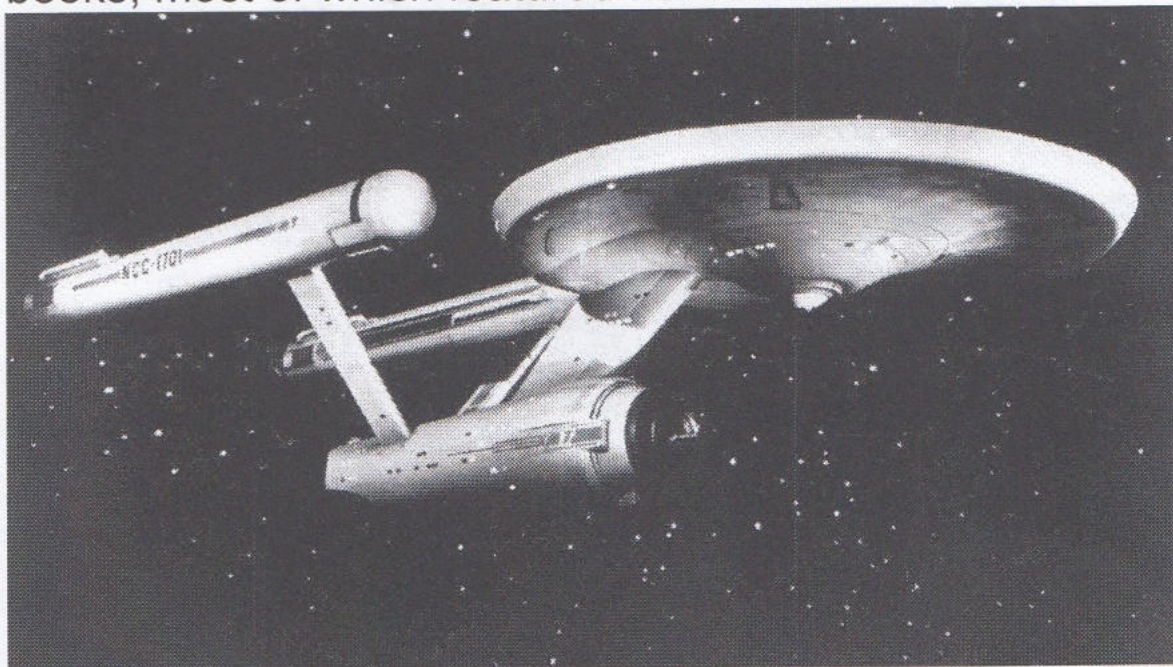
This is going to be black and white, like that very first edition. Just seems right to do so.

The Influences of Xenorama

Or

How are 30 Years Possible?

Figuring out what I was going to write about for this amazing 30th-anniversary issue took some pondering. These are the main influences that have made me write for the last thirty years at least. Probably more, since I was writing and drawing my own comic books, most of which featured heroes and monsters.



I started life as a fortunate child. My father was a science fiction fan, so I was introduced to all kinds of fantastic media at an early age. I was fortunate that my parents encouraged my love of the fantastic

These were the main influences on my love of the genre, and they are mostly in order. I think Batman and Spider-Man and Star Trek all happened about the same time, but without a time machine, the world may never know for sure. There has to be some kind of order, so I am going mostly chronologically.

These should be readily apparent to most readers, I would guess since I have been writing about them informally for at least four decades, if not longer.

Superheroes:

The Batman gets placed first in line for alphabetical reasons. It was the live-action show in the 60s that got me hooked. I thought it was dead serious since the actors never hammed the show up at all. I was worried he and Robin would never figure out a way to get out of those giant snow cones Mr. Freeze had put them in. It was this series that also introduced me to the idea of heroes teaming with other heroes when the Green Hornet and Kato showed up for two episodes.

Naturally, this show led me to the cartoons that were airing on Saturday mornings. I was still quite young

at the time, so most of my earliest memories are fragmentary. During those halcyon mid-60s years, there were a ton of superheroes on the airwaves. I was completely gone for superheroes after that. I liked serious action, though I could tolerate some of the less serious ones like the Super 6 and Mighty Mouse.

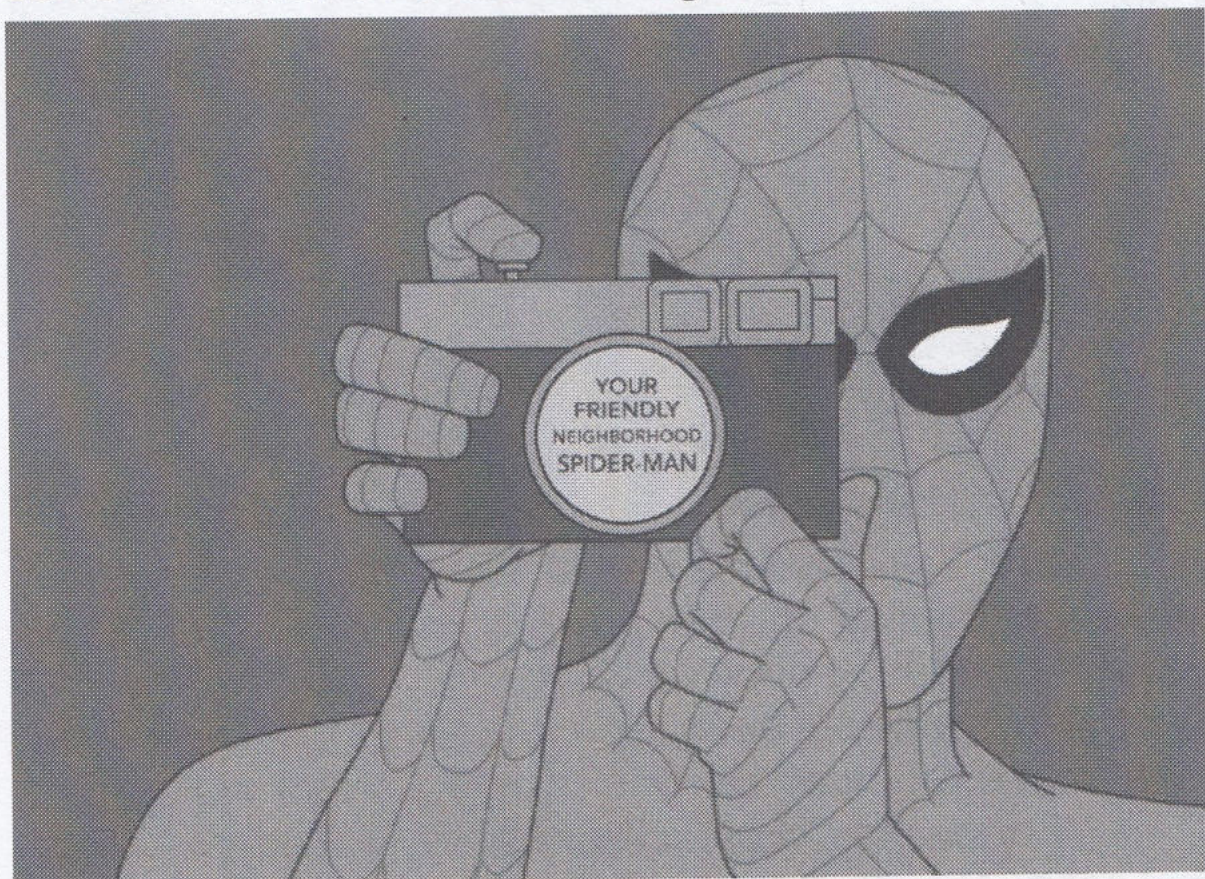
An interesting side effect of the Batman show was that it unintentionally led

me to appreciate comedy. While I didn't catch on to the comedy in Batman at first, I did appreciate the humor. I am not a fan of dreary dull realistic superheroes at all.



Comic books started after that, and I credit them for helping me learn to read. I also would read almost anything set in front of me.

The amazing Spider-Man cartoon started in 1967, a year after the Batman show started. I would watch this show most often in West Virginia, on Channel 20 WDCA. I loved that show, probably even more than Batman. As I got older and noticed many of the episodes used the same animation over and over again.



Sadly, superhero shows from the states in the 70s were rare and not action-packed. The cartoons were even worse, though I have reevaluated some of them since that time. Someday I will watch that first season of *Superfriends* and see if it is as disappointing as I remember it.

Super cartoons did make a rebound in the mid-90s, thanks to both the X-Men and Batman. I enjoyed most of them to a variety of degrees at the time.

Science Fiction:



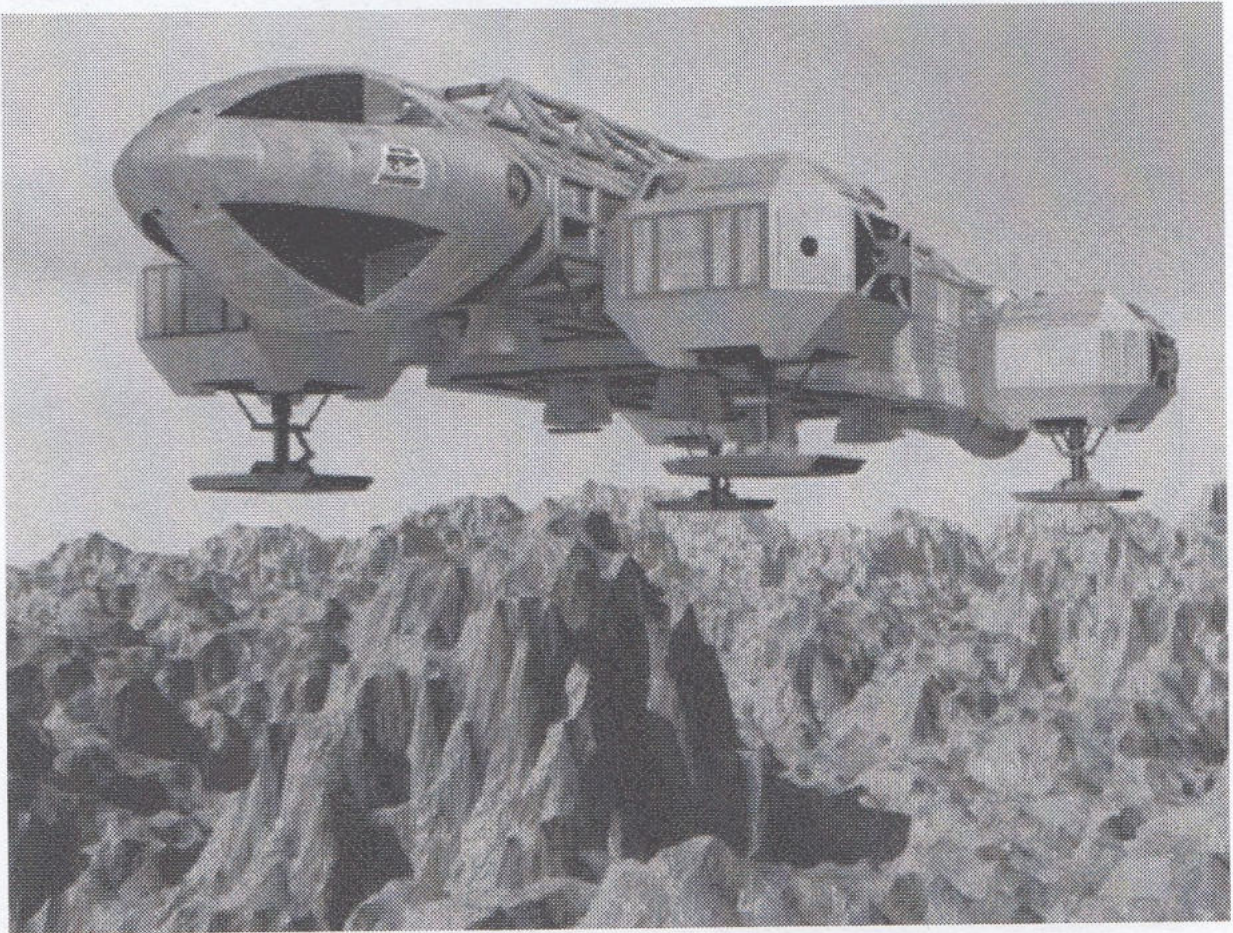
Star Trek sent me into space and beyond. I can remember the first episode I ever saw, which was *The Savage Curtain*. It aired on March 7th, 1969, and the sight of the powerful being Yarnek changing into his alien form from a rock was startling to my four-year-old mind.

Fortunately, most episodes did not feature aliens that scary, though Balok's alter ego was right up there. I know that the third season of *Trek* is considered the worst season, but since this season is the one that I have the earliest memories of, I like a lot of the episodes.

Naturally, I wanted to learn more about this series, which lead me to the adaptations of the episodes by the late, great James Blish, which lead me to read more of his stories, which lead me into both science fiction and fantasy books.

It also led me to books and magazines about Star Trek and other science fiction shows. Back in the 70s, these shows were far rarer than they are now. One could easily watch most of the series on television if they aired

regularly. We would watch *The Starlost* and *Space: 1999* simply because we had no other alternatives. This changed in 1977 when *Star Wars* proved that genre movies could be financially successful. A lot of the sci-fi shows from that time period were still cheaply produced, but we did get more of them. The success of *Star Wars*



has since proved to be both a blessing and a curse to genre cinema.

Comic books:



I started reading comic books before I could actually read. The pictures were exciting, and that was enough then. When I started learning to read in school, comic books helped in my comprehension of new and different words. I credit *Avengers* #70 as the first comic book I ever owned, but there are pictures of me next to a stack of comic books. I read and collected comic books for over thirty years until the market priced me out of it. The first comic books I remember actually reading were *Avengers* #70 and *DC Super Special* #6, which reprinted the first JLA/JSA team-up. I have loved super teams since then.

I also read most Marvel books for a long time. I was a bit of a snob for a while, but realized I was missing

out on some good stories from other companies. When the talent from Marvel began to work with the Distinguished Competition, I started reading those comic books again. In the 80s the independent comic book boom happened, which led to new ideas in all kinds of books. I read and enjoyed many of these books, but they did tend to be mostly superhero books as well.



Dinosaurs:

I was introduced to dinosaurs before I went to school, and like most children that age I was fascinated by these amazing animals. It didn't hurt that there was a lot of crossovers with comic books, cartoons, and movies, I'll tell you what.



Shortly after discovering dinosaurs, I saw *One Million Years, BC* (1966) for the first time on television. This was a life-changing experience, as it was the first time I had ever seen actual dinosaurs moving around and threatening some puny humans. This movie would air frequently in my area. In the fall of 1973, *The Valley of Gwangi* (1969) would air on late-night television

I would later go to many museums to see various dinosaur exhibits. Sometimes friends would go along, but many times it was just me. Unlike superheroes and science fiction shows, dinosaurs were (and avian dinosaurs, aka birds, are) real.

Xenorama goes to Asia

There was also a strong Asian influence on me when I was young, though I didn't realize it for several years. I loved the monsters, cartoons, and live-action shows that came from Japan. I also loved the kung fu movies from Hong Kong (and other countries) that were popular at the time.

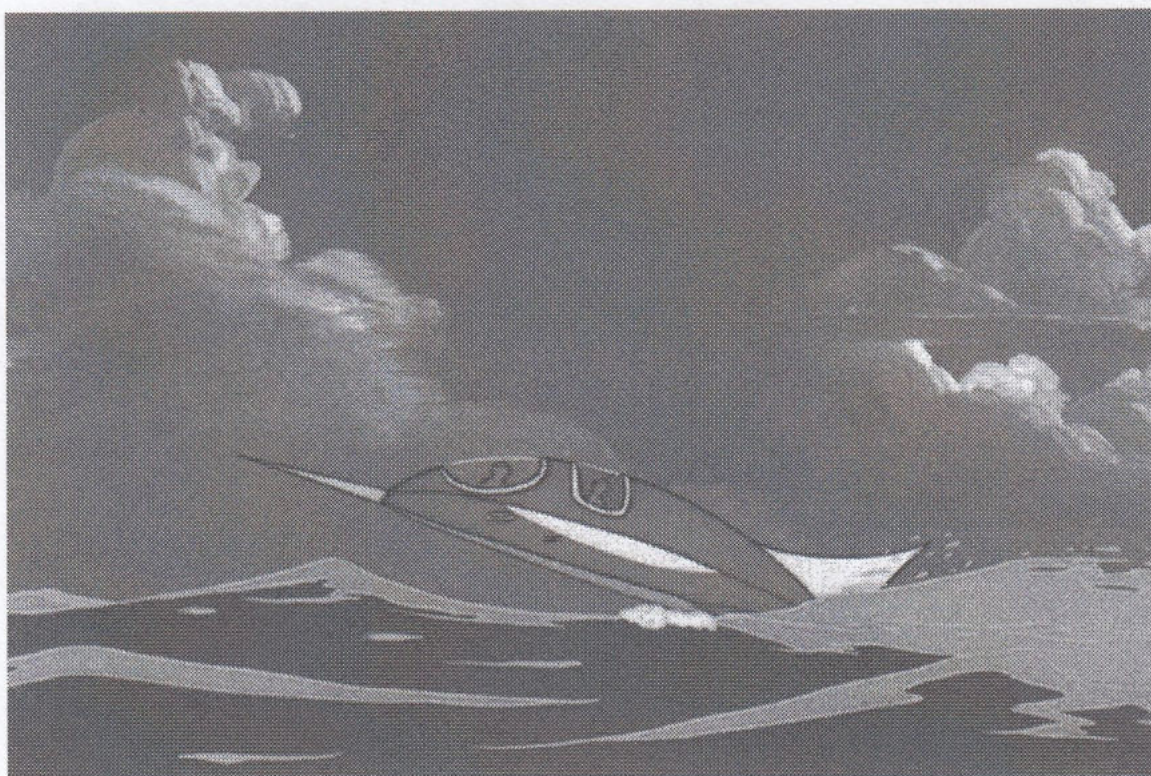


I don't remember when I actually realized that these shows are movies from a completely different country and culture. I do recall starting to notice the voices and words did not quite match up to the characters' mouths when they talked. The cartoons were also different since they were generally 30 minutes long and had a lot more character development.

There were a lot of Japanese monster movies aired while I was growing up but shows like Ultraman and Johnny Sokko were nonexistent. This held true for any Japanese cartoons until *Battle of the Planets* showed up in syndication late in the 70s.

Japanese Cartoons:

The first three Japanese cartoons I ever saw were *Gigantor*, *Prince Planet*, and *Marine Boy*. My memories of the first two shows were very fragmentary for years until I got videotapes of the episodes. These were followed a few years later by *Kimba, the White Lion*, and *Speed Racer*. It took nearly 20 years before I ever saw a *Gigantor* or a *Prince Planet* cartoon again, but I saw a lot of the cartoons that were in color in West Virginia. I liked them all, but *Marine Boy* became my favorite. Regular



readers might know about this due to the three different versions of my book about *Marine Boy* (it is still available for purchase!). There were a few shows I never saw until I was much older, like *8th Man*, *Astro Boy*, and *The Amazing 3*. I think I would have really enjoyed *8th Man*, since it is really close to a US superhero. He also looks really cool. I'm really happy to say that most of these shows are available on legit home video, and the other, lesser-known series are available if the reader knows where to look for them.

Kaiju:

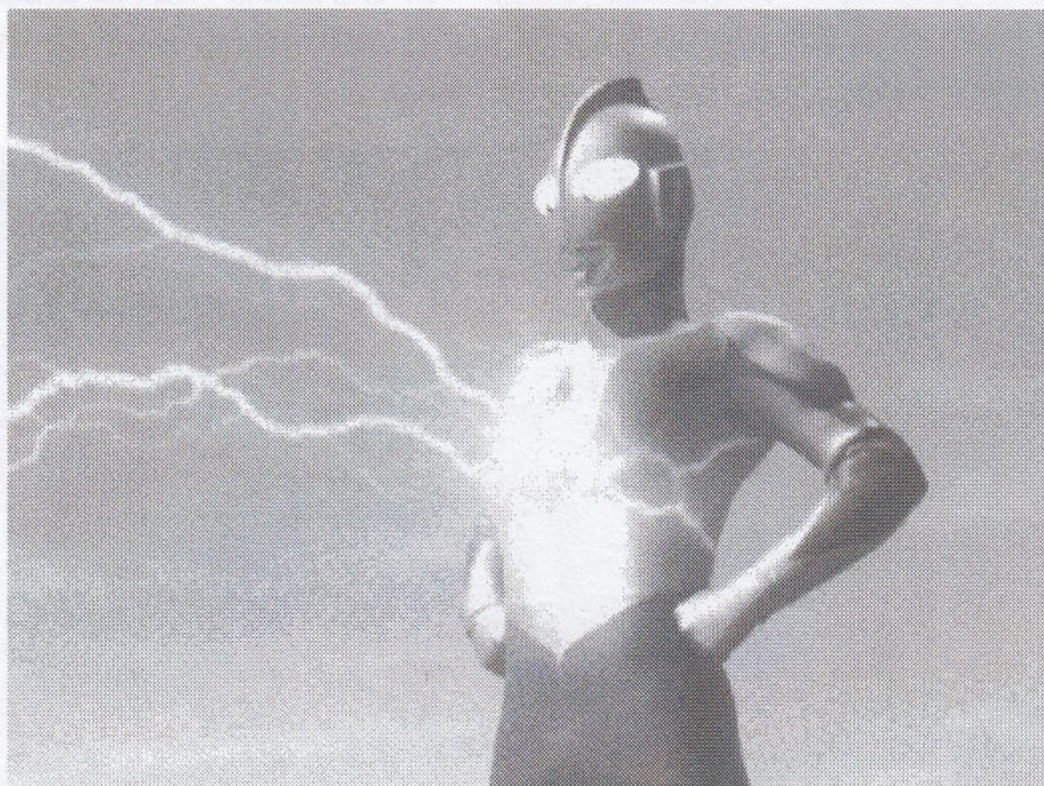
I distinctly remember the first Godzilla movie I ever saw. I had seen trailers on television for *Destroy All Monsters* (1968, US release 1969) but was far too young to understand what movies were at that time. I also saw the rather terrifying poster for *Godzilla vs the Smog Monster* (1971, US release 1972) which had me worried about seeing that movie. That first Godzilla movie also happened to be my first King Kong movie, as well as the first giant octopus movie I ever saw.



Yes, it is the famous *King Kong vs. Godzilla* that was my first true giant monster movie. I saw it on the big screen at Xmas time in 1971. I have some vague memories of watching monster movies before that, but this is the first movie I remember watching completely from beginning to end. After that, I had to learn more about giant monsters, no matter where they came from. I like a lot of the Stateside giant monsters, but they never held the fascination that the *daikaiju* held for me.

Ultraman:

Imagine loving both superheroes and giant monsters, then finding out there was an actual series that featured a giant superhero fighting different giant monsters every week (or day, when syndicated in the US). Somehow, no one thought of this amazing premise until July 17th, 1966, when Ultraman premiered on Japanese TV.



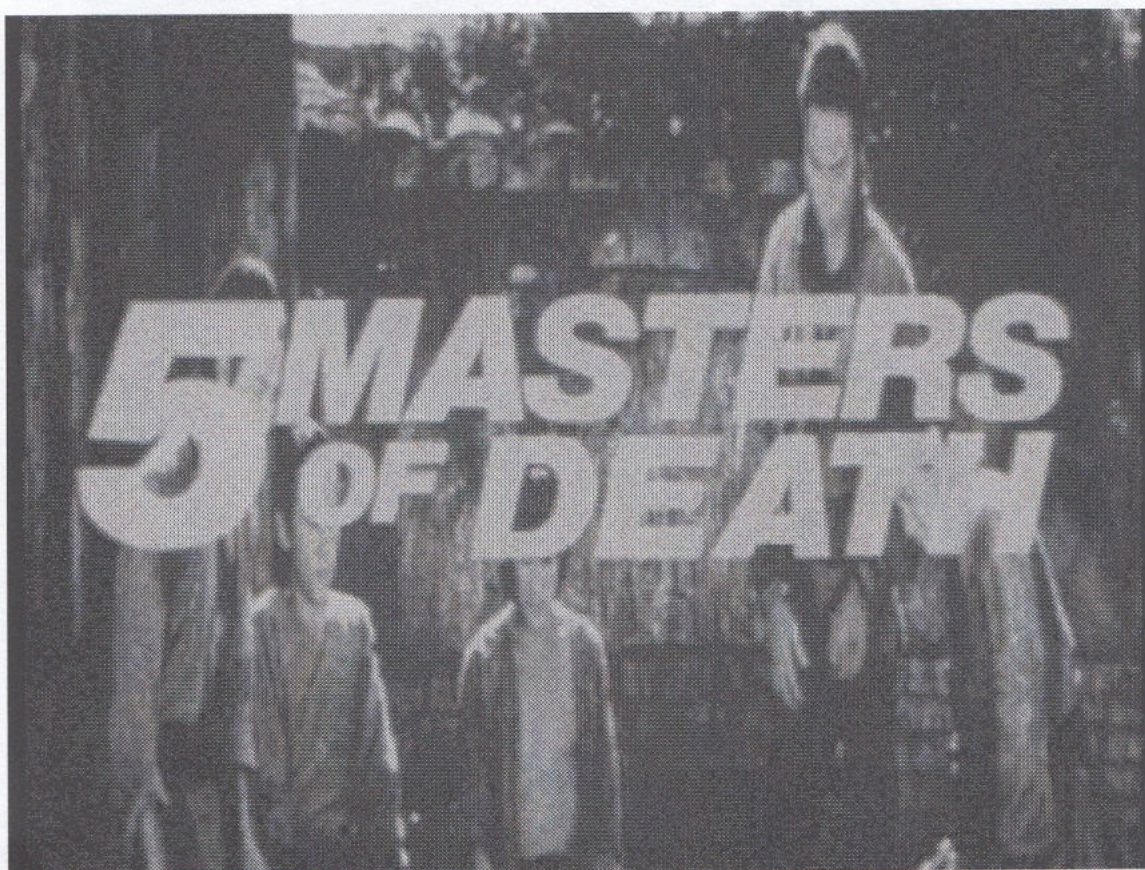
To say this series was groundbreaking is almost an understatement. It has spawned numerous sequels and spinoffs, not to mention outright rip-offs from other studios. The Ultra Family is still running strong and has had many home video releases all over the world and does not look like it will stop soon.

Watching Ultraman led me to many of the other Japanese superhero shows out there, Kamen Rider, Gorangers, Kikaider, and more. Many of these shows are also available to view legally on various streaming sites.

There was a three-page article about Ultraman and his brothers in the first issue, along with a history of Ultra itself.

Martial Arts movies:

My brother Eric accidentally introduced me to both kung fu movies and the Shaw Brothers at the same time. He was watching *The Kid With the Golden Arm* (1979) and I had never seen anything like that before. I missed about half the movie, but the following night *The Avenging Warriors of Shaolin* (1979) was airing, and we both watched it completely. I was completely captivated by the style of the movies. I had seen some martial arts movies, but they were always set in the current era, rather than the past. I knew nothing about the culture of China or anything, but the action was amazing. The kung fu and karate craze from the early 70s had long since passed, and in Colorado, martial arts movies did not air very often.



More martial arts movies were viewed in West Virginia, where I could see that some of these movies were better than others.

Music:

Thanks to my sainted mother, I was listening to Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash at an early age. Thanks to growing up in Colorado, I got to listen to John Denver whether I wanted to or not (I like him well enough). We also got to listen to novelty songs such as *The Flying*



Purple People Eater and *The Streak*. The Beatles came about accidentally when I found *The Yellow Submarine* airing on late-night television. I did not start listening to rock and roll until I listened to parts of *Kiss Alive!* In about 1975. I was later introduced to both the Cars and Blondie in early 1979 (thank you, Stephanie). The "new wave" of punk and power pop was far closer to my audio sensibilities than hard rock or metal.

All of these influenced me to start publishing Xenorama in 1992.

The Magic Serpent

1966

Directed by Tetsuya Yamauchi

starring: Hiroyuki Matsukata, Ryotaro Otomo, Tomoko Ogawa, Bin Amatsu, Nobuo Kaneko

music by Toshiaki Kawatake

86 minutes

AKA: 怪竜大決戦 *Kairyū Daikessen*, *Great Mystic Dragon Battle*, *Grand Duel in Magic*

Orochi Maru helps Yuki Daijo overthrow the local lord, Ogata. The Shogun's son, Ikazuki Maru survives and learns ninjitsu and magic from the hermit/wizard Dojin Hiki to return for vengeance.

The Denver, Colorado broadcasting area had a late-night Friday genre movie slot, called "Sci-Fi Flicks. Channel 2, KWGN, would air their news at 9 PM, which was an hour before the networks broadcast their news.



Froggo & Draggo and their Samurai friends have a fiendly little fight in latest Japanese monster epic.

At 9:30 PM they would show an episode of *The Outer Limits* which would be followed by some kind of monster or science fiction movie. Back then, it was rare for any TV guides, local or national, to have more than a sentence-long description of these kinds of movies. It was not uncommon for any fans to have no idea what they were about to see, and *The Magic Serpent* was no



exception.

When

I first watched this movie, I had no idea what it was going to be about. I had never heard of ninja, or the legend of Jiraiya. I didn't even know much about ninja at the time. All I knew was that it had swords, magic, and

giant monsters all in the same movie. That certainly was a winning combination for this kid!

The movie starts with the appearance of the dragon almost immediately, along with a bunch of samurai fighting each other. It also has a giant eagle that saves our young hero, and it never stops being fun and

engaging from that point on. The movie has some mysteries that seem obvious now, but back then there was probably a big surprise at the reveal of all the various parentages.

The US version is nearly the same as the Japanese cut, except for the monsters' roars being dubbed over with Godzilla, Rodan, and Mothra's cries. Usually, it's only the humans who get dubbed. The spider gets to sound like Mothra since Kumonga hadn't shown up yet.

The full-screen US version was released on DVD several years ago from Retro Media but has not been seen for quite some time. There is a fan-made disc out there with the Japanese version on it as well as the AIP-TV dub, but it would be nice to see a legit release that way. It is also available on YouTube as of this writing but under the Japanese name.

This is the movie that started my fan writing and publishing career. Damon Foster had told me I could write him a review for his late, lamented, and great



This poster's verbiage makes no sense.

Oriental Cinema magazine. I had started it, but then it became the first article I wrote for the first issue of *Xenorama* way back in 1992. I finally did send Damon a capsule review of the movie in the later 90s for his magazine. It took a while, but I did fulfill that commitment to him

My original article was the centerpiece of the first issue. I am sure I had a copy of the movie on VHS, but that was the extent of my knowledge about the movie. I knew nothing about *chanbara* films, or even much about ninja or samurai.

Times sure have changed.



Revenge Goes Scientific: “The Secret of The Telegian”

(1960)

By Bryan C. Kuriawa

When it comes to Toho's science fiction output one immediately thinks of Godzilla and his assorted kaiju friends. Yet during their Golden Era, some of the more compelling films were among the least known.

Among Toho's other projects was a series of productions known as the “Mutant Human” movies. Featuring creations that were people-sized, the threat often came from their unusual powers or abilities. The most famous of these films were 1958's “The H-Man” and 1963's “Matango,” both directed by Ishiro Honda. Whether it's the image of the liquid people standing amidst a burning river or the final minutes of a college professor's day yachting trip turned nightmare, both have left an impact on generations of viewers.

Yet one of the other “Mutant” films proved to have a unique history all its own. A starring vehicle for a future 60's Yakuza film mega-star, it marked the first sci-fi outing for a later “Godzilla” director and debuted to American viewers as a late night black and white oddity on local stations. That star, Koji Tsuruta, The director, Jun Fukuda and the film, 1960's “The Secret of The Telegian.”

“You Think A Man, Once He's Dead, Can Come Back To Life?”

At a Tokyo amusement park, curious attendees can test their bravery at the attraction, “Cave of Horrors.” Among the latest group is a broker named Tsukamoto. Making his way ahead of the parkgoers as they enter each section, he seems

distracted. Suddenly a strange sound is heard and a man appears before them, killing Tsukamoto with a bayonet.

After the police arrive, they encounter another curious figure, a science reporter named Kirioka (Koji Tsuruta), also



investigating the scene. He discovers a piece of wire a science professor identifies as a "cryotron." He also recalls a deceased colleague had been working on an invention using these

material years earlier. Meanwhile, the police locate a World War II-era ID tag and a letter asking Tsukamoto to come to the park. The reason is to learn about some event that occurred 15 years earlier.

Upon visiting Tsukamoto's apartment building, Kirioka runs into a beautiful young sales assistant named Akiko (Yumi Shirakawa) and his old friend, Detective Kobayashi (Akihiko Hirata).



That night, the two journey to an Imperial Japanese Empire-themed nightclub run by a Korean ex-soldier named Syogen (Yoshifumi Tajima) and his partner Onishi (Seizaburo Kawazu). Both have also received the same ID tags and suspect their other colleague Taki (Sachio Sakai) might be involved. Yet when Taki arrives and claims he also received an ID tag, they realize there's a problem.

After receiving a mysterious audio tape from a Lance Corporal Sudo threatening them, a man dressed in an Imperial Army uniform murders Syogen and outruns Kobayashi and the police. They also encounter an unconscious Akiko who was apparently being carried by someone. Returning to the nightclub, Kobayashi and Kirioka interview Onishi, who tells

them the truth. On August 15th, 1945, tasked with taking Dr. Nikki and his research to a secure site, Onishi, Syogen, Taki, and Tsukamoto actually were transporting stolen gold. Confronted by Lance Corporal Sudo (Tadao Nakamaru), Onishi kills him and Nikki, leaving them for dead before setting off dynamite in the cave they were in. Faced with a supposedly dead man out for revenge, Kobayashi and Kirkoka begin investigating the case of someone who can appear and disappear at will. All eyes turn to a dairy farmer named Nakamoto who has requested refrigeration units from Akiko's company for purposes beyond tending to his herd.

A unique fusion of science fiction, horror and crime thriller, "The Secret of The Telegian" is one of Toho's more unique films. Helmed by Fukuda, and with special effects by Eiji Tsuburaya, the results are something few others would have undertaken. Beyond the story of a "Mutant Human" is a deeper look at postwar Japan, the people behind and in front of the camera and the history of foreign films in America.

"Here Comes The Telegian!! The World Is Terrorized."

When most Japanese film fans think of Jun Fukuda, their immediate thought might be Godzilla doing a tailslide. Helming five "Godzilla" entries, Fukuda was often viewed as the man who turned the King of The Monsters into a superhero.

Born in 1923, Fukuda joined Toho in 1951 as part of their Assistant Director program. He would spend most of the decade working with numerous filmmakers including Kajiro Yamamoto and Senkichi Taniguchi.¹ Among his more prominent credits were Hiroshi Inagaki's "Samurai" trilogy and Ishiro Honda's "Rodan" (1956).²

Fukuda would make his debut with the 1959 film, "It's Dangerous To Play With Fire" and soon after found himself

¹ Ryfle, Steve (1998). "Japan's Favorite Mon-Star: The Unauthorized Biography of The Big G" ECW Press.

² Jun Fukuda. IMDB.com.
<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0297974/>

working on a sci-fi project in the form of "Telegian."³ Originally Honda was the proposed director; however, another film prevented him from taking it on. That movie is the alien invasion epic, "Battle In Outer Space."⁴ Honda recommended Fukuda as a replacement based on his work as his Assistant Director on "Rodan."⁵ Happy for the opportunity, Fukuda set out to direct this film.

In the years after "Telegian," Fukuda would distinguish himself with numerous action and comedy films. With titles like "The Merciless Trap" (1961), "The Weed of Crime" (1962), "Iron Finger" (1965) and "Young Guy On Mount Cook" (1969), he quickly proved an effective studio director.⁶

Yet in 1966, Toho gave Fukuda an assignment that would come to define his reputation among Western audiences. The seventh "Godzilla" entry, "Godzilla Vs. The Sea

³ Ryfle (1998) and Carrozza, J.L. (2022). "Japanese Science Fiction Cinema: Godfathers of Tokusatsu Part 1" Orochi Books.

⁴ Lemay, John (2020). "Writing Japanese Monsters" Bicep Books.

⁵ Carrozza (2022).

⁶ Of the films cited, "Iron Finger" and its sequel, "Golden Eyes" (1968) were picked up by The Criterion Collection/Janus Films around 2011 and could be viewed on their defunct Hulu channel. "Weed" was released to American TV in the 60's, but no prints have turned up. A letterboxed English dubbed export trailer did appear on the Something Weird Video compilation, "Dusk To Dawn Drive-In Trash-O-Rama" (Vol 6) and is viewable on YouTube. "Merciless Trap" is available on DVD from Sinister Cinema in a dubbed 16mm black and white print. None of the "Young Guy" films have received formal releases.

The H-Man. (2021, June 8). "The Weed of Crime" Toho English Export Trailer" YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RpF1CkTQbA>

Monster.” Over the next eight years, he would helm four more entries, the latter three of which would headline Toho’s Champion Festivals in March of those years.



Despite the popularity some of these entries achieved, Fukuda wouldn’t view his time with Godzilla as favorable. He referred to receiving a VHS tape of “Sea Monster” as “opening an old wound” and indicated his preference for the original 1954 outing as the best of the series.⁷ When Stuart Galbraith IV interviewed Fukuda for his oral history of Japanese fantasy films, he personally blamed himself for the transformation of Godzilla away from symbol of the atomic age:

“I did something like five Godzilla films. The monsters became the stars, and the human characters were put into the background. The human story was cut down. The original one is director Honda’s. The original one is the only one that’s successful, that’s really good. I give all of my Godzilla films a minus score.”⁸

Despite his self-criticism, each of Fukuda’s “Godzilla” films have something unique. “Sea Monster” is a fun, lighthearted piece in the style of a James Bond film with a jazzy score. “Son of Godzilla” benefits from a heartwarming father-

⁷ Ryfle (1998) and Galibraith IV, Stuart (1998). “Monsters Are Attacking Tokyo! The Incredible World of Japanese Fantasy Films” Feral House.

⁸ Galibraith IV (1998).

son drama alongside its island setting and entertaining characters.

While filled with excessive stock footage, "Vs. Gigan" features fun characters and can be viewed as a soft critique of Godzilla as a marketing/symbolic figure.⁹ "Megalon" is an ever-charming piece that functions as an overextension of the tokusatsu and superhero shows that dominated Japanese airwaves in the early 70's. Meanwhile, "Mechagodzilla" fuses Fukuda's love of action cinema with kaiju spectacle.

As for "Telegian," while he was critical of his forays into sci-fi, the theme of "Mutant Humans" would return on several occasions.

In 1973, Fukuda would act as a co-writer on the film adaptation of Kazumasa Hirai's manga, "Wolf Guy." Titled "Horror of The Wolf" and directed by Masashi Matsumoto, the movie, which follows a high school student/werewolf, is one of Toho's lesser-known and most underrated productions.

The following year, Fukuda would co-write and direct an adaptation of novelist Sakyo Komatsu's book about psychic secret agents called "ESPY." Starring "Kamen Rider's" Hiroshi Fujioka, "Prophecies of Nostradamus" Kaoru Yumi, and "Day of Resurrection's" Masao Kusakari, the result is a fun action production which needs a proper American re-release. During 1975, Fukuda was the proposed director for two separate films that almost seem like a continuation of the 'Mutant' entries. One was "The Human Torch," which involved a family drama and a man who can ignite himself and "Invisible Man Vs. The Human Torch." Acting as a 70's update of all the themes found in "Telegian," "The H-Man" and "The Human Vapor," it's a shame the latter was never made.¹⁰

Yet before all of that, he had a project handed to him from one of his colleagues to take care of. Fusing together elements that would become part of his later films was easy. Casting the characters was another.

⁹ Kalat, David (2010). "A Critical History and Filmography of Toho's Godzilla Series" McFarland and Company.

¹⁰ Lemay, John (2018). "Terror of The Lost Tokusatsu Films" Bicep Books.

“Huh? Is That You Kirioka?”

In “Telegian,” we have a familiar cast of Toho’s stock company of contract actors making appearances. Akihiko Hirata and Yoshio Tsuchiya play detectives on the trail of our killer. Yumi Shirakawa trades in being a gangster’s moll for being a sales assistant at a refrigerator manufacturer. Before trying to turn Mothra’s egg into a tourist exhibit, Yoshifumi Tajima plays a duplicitous ex-Korean soldier who served under the Imperial Japanese flag. Now he is a co-owner of an



Imperial Japan themed nightclub in a postwar Tokyo.

Yet among the primary cast are three actors who might not be familiar to some Western audiences. They are Koji Tsuruta, Tadao Nakamaru and Seizaburo Kawazu.

As science reporter Kirioka, Tsuruta gives an entertaining performance. While reporters are common in many Japanese fantasy films, the screenplay by Shinichi Sekizawa presents Kirioka as an early version of what was a recurring character type for him. His investigative nature is similar to Akira Takarada’s Sakai in “Mothra Vs. Godzilla” or Yuriko Hoshi’s Naoko in “Ghidrah The Three Headed Monster (Both 1964). His willingness to put himself at risk even includes him and Akiko going to Nakamoto’s farm under the disguise of being the company repairman.

Born in 1924, Tsuruta began working with Shochiku in 1948 after being with a theater company following World War II. Seen as a romantic lead, and distinguishing himself as both an actor and singer, he began rising in the postwar star

system.¹¹ In the mid-50's, he played famed swordsman Musashi Miyamoto's rival, Kojiro Sasaki in two installments of Hiroshi Inagaki's "Samurai" trilogy (1954-56). Starring Toshiro Mifune as Miyamoto, and available from The Criterion Collection, this would be his most well-known role in the US. By the end of the decade, he would become a contract player with Toho, appearing in multiple productions for the studio.

Among these roles were the fantasy epic, "The Three Treasures" (1959), two installments of the "Tales of The Underworld" series (1959-60), and Kihachi Okamoto's dark war piece, "Desperado Outpost."¹²

Following "Telegian" and the war epic, "I Bombed Pearl Harbor," Tsuruta would leave Toho and move to rival company, Toei.¹³ Over the next decade, he would be a top star for them appearing in numerous films. He would gain the most prominence and popularity in yakuza productions, playing honorable characters in dishonorable situations. With titles like, "The Last Days of The Underworld" (1962), "Gang Vs. Gang" (1963), "Seven Gamblers" (1964), "Rise and Fall of Yakuza" (1970), and "A Scarred Life" (1971), this made him a frequent attraction at neighborhood movie theaters.

By the early 70's, the "Honorable" roles Tsuruta excelled at fell out of fashion in favor of more realistic stories by

¹¹ Koji Tsuruta. *In Wikipedia.*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C5%8Dji_Tsuruta

¹² Koji Tsuruta. *IMDB.com.*

<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0875465/> and Koji Tsuruta.

GodzillaCineaste.net.

<https://www.godzillacineaste.net/people/tsuruta-koji>

¹³ Also known as "Storm Over The Pacific," this film follows the pilots and crew of the aircraft carrier, Hiryu during the first six months of the Second World War. Released in the US under the "I Bombed" title, footage from both the live action segments, and Eiji Tsuburaya's effects work, would be reused in Universal's 1976 war film, "Midway," which also starred Toshiro Mifune.

director Kinji Fukasaku. As his star declined, he began receiving less and less roles from Toei. Allegedly, he also became verbally abusive towards his co-stars and lost popularity with both them and audiences. His last major role under contract was the 1974 war epic, "Father of The Kamikaze," where he gave a dramatic performance as Admiral Onishi, the man who inaugurated such operations in the last year of the Pacific War.



After a cameo appearance in Yukio Noda's 1977 Japanese/Hong Kong production, "Golgo 13: Assignment Kowloon," he left Toei. Despite appearing in several popular films including "Proof of The Man" (1977), "Dog of Fortune" (1979), and "The Imperial Navy" (1981), he never regained his former superstar status. He died in 1987 from lung cancer, his last film role had been two years prior in Kosaku Yamashita's "The Last True Yakuza."¹⁴

As the antagonist Sudo/Nakamoto, Tadao Nakamaru is a very unusual part. While suitably creepy, enhanced by his monotone face, creepy laugh and awkward mannerisms, he's

¹⁴ Koji Tsuruta. IMDB. and Koji Tsuruta. GodzillaCineaste.net.

not the most creative villain, but he's memorable.¹⁵ Beyond the segments where he murders his victims, his most effective scenes are when Kirkoka and Akiko visit his farm. The one moment that stands out for me is an odd shot of him slowly drinking milk while looking directly at our protagonists. He's not sympathetic in the same manner that Yoshio Tsuchiya made the Human Vapor in Ishiro Honda's film that same year. He's more of a menace out for revenge. Take away the sci-fi and horror elements and you have the same energy as a crime film. Despite reasons being given, he's just geared toward his final goal without concern for those who get in his way.

Born in 1930, Nakamaru joined Toho in the mid-50's as a contract player appearing in small bit parts. He's most known in the West for playing the Interpol chief in "Terror of Mechagodzilla" (1975) and as the main antagonist in "What's Up Tiger Lilly" (1966), a comedic reworking of Senkichi Taniguchi's "International Secret Police: Key of Keys" (1965).

After multiple supporting roles, including Ishiro Honda's "The Mysterians" (1957) and "The H-Man" (1958), he finally had his breakout. In 1959, he starred as a corrupt Imperial Army officer, the primary antagonist of Kihachi Okamoto's dark war film, "Desperado Outpost." The film was a success and would lead to several follow-ups from Okamoto.¹⁶

Over the next decade, he would appear in multiple Toho productions. While often playing villainous parts, including memorable roles in "The Lost World of Sinbad" (1963) and "Japan's Longest Day" (1967), he did portray the kindly Buddhist disciple Ensai in the 1966 fantasy film, "Adventure in Kigan Castle." Leaving Toho after 1968, he continued working in film and television until the late 90's before passing in 2009.

¹⁷

¹⁵ For first-time viewers, you'll find out at the conclusion the reason his face is so awkward, although it is strongly hinted at in an earlier flashback scene.

¹⁶ Galibraith IV, Stuart. (2009). "Japanese Cinema." Taschen.

¹⁷ Tadao Nakamaru. IMDB.com.

https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0620092/?ref=tt_cl_t_4 and

Another interesting role of his after Toho was as hardline prosecutor Akagi in the Shochiku series, "Cobra" (1974-76). Starring Jiro Tamiya as Inspector/Karate expert Komura, Akagi hates Komura's disregard for procedure and Komura hates Akagi for his constant interference. That and Akagi being married to his dead partner's daughter (Yoko Yamamoto from 1967's "Monster From a Prehistoric Planet"), with whom he's in love and they were once lovers. So if you thought your 70's cop films needed karate, Hong Kong actors, an erotic film star and romantic melodrama, these two films are for you.¹⁸

Beyond the dangerous Nakamoto is his victim, the corrupt Imperial Army officer turned shady businessman, Onishi. Born in 1908, Seizaburo Kawazu had a long career working with multiple studios. To kaiju fans, he's most well known as the JSDF general in "Mothra" (1961) and the leader of a group of diamond thieves in "Dogora" (1964). Playing gangsters and criminals is a recurring theme with Kawazu as he portrayed similar characters repeatedly.¹⁹ In the year prior to

Tadao Nakamaru. GodzillaCineaste.net.

<https://www.godzillacineaste.net/people/nakamaru-tadao>

¹⁸ Directed by prolific filmmaker Umetsugu Inoue, who worked with both Japanese and Hong Kong studios, The "Cobra" films have never been properly released in the US. However, both entries are available for viewing online in their English dubbed export cuts, sourced from European VHS releases:

SpacePoliceMan (2020, July 19). "Cobra. 1.aka. Ikare Doku Hebi Moku Geki Sha Wo Kese. VHSrip. 1976" Archive.Org.

<https://archive.org/details/cobra.-1.aka.-ikare-doku-hebi-moku-geki-sha-wo-kese.-vhsrip.-1976>

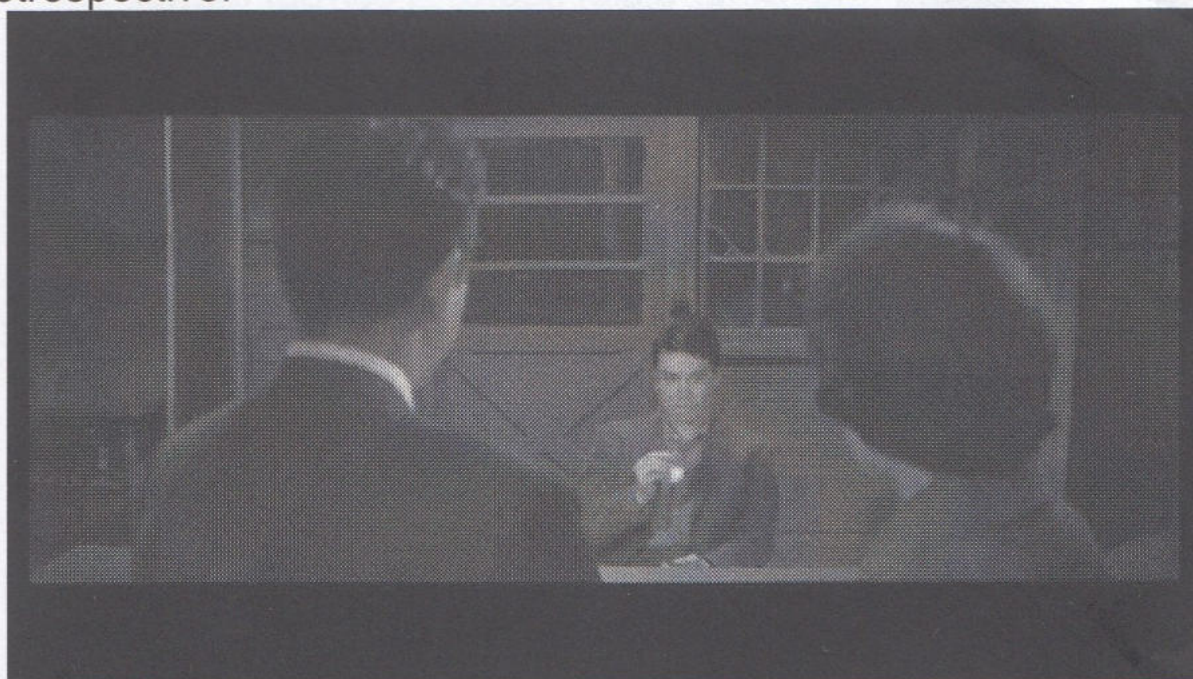
Tilhookeainist (2012, September 17). "Cobra 2 – Utareru mae-ni ute!" YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQ-uGu7UBCg>

¹⁹ Seizaburo Kawazu. IMDB.com.

https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0442951/?ref=tt_cl_t_3

“Telegian,” he played gang bosses in both of Kihachi Okamoto’s “Tales of The Underworld” films that inaugurated a cycle of crime movies at Toho.²⁰

Surprisingly, this also wasn’t his first time in the “Mutant” films as he had appeared in their debut. In Motoyoshi Oda’s “The Invisible Avenger” (1954), Kawazu plays the victim of a wartime experiment that turned him invisible. Spending his days as a circus clown in full makeup promoting a local business, he avoids attention. Yet when a neighbor in his apartment building is killed by gangsters, leaving behind a blind granddaughter, he decides to seek revenge. Featuring Yoshio Tsuchiya as a reporter and Tsuburaya’s effects, “Avenger” is a short, interesting film that deserves a proper Western retrospective.²¹



Even after leaving Toho, he would play the role of gangsters and yakuza bosses at Toei through the 60’s. One of his more prominent that I’ve encountered was Kinji Fukasaku’s 1968 production, “Gambler’s Farewell.”

Reflecting on the state of the yakuza in Japan, the film stars Kawazu as an ill, aging boss and Tsuruta as his loyal second-in-command who just left prison. While his gang was

²⁰ Galibraith IV (2009).

²¹ Oda, Motoyoshi (Director). (1954). “*The Invisible Avenger*” (Film). Toho Company Ltd.

allowed to operate as the country was rebuilding, it's no longer viewed favorably. Facing a new police chief (Eiji Okada), Kawazu's character denounces the local officials in a speech at a public event. Commenting how his group treated the local workers fairly, ensured the port's continued operation and prevented communists and left-wing agitators from taking control, he remarks how he is the reason for their success. This leads to numerous clashes with authorities and a former gang member (Fumio Watanabe) who wants to take over the port's business himself.²² An interesting take on the yakuza, and predecessor to Fukasaku's 70's outings, it's a fascinating film that deserves an American release.

As Onishi, Kawazu creates an effective performance as a disgusting and rather pitiful figure. A corrupt former Imperial officer, he tries to murder two people, so he could get his hands on state gold. Failing to achieve his efforts, he turns to business in Japan's post-war environment. Despite all his money and power, even fleeing to his remote and private residence, his past is always one step behind him. His final confrontation with Nakamoto/Sudo, is the epitome of theatrical justice. After everything he's done, the specter of his past and its links come back to haunt him.

"The Nation That I Knew Had Been Shattered. I Felt That I Was No Longer Wanted"

Beyond the sci-fi elements and crime film trappings, "Telegian" reflects on World War II and post-war Japan in a manner that would vanish over the coming decade. In Toho's films, the specter of the conflict would loom over numerous productions. Beyond the atomic bombing symbolism of "Godzilla" (1954) and "Godzilla Raids Again" (1955), the war itself would appear more prominently in other outings.

Most famously in 1963's "Atragon," the topic of Imperial soldiers who refused to surrender arose. Admiral Jinguji (Jun Tazaki) had spent almost 20 years working on a secret flying submarine with the intention of restoring Japan's glory. When

²² Fukasaku, Kinji (Director). (1968). *"Gambler's Farewell"* (Film). Toei Company Ltd.

he is pressed by his former commanding officer (Ken Uehara) and his daughter (Yoko Fujiyama), he is forced to choose between this and the new threat of the advanced undersea Mu Empire.²³

"Telegian's" presentation of the topic showcases the post-war era as a pastiche of the past. Onishi's decision to steal Imperial gold showcases the failings of the former era as he's more worried about survival than the ideals of Bushido. In contrast, Sudo is still devoted to the principles he's been instilled with as a soldier. Left for dead, and scared by his wounds, he withdrew from the world to a barren farm, milking cows to nourish the people of a different Japan.

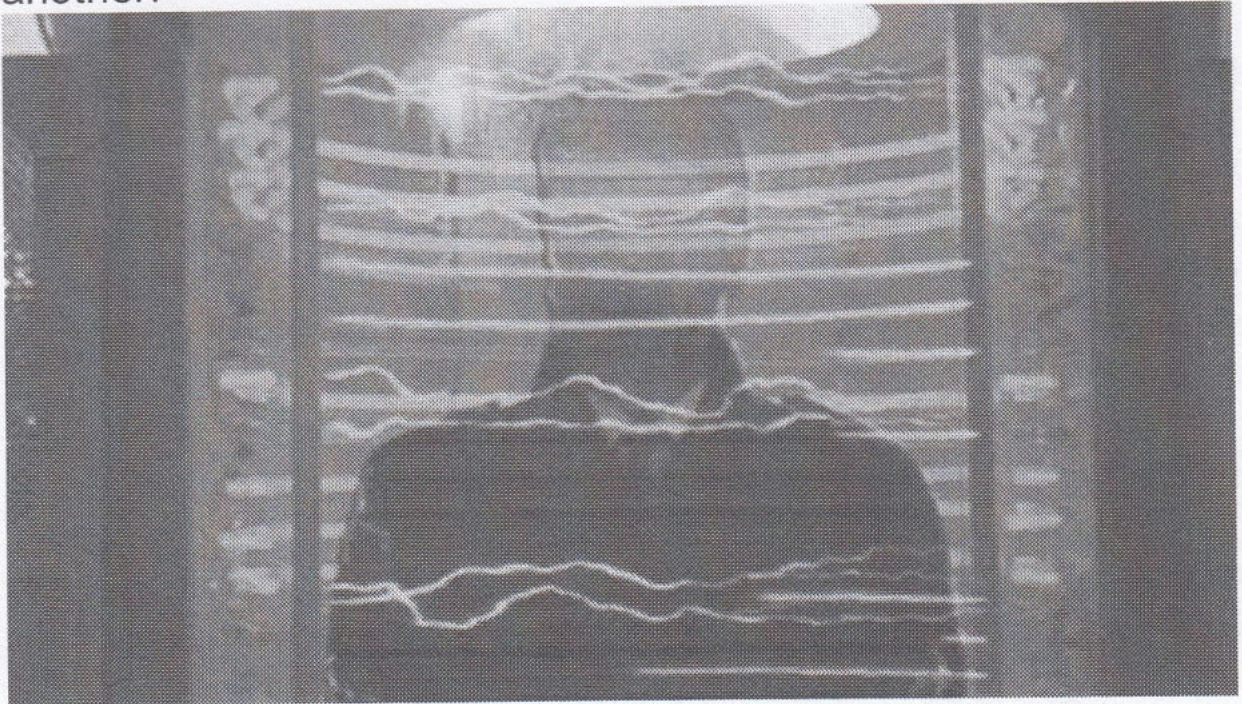
In contrast, Onishi, Syogen, Taki and Tsukamoto tried to survive in a changing world. Taki works with a construction firm, helping build the sprawling metropolises of the post-war economic miracle. Tsukamoto acts as a broker, involved as the intermediary in financial transactions and other exchanges of an economically vibrant nation. Meanwhile, Syogen and Onishi have parlayed Imperial Japanese iconography into a Tokyo nightclub. While a gold-painted dancer gyrates on stage, young men and women dressed in Imperial Army and Navy outfits serve "rations" and act like soldiers. The great contrast of an Imperial naval march in a place that would have been deemed too "Westernized" years before.

In the final confrontation of Sudo and Onishi, the reality of the fragile post-war era appears in full visibility. The former Imperial Army officer turned businessman, with questionable gang ties, facing the distorted persona of a once loyal young soldier. In the same manner as Japan's post-war business leaders had ties to the Imperial Army, or the nationalistic sentiment found in various groups and their Liberal Democratic Party, Sudo does represent a specter. He's a man of ideals, principles and concepts that were broken by a superior officer looking for security in a changing world.

Despite the best efforts of those four, they can't truly escape from the past. Beyond their corrupt and disgusting behavior lies the shadow of a nation's history, one that can't be

²³ Honda, Ishiro (Director). (1963). *"Atragon"* (Film). Toho Company Ltd.

erased and will always remain. To that end, Sudo is a reflection of the same distortion his superior officer committed, the destruction of one set of ideals, transformed and replaced by another.



In a similar fashion, Sudo's appearances before his victims also symbolizes the arrival of a new invention to more Japanese families, the TV. Throughout the decade, TVs were considered a luxury item, only accessible to those with more means and income at their disposal.²⁴ By 1960, TVs were now more common in Japanese households. With the blue lines running up and down his body, he looks like an old television static pattern. The dream of some televised character leaping out and attacking the viewer might have graced the minds of a Japanese man or woman around that time.

"A Presentation of Westhampton Film Corporation"²⁵

²⁴ Carrozza (2022).

²⁵ Prints from Something Weird Video and Sinister Cinema's VHS releases feature a credit at the end saying "A Presentation of Westhampton Film Corporation." According to IMDB.com, this obscure company had some involvement in the distribution of the 1961 exploitation film, "The 7th Commandment" (1961) and the French import, "Dishonorable Discharge" (1957).

Like most Toho sci-fi films, getting an American release was a major opportunity. Given new titles, some edits, dubbed and even rescored, these movies endeared themselves to audiences. Yet for "Telegian," its journey would be a little more complicated.

Hertz-Lion, the same company that released the cult classic, "Carnival of Souls" (1962), would purchase it for distribution. The film itself was left uncut in its original Toho English language export cut. Surprisingly, the export version features additional footage in the finale.

During the volcanic eruption, the camera doesn't pan into the plumes of smoke and cuts back down to the volcano in what appears to be the finale of the footage before editing.

Dubbed in Hong Kong, the voice of Ted Thomas, later to voice Kubota in "Godzilla Vs. Gigan" (1972) and the Seatopian Emperor in "Vs. Megalon" (1973) does several characters including Hirata's Kobayashi.²⁶

Rather than theaters, Lion instead released it direct to television. Until American International Pictures TV in the late 60s, this was among the first Japanese films to bypass a theatrical presentation. In another interesting change, the color film was converted to black and white. While it might be seen as an unusual choice, Robert Biondi in his piece for the series, "Toho In America," remarked that some companies did covert their color prints to black and white for TV presentations.²⁷ Not to mention that most American TV networks wouldn't fully embrace color in their programming until the mid-60s.

The movie found itself being syndicated to local markets and stations over the next decade or so before vanishing. In an essay for John Lemay's book, "Terror of The Lost Tokusatsu Films," Mike Bogue mentions seeing it on TV in

²⁶ Cardozza, J.L. (2021). "SF: The Japanese Science Fiction Encyclopedia" Orochi Books.

²⁷ Blondi, Robert (1998/2004). "Toho In America: The Secret of The Telegian" HistoryVortex.org.

<https://www.historyvortex.org/tohoinamerica7.html>

1969.²⁸ In the 90's, Something Weird Video and Sinister Cinema brought the film out of obscurity and onto VHS. Both releases utilized the same 16mm cropped black and white prints that had previously aired.²⁹

Yet this sadly marks the end of "Telegian's" home video history in the US. Not even during the mid-2000s Toho boom did the movie make a reappearance. While Tristar, Tokyo Shock, Discotek Media, Classic Media, BCI Eclipse, The Criterion Collection, Home Vision, ADV Films, and Retromedia brought the world of Japanese cinema to the DVD revolution, this film was absent.

For the curious, fan-subtitled copies do float around online from various sellers and websites. Much like the vanishing act of Sudo/Nakamoto, "The Secret of The Telegian" is a movie that appears where you least suspect it. Perhaps that will one day be in a Japanese film buff's collection.³⁰

²⁸ Bogue, Mike (2018). "Lost...Almost: Essays On Non-Daikajiu Japanese Tokusatsu Fantasies of The 20th Century" Bicep Books.

²⁹ Blondi (1998/2004).

"HEY, I WANNA DO THAT!"

by Blake Matthews

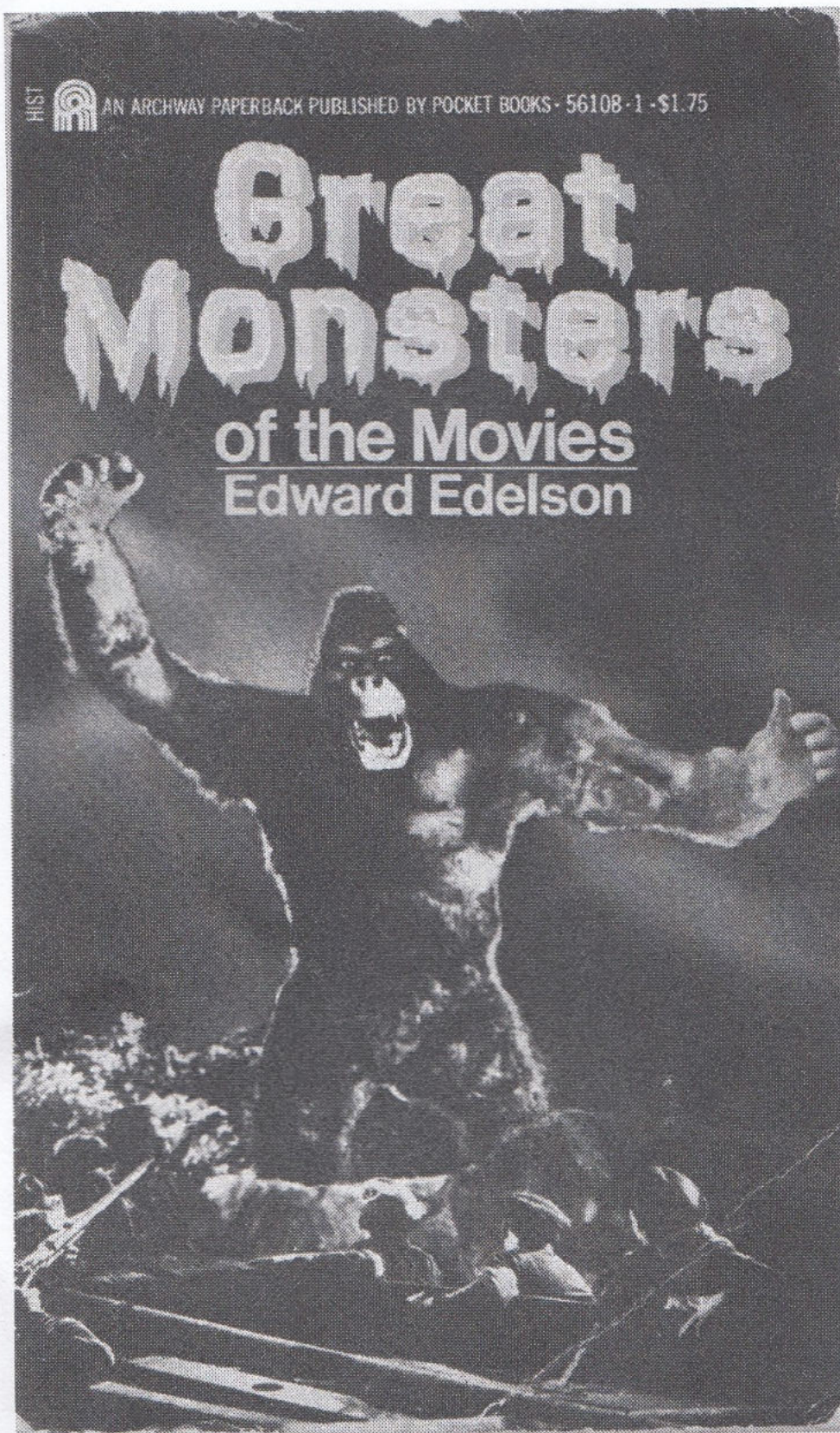
I became a Godzilla fan in December of 1989 with the acquisition of my first G film: *Godzilla vs. the Sea Monster*. It was another year before I became a movie collector, but at this time my interest in classic movie monsters was sparked. I started checking out books from the library about the subject, including the infamous "Monsters" series by Ian Thorne—notably the books about Godzilla, the Mummy, and The Creature from the Black Lagoon. I also read books about classic horror and sci-fi movies by authors like Seymour Simon and Thomas G. Aylesworth. I checked out their books time and time again from the public library. I just loved reading about these movies, the lore behind some of the monsters, and gazing at the stills. Remember, this was in the early 1990s when access to this sort of material was limited.



It was while I was in the 7th grade that I came to the conclusion that I could write a book like that. I mean, I had already acquired every Godzilla movie legally available in the States, plus most of the Gamera films, non-Godzilla movies, most of Ray Harryhausen's filmography, and lots of other movies—thanks to Suncoast Video, TNT's MonsterVision, and 100% Weird, plus the occasional dinosaur movie marathon on TBS. Books like Movie Monsters (1975) and Great Monsters of the Movies (1974) tended to gloss over Japanese sci-fi. They dedicated only two or three pages to the genre as a whole, offering fans very little helpful information about the subject. Thus, I ventured out to write a movie about monsters. I started typing up a book on my mom's word processor—we had one of those before we got a computer—but didn't get very far before other pursuits got in the way and I quit.



A few years later, I discovered the world of Godzilla fandom through the internet. Although my family did not get a computer until 1999, I used to visit my friend



Peter's house every Friday starting in the Fall of 1997. It was at his house that I discovered websites like "Barry's Temple of Godzilla" and "Crow T. Bird's Godzilla Page," all of which had reviews of all the films, including the Heisei movies, which hadn't yet

been released stateside. I eventually discovered B-movie sites like Teleport City, StompTokyo, and Cold Fusion Video, which covered a broader range of genres, but whose reviewers also showed a special fondness for Godzilla movies.

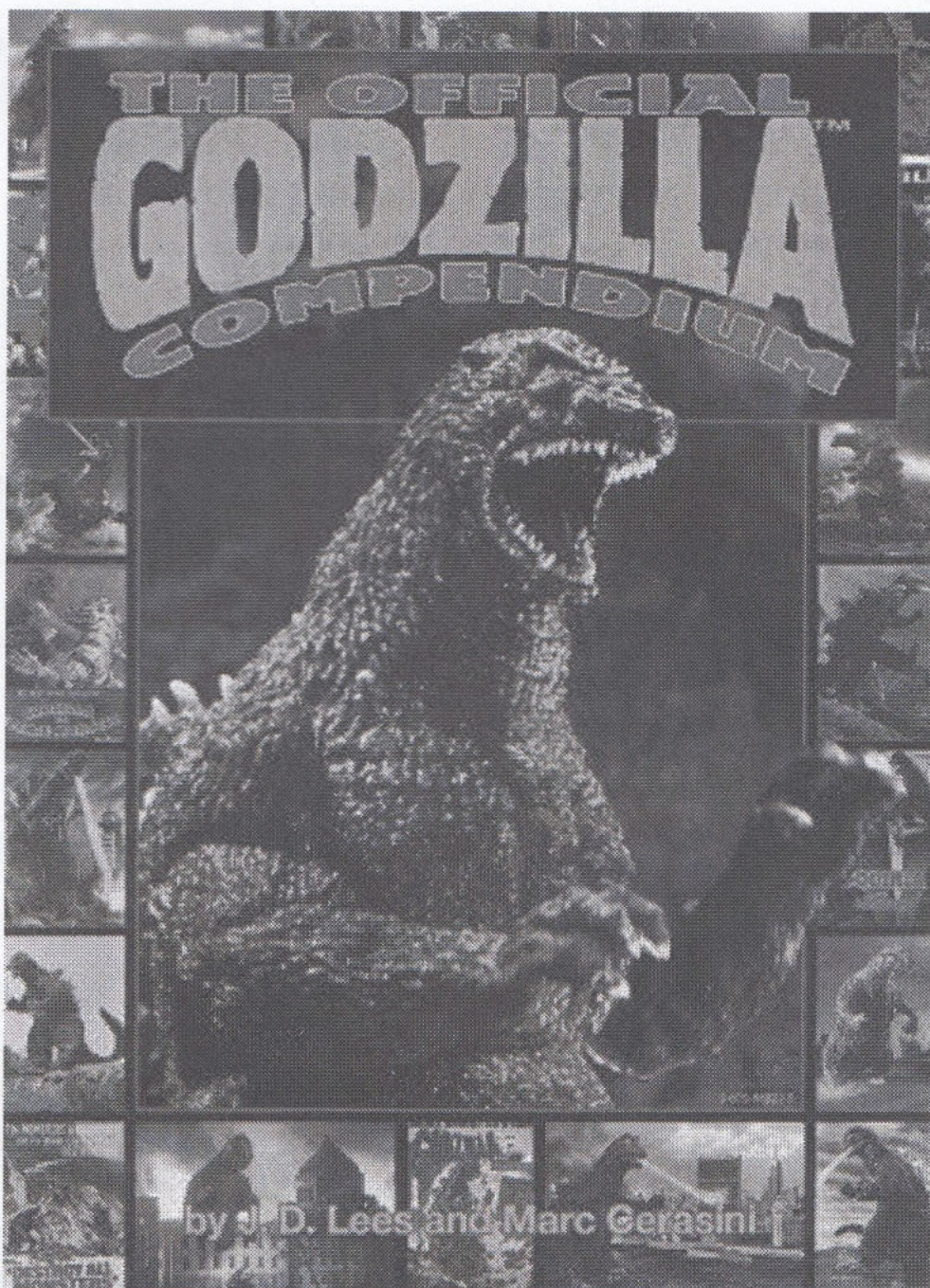
While in high school, I established a tradition of taking a week or two, usually during the summer, of watching my Godzilla collection over the course of a

week or two. It was during one of said marathons in 2001 that I started doing write-ups of these movies. I formed the idea in my head that I would watch all of the Godzilla movies, Toho sci-fi movies, and American giant monster movies, and review them all for a book about the subject. By this point, we fans already had books like The Official Godzilla Compendium (by J.D. Lees and Marc Cerasini); Japan's Favorite Mon-Star (by Steve Ryfle); and Monsters Are Attacking Tokyo! (by Stuart Galbraith IV). However, in my 19-year-old mind, I thought I could one-up their books by being less critical of Godzilla's movies, especially the ones from the 1970s, and include American giant monster movies, too.

The project went on hiatus for two years while I served as a missionary in Brazil. When I returned, I revived the project for a short while, adding reviews of the *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* movie; *Octopus* (2001); and *King Cobra*. However, the project was short-lived, and I eventually abandoned it.

The writing bug stayed with me, and I eventually started my own review "site" at Angelfire back in late 2004. I named it "It's a Beautiful Film Worth Fighting For," and the original purpose was to write positive reviews of (what I thought to be) underappreciated movies, like *Godzilla vs. Space Godzilla*; low-budget Donnie Yen films; and the like. It gradually expanded to include all sorts of movies, with an emphasis on giant monster and kung fu movies, although I occasionally dipped my toes in Italian horror and sword-and-sandal films, plus American B-movies from the 1950s. The site was moved from Angelfire to Geocities in 2005 and I reviewed movies regularly until 2006.

In 2006, a conversation with a friend from church, João Santos, inspired me to write a book. João had recently left a stable job in order to go into business himself. When I told him of my dreams to write a book, he told me that I needed to go ahead and do it. I took his advice to heart and set about writing a book. In two



years, I finished the first draft of a Portuguese-language book whose title translated as 55 Fights at Peking: The Best Fights in Chinese Cinema. The book was only possible to write thanks to the advent of Youtube, as DVDs were expensive in Brazil at the time and my job did not pay a lot. I also received some material assistance from our very own David McRobie, who sent me lots of DVDs of movies that were either not available here or were too expensive for me to purchase.

Had I published it, it would have been the first book published in Brazil about the subject. It did not go forward, however, because publishers in Brazil ask

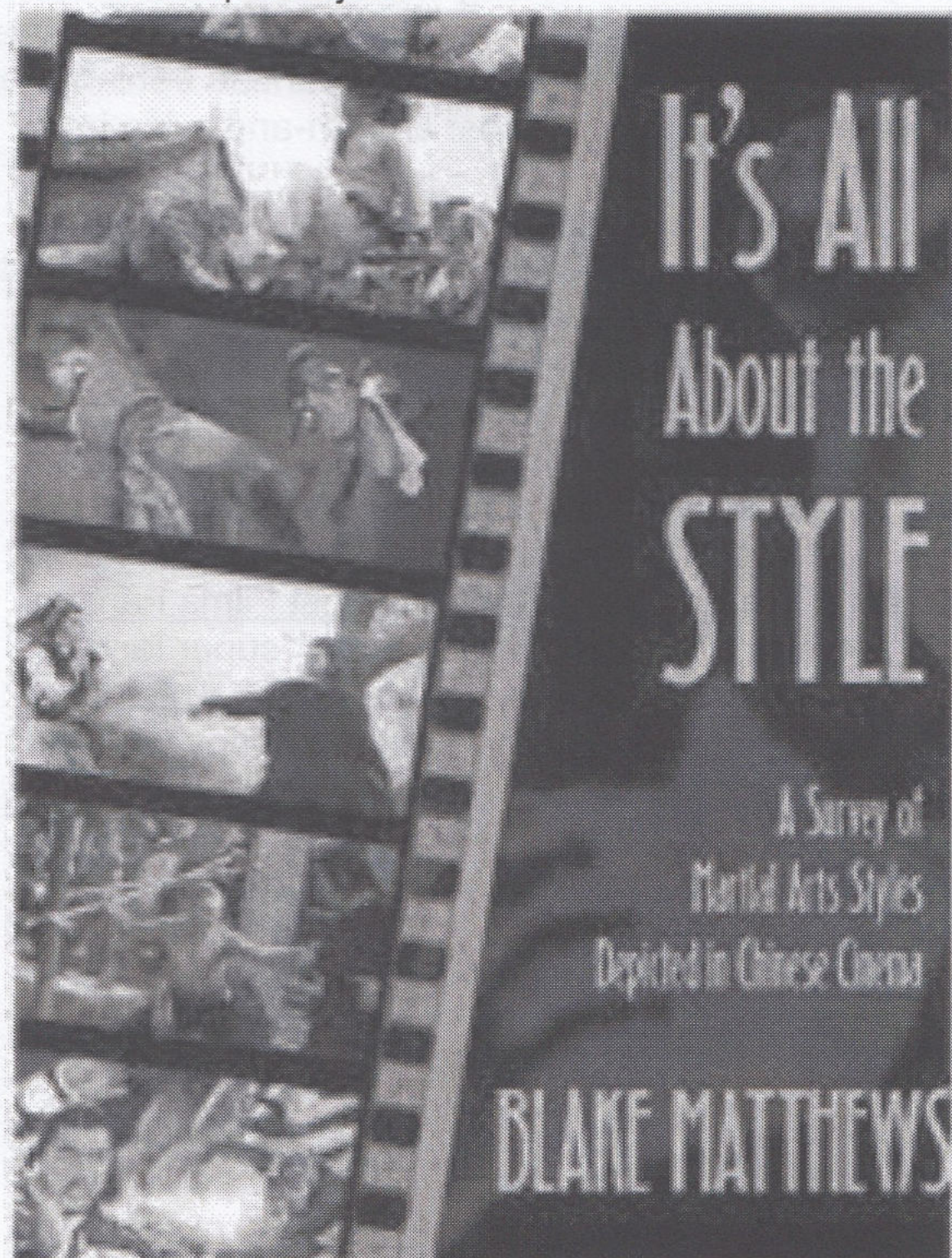
authors to foot the bill on the first edition, and that would have cost four thousand Brazilian reals, which I did not have at the time (even if I were to pay in installments). The project ended up dying and the first book about Chinese cinema in Brazil ended up being *Cidade em Chamas: O Cinema de Hong Kong* (by Filipe Furtado and Luiz Carlos Oliveira Jr.), published in 2018.

Although I did not publish 55 Fights at Peking, I did start translating those chapters into English, which eventually became my first (self) published book: It's All About the Style: A Survey of Martial Arts Styles Depicted in Chinese Cinema. I finished writing that around 2009, but I didn't really push forward in getting it published until 2013. Once again, David was kind enough to help me edit and provide the book with the Foreword. The book has been well received by many fans, even if it hasn't sold enough for me to stop working as a Systems Analyst and focus on writing.

The time gap between finishing the book and publishing it was filled by my rebooting my website, which I had stopped updating in 2006. The new version of my site once again called "It's a Beautiful Film Worth Fighting For," was relaunched as an affiliate of Cold Fusion Video, one of the sites that had inspired me to start reviewing movies online in the first place. I published more than two hundred reviews at that site before an epic server crash that resulted in the loss of all data. I was able to recover about half of the reviews through the Wayback Machine (stupid Blake didn't back up his work on Microsoft Word), but a lot of material was lost.

Following the loss of my site, I tried to start all over again at Blogger, but my heart was just not in it at the time. As a result, I deleted the site and posted my movie reviews at the Bad Movie Message Board and later at the Kung Fu Fandom Forum. Around 2014, I was exchanging e-mails with David McRobie about life in general when he told me that he was working on an issue of Xenorama about Mothra. I asked him if I could discuss

the 1992 *Godzilla vs. Mothra* and he agreed. Thus started my “tenure” as a contributing author to the *Xenorama* fanzine, which I’ve been doing for about eight years now. It is almost scary how much time has passed since I took up that job.



I have had numerous ideas for books about Hong Kong cinema and Martial Arts movies since then, but none of them have gotten finished. I did resurrect my website earlier this year and will probably have 400 reviews posted by the year's end. I still have dreams of publishing a second book about Hong Kong cinema and

at one point, something about Japanese cinema. Last year, I sent my old Godzilla reviews to a friend for him to share with his teenage daughter. She actually liked the reviews enough to suggest that I compile them into a book. I thought about it, although review collections are looked down on by hardcore Godzilla fans, who are more interested in English translations of Japanese behind-the-scenes books, which books cost an arm-and-a-leg here in Brazil.

One day, I will figure all of this out. I will have a good idea for a book about these movies, something that hasn't been done before—a niche or a sub-genre that has garnered little attention online or from those “prestigious” “super fans” whose names always come up in discussions about these genres. Until then, I will content myself with my contributions to keeping these genres alive through my website and contributions to publications like Xenorama and The Lost Films Fanzine. Maybe one day I'll become one of those “super fans” myself, or perhaps I will have been a prolific writer who one day made a young lady in Alabama happy with my thoughts on Godzilla movies.

THREE XENORAMIC SUPER-NOVAE THAT CHANGED FANDOM HISTORY

by Jim Walsh

On the occasion of XENORAMA's 30th anniversary, I have been looking back on the last 30



years of Heroic and Monstrous Events and trying to decide what were the most significant Xenoramic events in the last 30 years. One might think, "The Rise of the Internet!" Maybe the release of the STAR WARS prequels and sequels?

(...snicker...) The Marvel Cinematic Universe? The triumphant LORD OF THE RINGS trilogy? One could make a case for any of those; they were all significant events. But personally, I don't believe that any of these compared to three events that shine like super-novae

amongst the other constellations of Heroes and Monsters. When I look up at those 3 shining stars, I am reminded of how they guided us out of the post-80s chaos, through the cultural confusion of the early 90s, and into the future.

In 1992, we were still living analog lives, which means that our sources of genre materials were VHS cassettes, audio tapes, and printed material. The only commonplace digital media were compact discs, (laser discs existed but I never actually saw one). PCs were expensive and rare, and digital cameras, scanners, and cd burners were non-existent, for all practical purposes. Communication between fans was by handwritten letter or maybe a phone call (long-distance charges applied!). So we had lines of communication, and sources of information and media, but not very many, and not very fast.

Against that backdrop, the first of the aforementioned super-novae flared with the release of GODZILLA VS MECHA-GODZILLA 1993. While Godzilla's career had been revived in 1984, each of the Heisei-era movies seemed to stumble over some of the most basic storytelling essentials, leaving the viewer with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction when the movie ended. But GVMG93 tied together previous Heisei story elements and wove them into a tight, straightforward story that worked on multiple levels. The main cast and supporting characters were likable and engaging, and the Ifukube score was astonishing. As Godzilla and Baby swim off at the end, having won the future for Life, this would have been the perfect finale to the Heisei series.

A second super-nova flashed in 1995, with no warning – it was the return of the long-lost super-turtle-monster Gamera in GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE! This was a near-flawless movie, with a close-in visual sense that brought the viewer into the action in a way not seen before. GGOTU is amazingly personal and intimate for a kaiju movie, and at the

conclusion, it leaves you stunned and tentatively touching the side of your face to feel if it had been scorched during the climactic Sudden-Death shootout between Gamera and Gyaos.

The third supernova in this constellation is the greatest of the Stars of Ultra, from the Land of Light –

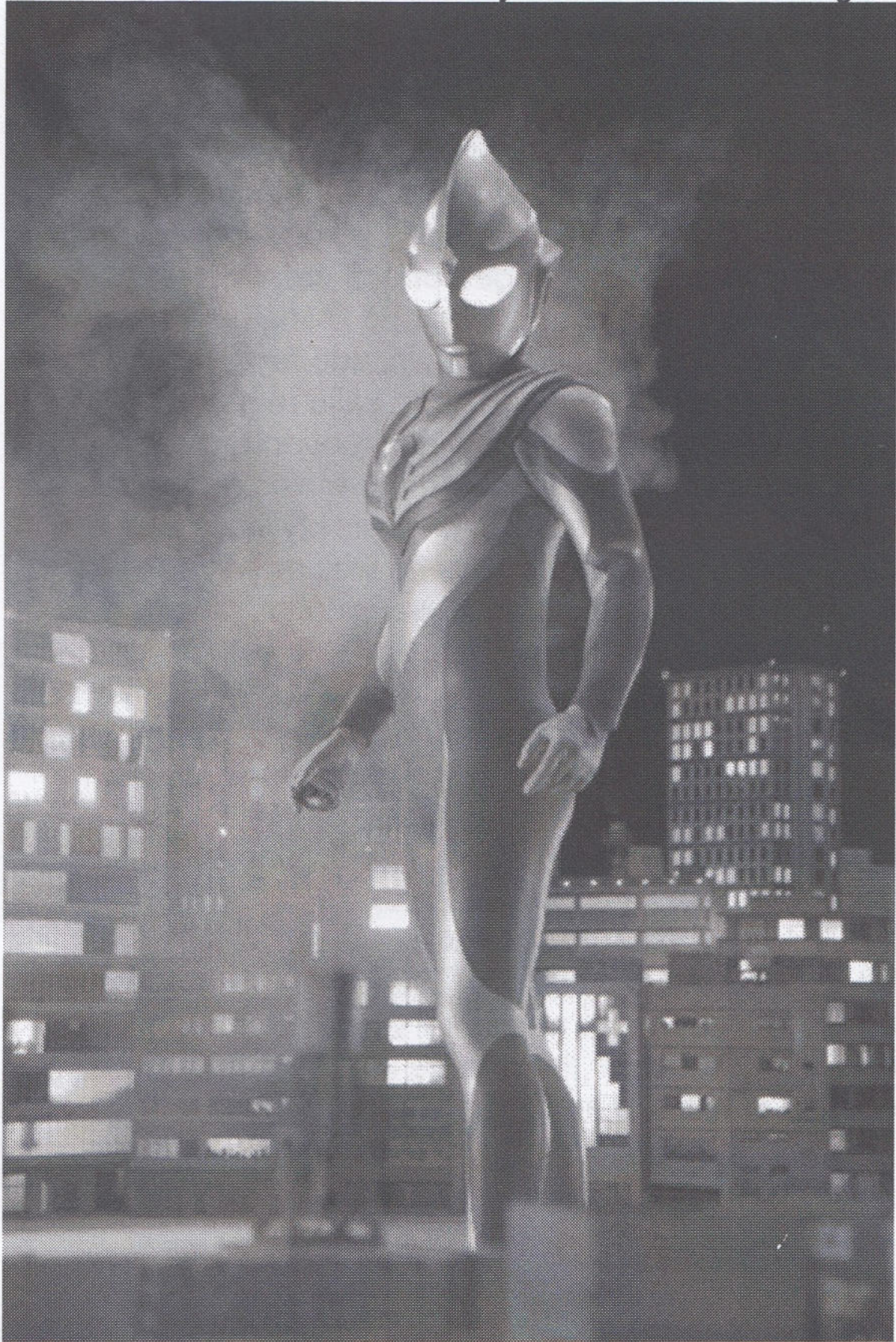


ULTRAMAN TIGA. Tsuburaya Pro had seemed unable to follow ULTRAMAN 80 with anything remotely resembling their hero. Fans like me had completely written off the possibility that there would ever be another real Ultraman show. As such, we were completely caught off-guard by 1996's ULTRAMAN TIGA. The monsters and effects were amazing, the cast is sincere yet warm, and Tiga's alter-ego, Daigo, projects a sense of genuine humility and purpose as if thinking, "I don't deserve to have this power, but I will try my best to use it to protect people." The viewer is quickly drawn into any episode and the series as a whole. There is no question that TIGA revived the Ultraman franchise, which has been going strong ever since.



To those of us who were old enough to realize what was happening, it seemed that we were surely in a kaiju "Silver Age", and the excitement started to spread. The fans weren't motivated by merchandise, which was much more limited then, and although the internet was growing, the low bandwidth kept websites very static and ruled out all but the lowest quality multi-media. Simple text-based messaging (through email and message boards) was the main means of spreading the word and meeting other fans. VHS tape trading took off as well. Some fans were content to merely hunt down the

Godzilla and Gamera films, but it seemed obvious to me that many others started working their way through the Toho, Daiei, and Toei sf/fantasy/horror movie catalogs.



This kind of spontaneous fan awakening/mobilization reminded me of a subplot from

the original 1977 theatrical release of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. In that movie, people who had had "close encounters" with UFOs experienced a compulsion to find other UFO witnesses and share their experiences. They were also obsessed with drawing or sculpting a representative image of their encounter. What happened in the late 1990s amongst fans of Heroes and Monsters was very much like this phenomenon. Besides the sudden surge of discovering other fans, there was a huge burst of creativity, in all formats, throughout the Heroes and Monsters Fandom. Kaiju-related Art, sculpture, music, and fan fiction took off. Fanzines multiplied, and soon kaiju related books followed. All this activity was set in motion by the excitement that blazed following the triple super-novae of GVMG93, GGOTU, and TIGA. Creativity inspired more creativity, in the movie industry as well as amongst fans, and of course, we have had 30 years of movies and shows since (and many of them are even worth watching!). We also have digital technology in its many beneficial forms (streaming media, on-demand movies, and music, etc) but while we fans enjoy using this technology, that technology can't be credited with creating the massive fan network; it only makes things more convenient. It was GODZILLA VS MECHA GODZILLA 93, GAMERA GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE, and ULTRAMAN TIGA that inspired us to the creation of the fan network that we have today, and that is why I consider them to be the greatest events in the world of Heroes and Monsters from the last 30 years.

OutTakes:

This issue was a pleasure to work on. All issues are fun, but some are more fun than others. It is far more a stroll down memory lane than other issues, but it is the celebration of the publication itself.



The world has changed a lot in 30 years. Fanzines had a huge burst of popularity in the early 90s, then a few years later the world wide web made information easier and easier to get. A lot of great zines faded out of existence. Thankfully made on demand services have brought a new renaissance of fanzines, many of which cover great

movies and shows that have been neglected.

The first issue of Xenorama was 20 pages long, had seven articles by a combination of seven writers and artists. This would be the format for the next thirteen issues, though occasionally the size of the zine would change. This was more of a financial consideration rather than an artistic one.

There is a lot more Xenorama to come!

Stay tuned...

X7



Editor's note: how in the heck has *Xenorama* been around for 30 years now? I want to thank each and every one of the people who have ever contributed something to the zine, but I really don't have enough space to say "thank you thank you thank you..." that many times (all apologies to Mr. Steve Martin), so I hope that this will do. *Xenorama* has had a banner year and next year should be just as good if not better! Stay Tuned!

Thirty years ago *Xenorama, the Journal of Heroes and Monsters* published the inaugural issue.

Typewriters, pasted in pictures and an editor who was learning as he went were what went into it. It is hard to believe that there was ever a time when *Xenorama* wasn't around in some form or another. This issue features the origins of the fanzine, which includes influences from all over the world. These include Japanese monsters, comic books, dinosaurs, music, science fiction double features and many more. There was no real internet back then, nor digital movies on demand. Finding fanzines to read about your favorite characters was a wonderful thing to do, and we here at *Xenorama* are very appreciative of everyone who has been along for the ride! Thank you all!



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