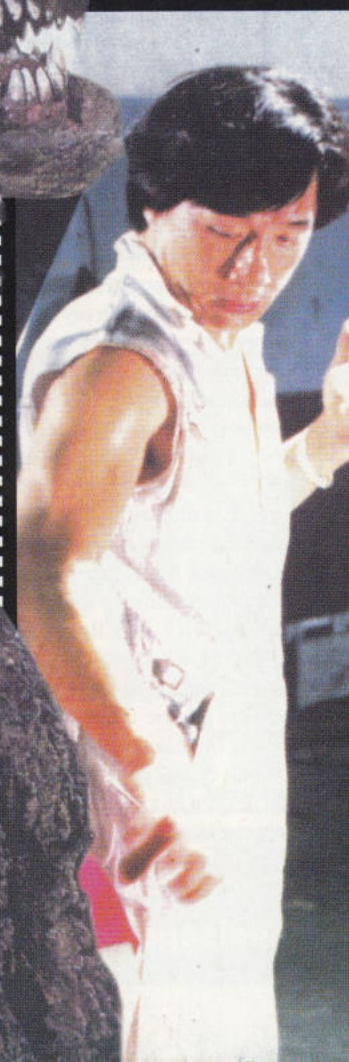


ORIENTAL CINEMA

THE REPTILIAN ISSUE!

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Like most people my age, I was five years old at one time. And at that approximate point in my life, I developed an interest in reptiles (probably because I myself have also always been cold-blooded; at least, emotionally). The first ever reptilian flick I ever glanced at was only for a few minutes, Britain's THE GIANT BEHEMOTH. But this was in the 1960s when I was a tiny tot, so the movie didn't leave much of an impression. However, REVENGE OF THE CREATURE (my first Gill-Man flick), which came on TV about a year later, most certainly did. By this time, I was intrigued by all sorts of monster movies, and although I tolerated plenty of Frankenstein and Dracula films, the movies which truly struck me as exceptional were those involving green skinned, cold-blooded creatures; inspirational epics (to me, anyway!) like ONE MILLION YEARS B.C., THE HORROR OF PARTY BEACH, WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH, the other two "Lagoon Creature" classics, and THE GIANT GILA MONSTER. I began collecting hundreds of plastic dinosaur toys and model kits, but began to feel these lifeless imitations weren't good enough.

At an early age, I "mastered" the art of catching snakes and lizards... and despite numerous pets I'd captured, never once did a snake bite me. I kept my many reptilians as pets for quite some time, until they escaped, I let them go or until...gasp!...they died! Yes, looking back on it, the whole



OC
staffers
Damon
Foster &
Barrie
Evans.



thing seems so cruel now. But pertaining to OC's subject matter, this period in my life gave me a chance to discover a new type of reptile: Rubber Japanese creatures! When I discovered Godzilla and Ultraman, I became more selective as my interest became more specialized and took a specific course. No longer was I content to sit through predictably unimaginative American one-shots like THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS where the reptilian critter was portrayed as a menace of pure brute force who gets killed at the end; a concept which basically implies that what we don't understand has got to be destroyed. While dozens of lifeless monsters marched across the screen for routine mayhem, I was discovering the unique personalities of Japanese reptiles like Godzilla and Gamera. Though both these coldblooded antagonists started out in the same types of unflattering sci-fi dramas which plagued the 1950s & 1960s, both moved on to star in their own series of adventures, placing reptilian monsters, not just human protagonists, in unique situations and conflicts.

The popularity of Japanese reptile cinema inspired a massive amount of colorful, entertaining superhero programs like the ULTRA legacy,

MIRRORMAN, JUMBORG ACE and countless others-- nearly all of which have been covered in previous OCs. So I guess one more time isn't gonna' hurt.

One last point of interest-- remember earlier in this editorial when I stated no snake has ever bitten me? Well, that all changed recently, when two black snakes (with yellow stripes on them) bit me, and on both occasions (separated by about four months between bites), the bite (once on the thumb, once on the wrist) broke the skin and drew blood. Obviously, I'm getting slow in my old age, as the quality of more recent OCs (including this one) proves.

Sincerely, Damon Foster, P.O. Box 576, Fremont, CA 94537-0576



Dear Damon,

Thanks for OC#11! As always, you gave us a wonderful issue, even with all the limitations! The letter column was most amusing, especially with everyone putting down Cockenham, or whatever he (she, it) is!

But I'm saving my praise for another time, because right now I want to talk some sense into you! I tvhjk /hink you are making a big mistake by ending OC! There are few magazines out there that are devoted to such rare Asian films, and even fewer are as informative, entertaining and original as OC! If fact, it was OC that helped renew my interest in Asian films and literally changed my outlook on life /Please find it in your heart to forgive me. -DF/ as it has done to many a reader of OC! It was through OC that I, along with many other readers, found out about obscure TV shows, movies, actors & actresses, and lots of info that was virtually unknown to many American fans! And as for OC being a "commercial failure", if a magazine succeeds in keeping me entertained & grabbing my attention, then it's done its job well!

Kevin Lonergan
Hyannis, MA, USA

Damon,

I'm very sorry that you told me that OC is going on indefinite hiatus because the lousy comics bought up the distributor to your mag and they won't carry it any more. I was very pissed when I heard that. I don't blame you for chewing out those fuckhead cocksucking comicbook fart-sniffing rats! Shit, we fans of this stuff are always the victims of big company greed to buy out everything. Is there no justice in this world? /I'm baffled too, I quit trying to figure out the system. The whole thing is illogical, about as pointless as asking Ramone Salcedo, "How's the wife and kids?"-DF/

Well, in any case I want to respond to a couple of things in the past few issues. One, to Ms. Laurine White's comments

SEND ALL LETTERS TO:
Damon Foster, P.O. Box 576, Fremont, CA 94537-0576

about G-Con '95. I understand she was responding to Frank Strom's G-Con report but I thought the people who did the con did a wonderful job! Even though it was their first con, I urge all fans to support G-Con and the people who ran it. Before that, we didn't have nothing like this before. This was the first-ever of-it's-type con in the U.S! */On the contrary! Back in the 1970s, August Ragone and Bob Johnson held similar events in California! Though they were called "Japanese Fantasy Days", not "G-Cons", they were basically the same thing but way, way ahead of their times!-DF/* Just give it a chance. I thought the location, the hotel, the dealer's room, programming of G-Con was very good and reasonable. Sure, there was little problems but G-Con was great! Take it from a person who was also there.

Also, Ms. White, G-Con 96 was more better! I was there and I've met the two Godzilla actors who attended the con. Plus, our video show that Jay Johnson and I did was even better with the con. Even the company, Expressions in Animation, who has finally released the original ULTRAMAN series to home video was at G-Con. Their first volume of ULTRAMAN really kicks ass! I urge all ULTRAMAN fans to buy the video and support Expressions, the video is available in video shops, if you can't find it you can order it from the company. Will give the address in a minute. But I think Ms. White, you should have come to G-Con 96 maybe you would have changed your opinion about it. There's an old saying, "See it for yourself". Don't get offended, Ms. White, everyone is entitled opinions of something we read. But support G-Con, folks! */So please, all you "Kaiju Fans", become rich enough to fly all the way out to the middle of nowhere every year, attend G-Con, and pay homage to Lord God J.D. Lees and Deity John Rocco Roberto, so that I will never again have to print such an annoying letter! -DF/*

Plus these people who write to you because they don't like or are offended

by your writing style in Oc. Like this Harry Cackenhams and this other one, Barry Kaufman are really pissing me off. I want to say this to these sniveling twits: If you don't like OC, don't fucking read it! You jackasses must like it because you are still writing to Damon. I must congratulate Mr. Barrie Evans for telling this Harry Cackenhams to crumb off! Like I said once, and I'll say it again, to the assholes who trash OC and Damon: Keep your comments and bullshit to yourselves! */Thanks for sticking up for me, Lenell, but let's call a truce here! Perhaps I shouldn't have printed the letters of those who so rudely attacked me, nor should I have defended myself in such a nasty manner. There's too much in-fighting among fans of such a small genre. I only printed letters from those who hate me because it can be so funny to read, and gives me a chance to toss in a few more silly comments of my own. So once again I state that I don't hate anybody who's written a nasty letter to OC; they expressed their opinions (mean though they were), and I did likewise (meaner though they were). I'm not claiming there aren't people in the fandom I dislike, my disputes with sleaze-rag perverts are commonly known, but these are basically fans of horror & exploitation, and not exclusively of the Asian genre. There's way too much rivalry (over petty, unimportant matters, misunderstandings, and outright lies) among fans, especially the stuff going on at the East Coast, and such pointless disagreements aren't doing any of us any good. I will, however, continue to defend myself in the same manner as those who trash me and my work.-DF/*

I want to respond to your last statement in your recent editorial. You are right, there seems to be some fellow fans and zines out there who do think that this fandom can only exist by their efforts. I am neutral and I support all these Asian-zines because I enjoy them and want the genre to be promoted in this country. However, sadly (but the fans

should know) there is competition and egoism among the ranks of fandom, which has nearly destroyed the entire field of Japanese sci-fi fandom */Nonsense! The fandom goes on strong no matter what lame-ass gripes certain zine editors think of each other! Don't give them snobs so much credibility! -DF/* Whatever happened to promoting the genre together? I have to say this to everyone in this hobby, that nobody is better than anyone else! This fighting doesn't help in the long run. I thought it nice of Damon to put in a good plug for all the Asian-related zines. */Even the ones I don't like very much!-DF/* I ask all the other publications to do the same. For the sake of the genre, the fans and readers! For once, forget about competition! */I think G-FAN can start this unofficial "peace treaty" by doing a plug for Dan Reed's zine, KAIJU REVIEW! Come on, G-Boys, let by-gones be by-gones, respect your fellow writers, that is, IF you can all get along with each other in the first place.-DF/*

That's all, Damon, I hope OC makes a comeback soon! Your mag (sniff, sob) will be sorely missed! Not just by me, but by your loyal supporters! You put out one hell of a damn good magazine! No, Great magazine! You are one cool mother fucker, Damon, we'll miss OC! May Ultra be with you!

"Shoowatt!" Lenell Bridges
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Damon,

Congratulations on another great issue of OC! */Thanks for the compliment, it made me even happier than Michael Jackson must have been when he found out his baby is a boy!-DF/* The only real disappointment was the cost cutting measures that have proven necessary. It's a shame that a magazine as diverse and interesting as yours cannot reach as wide an audience as so many inferior rags that I can't be bothered to mention. I guess that's the price you pay for being fairly independent and always speaking your



mind, but I think it sucks. However, please don't blame us comic geeks! All the foolishness that is going on in the distribution system is not due to our desire for even more funny books, but by pure greed on the part of businessmen. Actually, there is a lot less stuff available now, than there used to be. That's no great loss in most cases, but when OC runs into troubles, well, that's another story.

I got a good laugh out of the G-FORCE review and I agree with you completely! I cannot understand how any sane mind could prefer BATTLE OF THE PLANETS to this version. Sure, G-FORCE has bad dubbing, bad name choices, and lousy new music, but at least it's fairly faithful to its source. Plus, it isn't wimpy when it comes to violence like BATTLE OF THE PLANETS. At least G-FORCE is usually honest enough to admit that the characters really are dying and not just "unconscious". I grew up on BATTLE OF THE PLANETS, but I still think G-FORCE blows it away. By the way, "Galactor" is a more accurate name for the head villain, since that was the name of the whole evil organization in GATCHAMAN. The original name of that villain was "Berg Katse" and not "Zoltar".

I also have some additional info on THE LOST WORLD OF SINBAD. A.I.P.'s credits were fairly screwed up, which is pretty typical for English dubbed versions. Okay, the flick was released in Japan in 1963 and was originally called DAI TOZOKU, which I think means "The Great Thief". Shinichi Sekizawa was actually co-screenwriter with Takeshi Kimura, Takao Saito was director of photography. Executive producer "Yuko" Tanaka is really Tomoyuki Tanaka, that well-known producer of Toho sci-fi. When they list Tadao Nakamura, they really meant Tadao Nakamaru. Nakamaru, who plays the Premier in SINBAD, is that guy from THE SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN, TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA, BRAIN 17, BIOMAN, etc. Tetsu Nakamura is the name of the archer, though he has lots of other aliases.

Here is a list of some of the other familiar actors in SINBAD: Jun Funato as the Prince, Ichiro Arishima as the Wizard (almost impossible to recognize under that make-up!), Mitsuko Kusabue as the scheming traitor Sobei, Hideo Sunazuka as one of the bandits (he was one of the goofballs in GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER), and Nadao Kirino as the last Sinbad crewman to get arrowed. Of course, none of the above is all that important except to collectors of useless trivia like myself. Doesn't it get you ticked off, though, that the people who are getting paid to translate this junk for us never ever do it properly? Are the Japanese & Chinese languages really that impossible or are these people just lazy?

I don't think KAMEN RIDER V3 appears in the Japanese SPIDERMAN (Toei; 1978) series. However, I do have an episode (#33, I believe) which guest stars Hiroshi Miyauchi. Oddly enough, Miyauchi plays a detective who dresses suspiciously like Ken Hayakawa, his lead role in KAI KETSU ZUBAT! It's not really Hayakawa, but it's fun nonetheless, and Miyauchi steals the show */He has a knack for that!-DF/* right out from under Spidey.

I don't have any of the caper flicks you're after, but I do have 100 SHOT, 100 KILLED, a Japanese flick directed by Jun Fukuda & starring Akira Takarada, Mie Itama, Ichiro Arishima, Akihiko Hirata & Mike Daning. It's mostly in Japanese, but with parts in English, Chinese & French! It's a little talky at times, but fairly cool and kinda' funny. So far, it's been the only Japanese spy flick I've been able to dig up.

Christopher Elam
LA., U.S.A.

Hi! My Very dear Damon Foster!

I'm a big HK movie fan (I guess I am the greatest collector in Germany) and I dislike your bullshit writing about those movies very much. Also, your friend Doug Weldy only writes crap. Take TRAGIC FANTASY for example. No

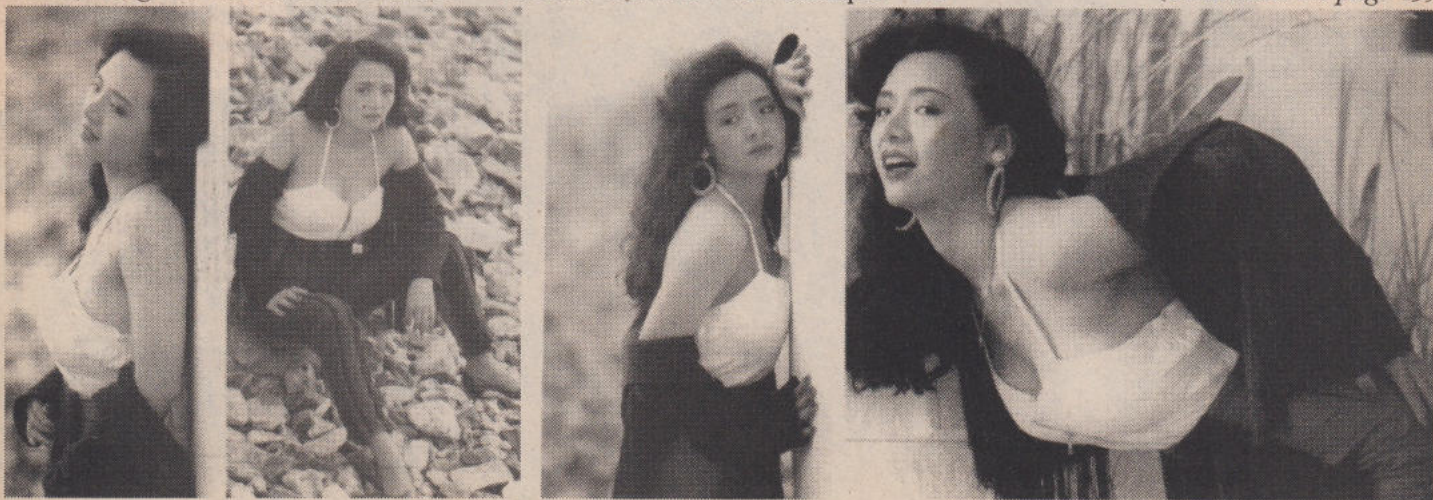
word about the great violent scenes of Cat. 3 fame. Or even the "geile" Canto Pops from famous group Beyond of HK. Even in Dolby Stereo, farthead. And, you seem to be very old */Yep, I'm old; it seems like only yesterday the Town Cryer was yelling: "Here ye, here ye. The Foster child is a boy".-DF/*, and still watch those cheapie plastic-hero "Schvett". And no more words about boring Godzilla and co. Just what the heck do you write this crappie shit for? And always those pubertarian "get laid" shitties. Who wants to read this? This ain't Penthouse Love Letters for Gay Section of "Masturbation to Inframan"- "Mill". "Get a life".

And please, stop these Filipino-Trashsdrott films. Can't get 'em, won't see 'em. Fuck 'em and fuck your bullshit "get laid" sentences.

By the way, I'm a fan of hard-blooded the horror like UNTOLD STORY, great bloody FX in this one, yeah! Get an issue for Cat. 3 Fuck & Kill films. Please do that, many guys would appreciate it. So now, read ATC and learn.

So long (Mine too!),
Andy the Chinese master
(aka Andreas Busch), Wacking
off in Germany, to some sleazy
HK Cat. 3 piece of crap

Look, you stupid kraut. It's understandable that you dislike my attitude and personal comments in OC, that's a perfectly normal reaction (especially from one-dimensional geeks like you) to my abnormal approach to writing. But when you condemn me for offering ample coverage of Japan's monsters & superheroes, not to mention unique Filipino productions, you come off as a narrowminded idiot. For the record, I'm actually proud that I managed to keep OC away from the trendy, profitable Category 3 garbage coming out of HK. Had I done that, enough horny shitheads would be buying OC, and its profits would be higher, eliminating its unstable future (you'll be glad to know it won't)
(continued on page 49)



COLDBLOODED AVENGERS: YOUR FAVORITE REPTILES OF SCREEN & TV

Science fiction movies involving reptiles go back pretty far, as proven by the existence of B&W, silent oldies like *THE LOST WORLD* and *20 MILLION B.C.*; both of which were shot at an early time period, possibly 8:45 a.m. But seriously, both stories became influential, each having remakes. The first two remakes were in the 1960s. The remake of *THE LOST WORLD* seems to be strikingly different than the original, which, as I understand it, was a lot like *KING KONG* in that not only do explorers go to a prehistoric locale, but bring a monster (in this case a brontosaurus) back to civilization where it causes mayhem before being destroyed (a common, tragic re-occurrence which has happened in many a monster movie ever since). The 1960s version of

THE LOST WORLD, on the other hand, never shows our adventurers leave the dinosaur-populated land. Another difference is that while the original used Willis O'Brien's jerky animation (but excellent, considering how revolutionary it was back then) of model dinosaurs, the 1960s remake, which, when seen today looks like some bad old TV movie, used actual lizards like iguanas and baby alligators, but with fake horns & scales added. For cheap dinosaur effects, similar acts of cruelty to reptiles can be seen in the old *FLASH GORDON* serial of the 1930s, an elusive movie called *TWO LOST WORLDS*, and of course *ROBOT MONSTER & LOST IN SPACE* (both of which use stock footage from other productions, no lizards were harmed in the making of these turkeys). One of the most ridiculous examples of misuse of reptiles was in some stupid Pat Boone farce called *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH* of the 1960s, where the Earth's "center" has sky, sun, beaches and monitor lizards they tried to pass

off as dimetrodons.

Far more striking than the 1960s' *THE LOST WORLD* was, of course, the full color *ONE MILLION B.C.* remake, *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* Not only did it feature outstanding stop-motion-animation by Willis O'Brien's successor Ray Harryhausen, but the voluptuous charms of Raquel Welch wearing the pre-cursor to what we now refer to as "Wonder Bras", looking drop dead gorgeous as the cave girl with big tits. The model tyrannosaurus and the overgrown sea-turtle were great, but it's Raquel Welch's padded push-up bra that has had men masturbating for over 30 years, and still counting! While I'm on the topic of remakes, I should say I recently sat through yet another remake of *THE LOST WORLD*. This 1992 pathetic ripoff has got to be one of the most stupid reptile movies of all time. Talky, meandering, dumb and pointless time-filler as uninspired characters bore us to tears while preparing for their expedition to "The Lost World". Once they arrive, lackluster writing offers the usual "skeleton tribe" and a native woman who looks out of place; this Mexican-looking babe, living in an otherwise African tribe was cute, but nothing more. The dinosaurs, on those rarest of occasions when actually shown, are incomplete rubber puppets; just heads & feet, no full body shots! Some irritating British kid befriends a fake-looking, baby teranodon, which of course, the characters call a pterodactyl.

But no matter how important the original *THE LOST WORLD* and *ONE MILLION B.C.* were, the first time anybody ever got to hear a reptilian monster on film was in the Willis O'Brien classic *KING KONG* (RKO Radio Pictures, 1933), not only one of the



first monster movies to have sound, but it was a masterpiece (for its time, anyway) that featured not only a horny ape, but some dinosaurs (i.e. a tyrannosaurus and a stegosaurus) too.

But it's at this point (the early 1950s), finally, when the subject matter becomes all too familiar to OC's readership, since it's here that the Japanese got in on the reptilian swing of things. Toho's GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS introduced Gojira, beyond a doubt, the most famous cinematic reptile ever to wreck havoc. No dinosaur before him exhibited such charisma and personality. The reasons for Godzilla's rise to popularity are varied, one possible theory is because of the atmosphere in the movie, since nobody knew about the horrors of atomic warfare as well as the Japanese. So in the early 1950s, to cash in on the Japanese public's fears of nuclear weaponry, Toho canceled plans to produce an Indonesian/Japanese blockbuster EIKO KAGE-NI (aka "Beyond the Glory") in favor of Tomoyuki Tanaka's KAITEI NIMAN MAIRU KARAKITA NO DAI KAIJU, which meant "The Monster From 20,000 Miles Beneath the Sea" (a title inspired by two American hits: THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS and 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA). KAITEI NIMAN blah blah blah was later renamed GOJIRA (Toho; 1954), and of course, GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS. The Japanese audience's interest in this flick was continually fueled by a weekly, serialized radio drama (also called GOJIRA), which was broadcast from 7/17/54 to 9/25/54. Thanks to huge promotional campaigns, 9,610,000 people came to see GOJIRA in Japan. Production on the live action theatrical GOJIRA officially started on 7/5/54, already having had a head start, thanks to two months of pre-production out of the way, and filming was completed in 122 days.

The legendary Japanese hit, GOJIRA spawned a 1955 sequel, GOJIRA NO GYAKUSHU, where, once again, Gojira received another American alias; first it was Godzilla, now it's Gigantis, the American release being GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER. The name changed because the American Releasers (Warner Brothers) couldn't get permission from American International (who changed GOJIRA into GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS) to use the name "Godzilla". The screenplay was by Takeo Murata, and although many consider it inferior to the original, it too was a hit, filling theaters with 8,340,000 audience members. So it was a go for reptilian cinema in Japan, therefore 1956 had entries like RODAN (SORA NO DAI KAIJU RADON) and the rarely seen

horror/fantasy/drama MADAM WHITE SNAKE (starring Shirley Yamaguchi). You HK fans may recognize this title as PAI-SHE CHUAN, a Chinese fairy tale which influenced many movies, including Maggie Cheung's GREEN SNAKE (Golden Harvest; 1993). Lin Ching Hsia (aka Brigitte Lin of THE BRIDE WITH WHITE HAIR, ROYAL TRAMP, PEKING OPERA BLUES, ZU: WARRIORS OF MAGIC MOUNTAIN, and Jackie Chan films FANTASY FORCE MISSION & POLICE STORY) starred in another rare version of it called LOVE OF THE WHITE SNAKE in the mid-'70s. In 1992, it was rumored that body-builder Michiko Nishiwaki (Toei's DIMENSIONAL WARRIOR SPIELVAN, MY LUCKY STARS, OUTLAW BROTHERS) would be the second Japanese actress to play the role (Shirley Yamaguchi was the first, back in 1956), when she accepted an offer to appear in STORY OF THE WHITE SNAKE. But to the best of my knowledge, this Hong Kongese movie was never completed. MADAM WHITE SNAKE (1956) drew six hundred thousand people to the box office in Japan, but internationally, it's not well remembered.

Though 1956's MADAM WHITE SNAKE (Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Screenplay: Toshio Yasumi) never went far, Japan's other 1956 reptile flick, RODAN most certainly did. Produced by Tomoyuki Tanaka, screenplay by Takeo Murata & Takeshi Kimura, and directed by Inoshiro Honda, the success of RODAN confirmed what GOJIRA and GIGANTIS implied: Sci-fi reptiles had given Toho their nitch! As an unlikely experiment, to satisfy the Japanese public's intake of reptilian horrors, the American version of GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS returned to Japan as a Japanese dubbed version of this Raymond Burr print! Perhaps it was only to tide over the public in between films, and even though the Japanese audience couldn't figure out Raymond Burr's Steve Martin inserts, it did fairly well at the Japanese box office. But the next new Toho dinosaur movie wasn't until 1958.

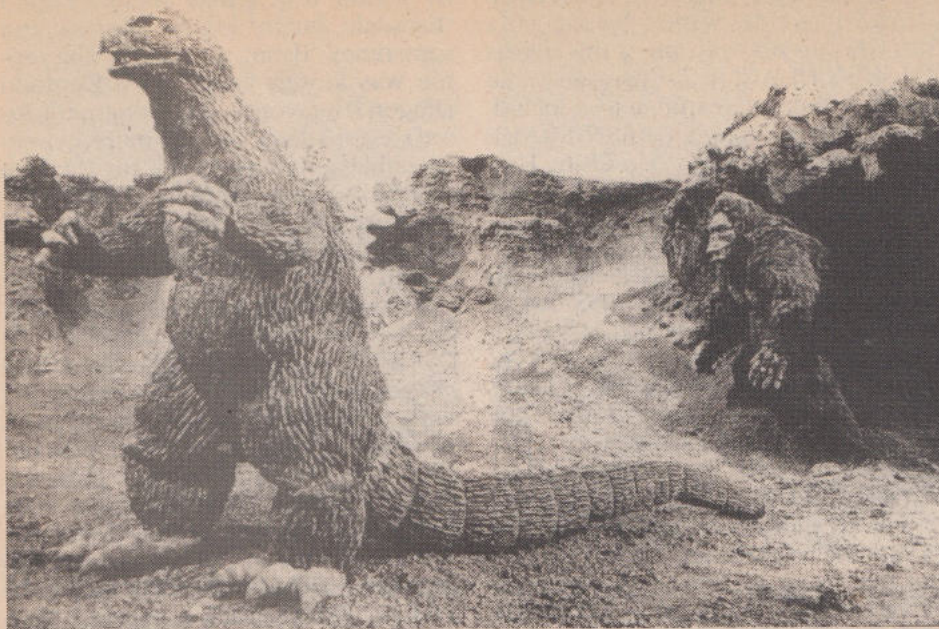
DAI KAIJU BARAN ("Giant Monster Varan") came from Toho (of course) in 1958. This B&W monster flick came to America in 1961 as VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE. All shots in Varan's English print neglect this reptile's ability to fly, though even in DAI KAIJU BARAN this creature only flew in one brief scene. Unlike Godzilla & Rodan, Varan wasn't awakened or mutated by atomic radiation, he was always around, lurking like Nessie, Lake Okanogan's Ogopogo, Lake Champlain's Champ, and other bullshit hoaxes. In the original Japanese BARAN, Varan is a mountain god feared

by locals, much like Majin. Called "Baradaki Sanjin" by the natives, and sometimes "Baran no Poda". The reptile was loosely based on a Komodo Dragon (the world's largest monitor lizard), even though Varan more closely resembles a flying squirrel. But the latin word for dragon, "Varanis" is obviously what inspired the name Varan, even though the Japanese still pronounce it "Baran".

Regardless, VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE never had the impact shared by GODZILLA & RODAN. The American version had excessive tampering (as with GODZILLA, plenty of footage of American actors was spliced in, with unsatisfying results), but even the Japanese version suffered due to budget cuts, since that same year (1958) Toho cast Toshiro Mifune in the blockbuster (by Japanese standards) fantasy, THE THREE TREASURES; a movie I accidentally said came from 1966, when I reviewed it in OC's "Giant Titans" issue. Strangely, this talky, boring film is considered a classic, while it's direct rival that year, VARAN is often slagged; I think somebody has got their wires crossed! THE THREE TREASURES's only connection here is that it involves a large reptile, a multi-headed hydra that appears briefly in this otherwise dull fantasy. Regardless, the fable was liked enough to generate remakes, like the colorful, 1994 movie YAMATO TAKERU (again involving the several-headed dragon, who now bears a striking resemblance to Death Ghidrah in the new MOTHRA movie), not to mention a 37-episode cartoon program of the same name. If nothing else, THE THREE TREASURES, really just another boring old samurai film, gave us a chance to finally see a Japanese, rubber reptile in color.

As a change of pace, not all of the next few Toho sci-fi dramas involved reptilian beasts. Science fiction was alive & well in Japan, in non-reptile films like BATTLE IN OUTERSPACE, THE MYSTERIANS, HALF-HUMAN, SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN, THE HUMAN VAPOR, DAGORA THE SPACE MONSTER, WARNING FROM SPACE, GORATH, ATTACK OF THE MUSHROOM PEOPLE, THE H-MAN, the three "Tomei Ningen" movies, and THE LAST WAR. But 1963 saw the long overdue return of reptiles in Toho cinema, thanks to the notorious KING KONG VS. GODZILLA and the under-rated ATRAGON. ATRAGON concentrated on a high-tech submarine battling subterranean invaders, and only had Manda (an overgrown salamander) in a couple brief scenes, but being the first Japanese monster film I ever saw, it has a certain sentimental value to me.

How KING KONG VS. GODZILLA



came about is an interesting concept. First of all, nobody should deny that the original KING KONG, like GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS, was a classic. After over 60 years, KING KONG still entertains. If only Kong's tiny hair-follicles wouldn't keep moving (a dead giveaway that the model is animated and obviously handled heavily), and the overdone references to BEAUTY & THE BEST are stupid and annoying! I rented the restored, colorized print, which, thankfully retained the "shocking" scenes (Kong tears Fay Wray's clothes and eats people) edited from theatrical prints back in the 1930s. In the reptile dept. (after all, that's what this issue is suppose to be about), KING KONG offers not only Kong's well-publicized fight with a pteranodon & T.Rex, but there are other reptiles: Charging stegosaurus, carnivorous (!) brontosaurus, and a giant salamander or two. But it seems to me that the human adventurers would have rather captured a dinosaur than Kong, since unlike gorillas, dinosaurs are extinct and such a discovery would be more valuable than a big horny ape. Regardless, KING KONG's (RKO, 1933) creator, Willis O'Brien initially came up with a concept (years after KONG's 1952 re-release) called "King Kong vs. Frankenstein", a script where another giant gorilla is taken from Skull Island (the name "Skull Island" is a media thing, it's not called that in the movie; though the island does have a "Skull Mountain"). In the meantime, the current Dr. Frankenstein descendent has created a new monster supposedly called a Dingo (not to be confused with them small wild dogs in Australia). Though details are vague, this creature was to be made from different types of animals including a rhino. But John Beck took control of

the project when O'Brien approached him. No American film companies were interested in a King Kong sequel, so Beck took the concept to Toho, who eventually decided that they liked the idea of Kong fighting another monster, so long as it was one of their own; thus, the infamous KING KONG VS. GODZILLA was born, and the tradition of Kong's dislike toward reptiles continued. American film critics considered it a laugh riot, but it's still the highest grossing reptile movie in Toho history, having an audience attendance worldwide of 12,550,000!

King Kong would appear in one more Japanese film (KING KONG ESCAPES; 1967) and fight another reptile, Gorosaurus, in a slick battle reminiscent to Kong's duel with the T. Rex in the original KING KONG. But it was Godzilla, who's career as the world's most famous dinosaur soared, who went on to star in more movies than there are hairy-underarms in a San Francisco Women's locker room! KING KONG VS. GODZILLA really set the pace for Japanese reptiles in movies to come. Though GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER (Toho; 1956) pitted Godzilla against Angilas, it was Godzilla's fateful bout against Kong which really established what resurrected dinosaurs were all about. Gone were the days of intended "one-shot" monsters (Godzilla, Rodan, Varan, etc.) rising, attacking then dying. The Japanese reptiles of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, whether depicted as heroic or villainous, were going to break new grounds, go on their own adventures, and "boldly go where no reptile has gone before".

Though 1964's GODZILLA VS. THE THING is considered the definitive classic for its intelligent script and flawless special effects, it was the likes of

GHIDRAH THE THREE HEADED MONSTER and MONSTER ZERO which really sent the Godzilla series ahead of the times, and put the whole concept over-the-top. Oh sure, there are a few oldtimers and purists, who ignore the existence of anything to come out after GODZILLA VS. THE THING, but it's starting with GHIDRAH THE THREE HEADED MONSTER where the most innovative ideas came into play, and really made the Godzilla films into a one-of-a-kind series. Finally, Godzilla and Rodan were treated as actual creatures with a range of emotions, and some intelligence, and not just the automated, lumbering menaces who's only purpose was to trample on buildings. Being Japanese movies, racist American critics were (and still are) quick to pounce on them simply because the costumes are made of rubber. Maybe so, but at least they're not real lizards with fake fins & horns glued to them! What's worse, cruelty to animals or cruelty to latex?! For those who still consider the Godzilla movies to be crappy, let's have a look at their non-Japanese competition, over the years. I won't pretend to be an expert on cartoons, so the likes of VALLEY OF THE DINOSAURS (a 1970s, Saturday morning program), THE LAND BEFORE TIME, and THE FLINTSTONES will be ignored. Also excluded (thankfully) are lame-ass kiddie fiascos like BARNEY, the worthless Disney piece of shit PETE'S DRAGON, that whole TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLE genre, and the PREHISTERIA flicks. But the following American productions shall once and for all prove how excellent Japanese cinema really is:

20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH- 1950s classic about a rocketship (arriving from Venus) that lands near Italy and out comes a marauding monster. Ray Harryhausen's animated FX highlight this enjoyable, B&W oldie where the creature (humanoid, but with scales and a lizard tail) never attacks unless provoked, in this case by a dog, pitch-fork wielding farmer and an elephant. This rapidly growing monster is shot down at the Roman Coliseum; best known to OC readers as the place where Bruce Lee duelled Chuck Norris in RETURN OF THE DRAGON (Golden Harvest; 1972). Though outdated and with naive character development, this is a fun movie, the monster (called a "Ymir" in magazines, though never named in the flick itself) almost has the charisma of a Japanese nemesis. Though I liked the movie okay, the fact remains that the "Ymir" never had Godzilla's stamina & potential to have his own film series.

CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON (1954)- My god, did Julia Adams look hot in that one-piece bathing-suit, or what?! Though I shudder to imagine what she might look like today, she, like the movie, is great! I loved this classic tale of a lovesick "gill man" when I was a kiddie, and never outgrew it! It's an enjoyable story of scientists encountering a murderous, part-fish, part-human, part-reptilian water dweller at the Amazon River. The "Creature" costume looks realistic even by today's standards! I'll take a slick, rubber costume over modern computer FX any day! Universal Intl.; 1954, Dir.: Jack Arnold, Story: Maurice Zimm, Screenplay: Harry Essex, Arthur Ross, Starring: Richard Carlson & Richard Denning.

REVENGE OF THE CREATURE- Much like the first, except that the gill man is captured, put on display for tourists at an aquarium, and then he escapes and stalks Lori Nelson all over Florida. This enjoyable monster movie is of sentimental value to me for being one of the very first (tying with *THE GIANT BEHEMOTH*) sci-fi thrillers I ever saw. As a twerp, the scenes which really left an impression on me were where he killed a stork and later a dog. Today, the most memorable scene is a hilarious blunder: The Gill Man tosses a man into a palm tree, but it's obvious the guy is dangling on a wire. Big fun regardless. With this sequel, it looked as though the Creature just might have a whole series of films, with each getting more exciting than the last; quite conceivably, the Creature could have become the American equivalent of Godzilla. Dir.: Jack Arnold, Starring: John Agar, Lori Nelson, John Bromfield.



THE CREATURE WALKS AMONG US- Via an accident, corrective surgery & an egomaniac scientist who wants to play god, the "gill man" becomes a "lung man"-- and doesn't know it; so he eventually drowns, thinking he can breathe underwater. Another enjoyable B&W classic. It's too bad the film series ended here; things were getting interesting! Given the chance, the gill man could have given Godzilla a run for his money! But alas, this is the last film in the series, it's just a trilogy. Universal; 1956.

GORG (1961)- Noble attempt to emulate Japan's man-in-suit movies, and ironically, it probably influenced later Japanese films (i.e. *MONSTER FROM A PREHISTORIC PLANET*, and the films where Godzilla returns to the ocean at the climax). High point: Huge Gorgo props (head & hands)! The dinosaur costumes and miniatures are probably just as good as that of any Japanese film at the time, but crude filming and unconvincing double-exposures strike blows against this British/American coproduction. Script involves the discovery of a sea monster near some Irish fishing village, its capture and rescue by a larger Gorgo. King Bros. Productions; Starring: Bill Travers, William Sylvester.

HELL COMES TO FROG TOWN- Had I stopped to think frogs are amphibians (not reptiles), it would have saved me the effort of sitting through this worthless, 1987 comedy/S.F./adventure drama. The setting is another nuclear-holocausted place (common in low budget stinkers like this) with human scavengers pitted against sterility and mutant, talking frogs. Most of the frogs don't look much better than the monstrous villains on Japanese superhero TV. Stupid, pointless shenanigans from start to finish. It stars some anorexic blond woman who does weak martial arts, and Roddy Piper, who appeared with Sonny Chiba in *IMMORTAL COMBAT*.

ISLAND OF THE LOST (1968)- Worthwhile little caper about a family stuck on a dangerous island. Though there are conflicts with hostile natives, "Saber-Toothed Wolves" (German Shepherds with ceramic fangs, no Godzilla movie stoops this slow!), and tiger sharks, there's also an alligator with fake fins attached, which I consider more tacky than any Japanese film! Hell, there are even ostriches with fake horns glued to their heads! A Paramount Film, Starring: Richard Greene, Luke Halpin & Irene Tsu.

LAND OF THE LOST (Sid & Marty

Kroft; 1974)- Most of you, like me, remember watching this series as a kiddie. Though it's a childish Saturday morning program, the animated dinosaurs are superb when shown, and although the only friendly one, Dopey (a baby brontosaurus; no doubt the inspiration for *BABY*), was sickeningly cute & sappy, at least the over-all approach toward dinosaurs seemed kinda' realistic. And them weird lizard men, the Sleestacks were kinda' eerie too. This show is considered a classic now because its early 1990s remake is so damn stupid (though I'd almost like to bone the jungle girl). The antagonistic tyrannosaurus of the show, "Grumpy" had a fairly regular role, as did "Alice", an allosaurus who guards the Sleestacks' ancient village. Grumpy is as close as America has ever come to having a Godzilla, which is sad. Broadcast on NBC, Script Writers: D.C. Fontana, David Gerrold.

LAND UNKNOWN, THE- Rather like *THE LAST DINOSAUR* in many ways. It's an enjoyable, generally well-done, if not a little typical 1957 B&W sci-fi caper about an expedition stuck (their helicopter crashed) at a dinosaur-populated region with a fanged (and persistent) pleisiosaur, a really cool tyrannosaurus costume, overgrown monitor-lizards, plants that eat women and bushbabies, a horny rogue, and pteranodons who screech just like the ones in *JOHNNY QUEST*! I liked it. Dir.: Virgil Vogel, Cast: Jock Mahoney, William Reynolds, Douglas Kennedy, and Shawn Smith (no, not that little putz from the worthless *BLACKEST HEART* rag).

ARENA- This is the 17th episode of *STAR TREK* (Paramount TV; 1966), and a personal favorite of mine as a twerp, because the reptilian "Gorn" monster was so cool looking! Though he was a villain, and Capt. Kirk admits to having some sort of "instinctive revulsion to reptiles", at least Kirk spares his opponent, the Gorn isn't killed. But they never brought the Gorn back as a good guy, the bastards! Being animal in appearance, yet having a uniform, he just might have been a small influence to Japanese superhero villains of the post-Kamen Rider genre, but we'll never know for sure. Writers: Gene Coon, F. Brown, Dir.: Joseph Pevney, Guest Cast: Carole Shelyne, Vic Perrin.

Q: THE WINGED SERPENT- Gory little shocker about a flying dinosaur stalking 1982 New Yorkers with speech problems (i.e. excessive use of the word "fuckin'", inability to pronounce R's at the ends of words, etc.). I was relieved to finally hear David Carradine act & speak well, without that "Chinese" (hah!)

accent he demonstrated in 1971's KUNG FU series and its sequels. The monstrous Q, though animated decently (just don't expect anything of master Ray Harryhausen's quality!), is strictly hungry & evil, no personality, we give it no sympathy when Carradine machine-guns it to death at the climax. As amusing as it is, it could have been more interesting if more screentime concentrated on the bird-like reptile itself, and not dull human characters (i.e. Michael Moriarty & Candy Clark) and some fanatically evil religious cult obsessed with human sacrifice.

CAVEMAN- Early 1980s spoof of ONE MILLION YEARS B.C., with Richard Starkey (aka Ringo Starr) as a cavemen coping with rival cavemen, cave-babes and hilarious dinosaurs, courtesy of maestro Ray Harryhausen! The movie is stupid and silly, yet entertaining.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES- No comment, I don't want to throw up.

CARNOSAUR- Unwatchable Roger Corman dreck, I found it so lame I could never sit through its sequel, CARNOSAUR II.

JURASSIC PARK- Enough said.

DINOSAURS- Early 1990s TV show with cool costumes, but placing prehistoric reptiles in a suburban setting makes this poor comedy into a half-ass imitation of worthless kiddie programs like THE FLINTSTONES and THE SIMPSONS. And that baby dinosaur who hatches from the egg, does he scream, "Minya ripoff" or what?! Did Toho ever sue these people?!

THEODORE REX- The mere existence of Whoopie Goldberg is justification for never having seen this comedy, and is grounds for nuking Hollywood.

DRAGONHEART- Being so so so current & mainstream, I expected to trash this 1995 fantasy. But I really seemed to like it; the characters are interesting, the swordplay is okay, and the dragon, though computer-animated, never gave me a headache, and was damn convincing; the FX are breathtaking! Perhaps there should have been more blood and onscreen stabbings, but otherwise, this Euro-period, sword & sorcery tale of knights, dragons, chivalry, rebels against the evil king, etc., is worth checking out on a rainy day. Video Release: 1996 (MCA Universal), Starring: Dennis Quaid and Sean Connory's voice as the dragon.

I had mixed reactions to all these American movies. Rarely did any of

these rise to the atmosphere of the Japanese product.

But not all reptilian flicks were so lame. There were more Japanese films (thank god!), insuring Godzilla a permanent place in motion picture history. The popularity of this new age in wacky 1960s Godzilla adventures paved the way for numerous imitations: Daiei's Gamera films, Shochiku's GAPPA, Britain's GORG, Toei's MAGIC SERPENT, Nikkatsu's THE X FROM OUTERSPACE, and last, but certainly not least, TBS's never-ending ULTRAMAN genre. But first things first. Fire-breathing turtle Gamera made his debut in Daiei's GAMERA (aka GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE) in 1965, the same year a slanty-eyed Frankenstein battled a teddy-bear dinosaur called Baragon in FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD (Toho; 1965). Being a blatant Godzilla imitator, Gamera's films followed in Godzilla's foot-steps more than closely; once again, a prehistoric creature is revived by a nuclear bomb, and in the later film, the monster in question, be it Toho's Godzilla or Daiei's Gamera, became a good guy, battling monsters even more evil. In both cases, the films got pretty infantile in later years, and it's probably because the movie-makers were trying to compete with the whole Ultraman legacy which had taken Japanese TV by storm. Though technically, SPACE GIANTS (aka "Goldar", "Maguma Taishi", & "Ambassador Magma") predated ULTRAMAN by a few months, ULTRAMAN came closer to perfecting the concept and in the long

run, and became far more successful.

Japan wasn't the only Asian country interested in making flicks about monstrous reptiles. The 1967 Hong Kongese fantasy THE MONKEY (aka "Monkey Goes to the West") featured the famous Monkey King of Wu Cheng En's ancient novel, *Journey to the West*. In some versions of the story, the Monkey King (here played by Yueh Hua of COME DRINK WITH ME, 7 BLOWS OF THE DRAGON, INTIMATE CONFESSIONS OF A CHINESE COURTESAN, AMAZONS & SUPERMEN, PAYMENT IN BLOOD, THE WARLORD AND THE ACTRESS, SWORD AND THE LUTE, LUNG WEI VILLAGE, MONKEY KUNG FU and Hiroshi Fujioka's IN THE LINE OF DUTY 3) battled a "Dragon Prince", but in this 1967 Shaw Bros. version, the dragon was portrayed as a dinosaur, and it wasn't that bad of a prop. That same year, Korea offered WANG MA GUI ("King Monster"), an impossible-to-find sci-fi oddity, and of course, DAI KOESU YONG-KARI, which, thanks to assistance from Japan's Daiei, made it to American TV as YONGARY, MONSTER FROM THE DEEP. But neither China nor Korea really pursued reptilian movies much, since these few films failed at any major accomplishments. It wasn't until the 1980s, that Korea finally began to develop its own sci-fi scene. This was largely the work of one man, a childish comedian in Seoul called Shim Hyung Rei (aka Shim Hyung Lei). He starred in a number of infantile superhero farces like the UREME series, the SUPER HONG GIL TONG series, and SPARKMAN (one



of the better entries) before creating his ONE MILLION YEARS B.C. salute, the masterpiece (by Korean standards) TYRANNO'S CLAW, which didn't come out on video until the early 1990s. With a decent budget, and excellent dinosaur props, this enjoyable tale of caveman-against-dinosaurs may label Shim Hyung Rei as being Seoul's Steven Spielberg, and put Korea on the reptilian sci-fi map! I hope to see him make more great flicks like this in the future, it shall be interesting to see what Shim's next project is. He has also completed YOUNG GU AND THE DINOSAUR JUJU, featuring him as Young Gu (a character he first portrayed in the over-the-top thriller, YOUNG GU AND THE GOLDEN BAT), befriending a large horned reptile that bears a striking resemblance to Yorgary. Unfortunately, I've not been able to locate a tape of this elusive caper!

The 1960s Ultra genre in Japan, obviously influenced by the giant monster & reptile films created slight controversies in Japan, since Toho was annoyed that their main FX man, Eiji Tsuburaya (creator of Godzilla, Rodan & Varan, but you already knew that) branched off to start his own company, Tsuburaya Productions in the 1960s, resulting in all the Ultraman TV shows. Regardless, Toho was willing to distribute an Ultraman theatrical movie (made from episodes) in the late 1960s, this being Toho's only connection to Ultraman ever. The ultra genre started with 1965's ULTRA Q series (starring Kenji Sahara and Hiroko Sakurai), a B&W show which tried to capture the atmosphere of TWILIGHT ZONE and OUTER LIMITS, but since it involved continuing characters, it more closely resembles later American programs like THE NIGHT STALKER or THE X-FILES. It's sequel series, ULTRAMAN (TBS; 1966) carried the concept (people battling assorted monsters & reptiles) a step further by adding a metallic, giant superhero to the program, and the rest, as they say, is history.

ULTRAMAN is one incredibly important show, and one which I've written about over and over and over again; the whole Ultra legacy seems to cross into so many genres that it always pops up.

Its sequel series, ULTRASEVEN featured the adventures of Ultraman's brother, Ultraseven, although originally, ULTRASEVEN wasn't intended to involve a superhero, it was meant to be almost a throwback to ULTRA Q, except that the characters would have Science Patrol-esque uniforms (Ultra Q lacked funny helmets & space-age weaponry utilized by both the Science Patrol and Ultra Squad). Though the series didn't end up following that pattern because it became considered more obsolete than a lesbian without a tongue, there was

an outstandingly outstanding program a few years later which did use that concept (helmeted team vs. monsters; minus a superhero), called KINKYU SHIRE 10.4-10.10. (Tsuburaya; 1972/26 epi.). The idea was that the Ultra Garrison would have twice as many weapons and vehicles as their inspiration The Science Patrol, an excuse to show off lots of props, miniatures and vehicles. But as a follow-up to ULTRAMAN, TBS wanted the program to involve a giant superhero. So the rough draft of the script was re-written to involve a gigantic hero, tentatively called "Red Man". "Red Man", a name which would later become its own character/series (shot for the same amount of money it would cost to get a fastfood meal with a discount coupon),



was the original title for ULTRASEVEN, but TBS, again craving similarities to ULTRAMAN, wanted to keep the word "Ultra" in the title (for continued success founded by the original, 1966 ULTRAMAN). Red Man, though a space alien, wasn't meant to be related to Ultraman in anyway, there was originally no intention to create a family of superheroes. This is why Ultraseven stands out from the other Ultra Brothers, his design is a lot different. His uniform, to quote a badly dubbed character in GODZILLA VS. MEGALON, "is a sort of red". So the next chosen name was tentatively, "Ultra Eye".

We can refer to the program's timeslot as the "Ultra Timeslot". It's the same timeslot which aired 1965's ULTRA Q, and 1966's ULTRAMAN. The broadcasting TV station (TBS; the Tokyo Broadcasting Service) had wanted ULTRAMAN's budget to be lower than that for ULTRA Q, even though ULTRA

Q was in B&W and ULTRAMAN wasn't. One budget cut was that ULTRAMAN was filmed on 16mm, where as ULTRA Q was 35mm. After the success of ULTRA Q, TBS gave Tsuburaya money that was to be for two programs, the follow-ups ULTRAMAN and that which would later be known as ULTRASEVEN. But the whole budget, intended for both ULTRAMAN and "Red Man/Ultra-Eye/Ultraseven" ended up being spent entirely on ULTRAMAN. So there was a panic at TBS when ULTRAMAN went off the air, they were worried their "Ultra Timeslot" would go empty, because the Tsuburaya Co. used up all their money [on ULTRAMAN] and couldn't come up with an immediate replacement series.

Meanwhile, Tsuburaya rival Toei Co. (who would later bring us anything from KAMEN RIDER to POWER RANGERS) was developing a science fiction program of its own called UCHU DAI SENZO. This title was no coincidence, seeing as the Japanese title for STAR TREK, back in the 1960s was UCHU DAI SAKUSEN ("Operation Universe"). This in turn, was influenced by another U.S.A. hit series, SUPAI DAI SAKUSEN ("Operation Spy"), which we yankees remember as MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE! The Japanese TV station kept the word "Sakusen" in the title, hoping to lure MISSION IMPOSSIBLE fans (in Japan) to watch not only STAR TREK, but later, the proposed Toei outerspace program UCHU DAI SENZO. While back at the Tsuburaya company, they had to contact sponsors to raise money to produce their next series ("Red Man", "Ultra Garrison" & "Ultraseven"; there were other possible names for it too), therefor leaving a gap of at least six months, in their Ultra Timeslot. So the network contacted Toei, about purchasing their potential new sci-fi program UCHU DAI SENZO, which had just began production. At TBS's request, UCHU DAI SENZO was now to have the word "Ultra" in the title, if only to fill in the gap at TBS's Ultra Timeslot, until Tsuburaya could raise the yen to make ULTRASEVEN a reality. So UCHU DAI SENZO became CAPTAIN ULTRA, and immediately replaced ULTRAMAN once that series had run its full course. Having been produced by a different company (Toei, not Tsuburaya), CAPTAIN ULTRA was nothing like ULTRAMAN and is in no way related to ULTRA Q, ULTRAMAN, or the upcoming ULTRASEVEN. 1966's ULTRAMAN lasted from 7/10/66 to 4/9/67, before handing the torch to Toei's illegitimate "follow-up" (a sequel in title only) CAPTAIN ULTRA, which carried the Ultra name from 4/16/67 to 9/24/67. By the time CAPTAIN ULTRA ended, Tsuburaya and TBS had gathered enough yen from

sponsors to make ULTRASEVEN a go! So ULTRASEVEN continued the "Ultra Timeslot", no link in the "Ultra Chain" was broken.

With all the special effects involved, ULTRASEVEN, like ULTRAMAN and ULTRA Q before it, went over budget. So despite the huge success of these programs, TBS was reluctant to continue doing programs so heavy in FX, once ULTRASEVEN went off the air. So after the broadcast of ULTRASEVEN, the Ultra Timeslot came to an official end, being replaced with 1968's KAIKI DAI SAKUSEN ("Operation Mystery"), a small-scale, low budget drama; for the record, I hated this boring program and trashed it mercilessly in a review I wrote

(in OC's Japanese Sci-Fi Issue). KAIKI DAI SAKUSEN is as fun as getting a blowjob from a piranha. Fortunately, a few years later, the Ultra series would have a rebirth in programs like RETURN OF ULTRAMAN and ULTRAMAN ACE. Programs which involved more reptiles than ULTRASEVEN did, since most of the villains in ULTRASEVEN were space-alien. In the years that followed, there were plenty of Ultra sequels including TV shows like ULTRAMAN TARO, ULTRAMAN LEO, THE ULTRAMAN: JOE, ULTRAMAN 80, ULTRAMAN GREAT: TOWARDS THE FUTURE, ULTRAMAN POWERED: THE ULTIMATE HERO, and the more recent ULTRAMAN TIGA. There were also

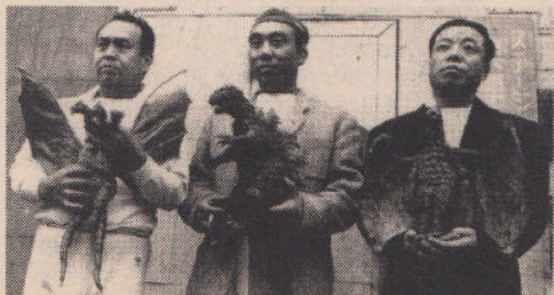
mouth titles, ZONE FIGHTER & THE ZONE FIGHTERS. Far too much is said about movie greats Godzilla, Gigan & Ghidrah making guest appearances in this action packed program. With or without these three charismatic reptiles, RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE is a thrilling sci-fi adventure in its own right. The appearance of Godzilla was another attempt to cash-in on the superhero craze, also tried in GODZILLA VS. MEGALON where Godzilla comes to the aid of heroic robot Jet Jaguar. But despite help from Zone Fighter & Jet Jaguar, most of Godzilla's 1970s films were box office bombs, the adult audience had grown tired of Godzilla's decline into kiddie films (GODZILLA'S REVENGE, GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER, GODZILLA VS. GIGAN, GODZILLA VS. THE COSMIC MONSTER, etc.), and the kiddies couldn't be bothered with an oldtimer like Godzilla, not so long as the Ultramen and Kamen Riders were delivering fast-paced thrills all over Japanese TV.

So though the superhero genre (and its reptilian villains), continues to thrive to this day, the mid-1970s weren't kind to theatrical reptiles like Godzilla, who seemed to die after 1975's TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA, and another casualty, Gamera, who faded away after 1971's GAMERA VS. ZIGRA. So aside from the heroics of Japanese TV, what reptiles wrecked havoc in the 1970s? Well, seeing as this magazine is *Oriental Cinema*, I've generally neglected writing about the existence of American and/or European films. For what it's worth, round-eyed movie makers offered tacky 1970s fantasies like AT THE EARTH'S CORE, THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT, and THE PEOPLE THAT TIME FORGOT, all of which involved marauding reptiles stalking the late Doug McClure. Also of note was the low budget, predictable farce THE CRATER LAKE MONSTER (kinda' like the Loch Ness monster, but from a meteor and he eats people), and the Sid & Marty Kroft Saturday morning show LAND OF THE LOST, which, with its animated dinosaurs and interesting scripts, is one of the better American kiddie programs I grew up on, and it certainly blows away the tacky, early 1990s remake program of the same name. But of any American dinosaur



copy-cat programs which some idiots consider "ripoffs", but in my opinion, some are just as good as the originals! If you like villainous reptiles being tackled by metallic giants, you haven't lived until you've seen Ultra Clone programs like MIRRORMAN, JUMBORG ACE, SPECTREMAN, SILVER KAMEN, IRON KING, ANDRO MELOS, & MEGALOMAN!

But of all the Ultra imitators seen on Japanese TV in the 1970s, the most sought after, intriguing is the 1973 program known by many names: RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE, HUMAN COMET ZONE, ZONE: THE HUMAN METEOR, and of course, its unofficial word-of-



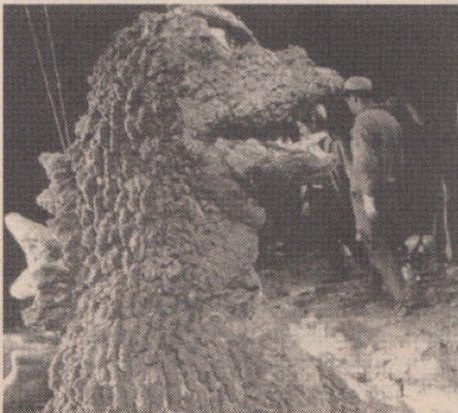
production, one of the more interesting was 1977's *THE LAST DINOSAUR*. Though a TV movie with Joan Van Ark and some ugly old guy, it was partially financed by Japan's Tsuburaya company, and the cool-looking dinosaur costume also appears in the *AIZENBORG* (aka "Attack of the Super Monsters" in America) series. At least in this film, the dinosaur is allowed to survive.

In the 1980s, both of Japan's cinematic reptiles made comebacks. Gamera's pathetic return was in the cheap, crappy movie *GAMERA SUPER MONSTER* (1980), where all the flying turtle's scenes were stock footage from older films, so we saw the same old battles over again. It was amazing that Daiei managed to scrape up even enough yen to make a lame flick like this, seeing as they went bankrupt back in 1971. Godzilla made a superior comeback in *GODZILLA 1985*, and although the movie was predictable, redundant, monotonous shit, its decent budget, high-tech special effects and coherent writing insured a healthy re-birth for Toho's reptilian avenger, which brought him back into vogue. All his late 1980s films and 1990s films followed the same talky, dead-serious approach of *GODZILLA 1985*, but fortunately, he's been fighting an abundance of monsters (old and new) to add excitement, and since this new age of Godzilladom offers high-tech, state-of-the-art (depending on who you ask) special effects, these are the most advanced, slick looking adventures the Big G has ever been in. But success breeds imitation, and so now we flip flop back to Gamera, who, in recent years, has also had another comeback. Gamera's two newest films easily compare (and in some ways, actually surpass) to the equally advanced Godzilla films of recent years, and are a far cry from the tacky, campy kiddie films Gamera stomped through in the 1960s and early 1970s! It appears that the next Godzilla movie will be an American one from Tri-Star (which I'm sick of hearing about, I wish they would just give it up), and just might be as bad as *ULTRAMAN POWERED: THE ULTIMATE HERO*, Saban's *MASKED RIDER*, and any other example of Americans

completely ruining a Japanese concept. While Godzilla is doomed to an Americanized bastardization (and Toho approves, yet finds the time to hassle fanzine writers over copyright stuff?), Gamera is back in force, actually surpassing his inspiration. It will be interesting to see how this all turns out.

Over the last 20 or 30 years, Japan has had other genres to regularly showcase reptilian sci-fi. These are the human-sized, live action superheroes like the Kamen Riders, Sentais, Space Sheriffs, and endless variations (usually from Toei), of the cybernetic hero, way too many to list, in fact. But in most cases, these "Normal Size" reptilian villains are either robots or mutants. For example, *KAMEN RIDER V3*'s Machine-gun Snake (a cobra toting a gun, with bullet holster!) looks very reptilian as far as the scales go, ditto Silver Tortoise from *JINZO NINGEN KIKAI*, and the many green-skinned creatures on *DYNAMAN*. But again, these are manmade (or sometimes, "alien made") warriors, not naturally born reptiles. They're not normal dinosaurs or freaks of nature, but machines (either mechanical or genetic) based on animals, made to look like animals. They've got high-tech weaponry, bionic parts and usually the ability to speak Japanese and perform acrobatic martial arts. Whether or not they should be included in a magazine about reptiles is debatable. But due to a lack of space, time & money, mentioning this "tokusatsu" genre here is the best I can do.

Ditto for the many monsters of Japan's cartoon genre. Naturally, there have been plenty of sci-fi programs in the over rated world of Japanese animation, but OC's main focus has never been cartoons, and I won't pretend to be an expert on the anime genre. There have been endless cartoon rags since the 1970s, so there's no point in rehashing that which has already been excessively documented. Besides, I'm running out of space already! Anyway, what follows is another large filmography, including as many reptilian productions as we had time for.



GODZILLA ON THE 1996 MTV AWARDS

By Lenell Bridges

The music awards, where Godzilla won the Lifetime Achievement Award. I thought it would be great because our monster king was going to be respected, right? Wrong! MTV turned Godzilla into a joke! MTV used old movie clips from Godzilla's embarrassing moments on the screen, put onto a pathetic soundtrack (crap music, I believe!). Plus, Patrick Stewart (from *STAR TREK* fame) looks and sounds like he doesn't want to even talk about Godzilla! MTV, why did you choose this *TREK* moron!? He no doubt doesn't like Godzilla! To add insult to injury, they embarrassed producer of Toho, Shogo Tomiyama. No wonder Toho has a grudge against us in the west and won't release their films these days, this lack of respect of their product by some American jackasses is the reason why. That MTV Awards special really pissed me off (how they treated Godzilla)! If you watch it, don't say I didn't warn you.

AGON, THE ATOMIC DRAGON- See OC's "The Science Fiction Issue", and also OC's "The Giant Titans Issue" for details. **1/2 -DF

AIZENBORG- See OC's "The Giant Titans Issue" for review. *** -DF

ATRAGON- Okay, so it's not the most convincing movie in the world, and Manda does look like a rubber snake, but there's goofy fun to be had in this movie (Toho; 1963). Them pesky underwater denizens of Mu get all surly, backed up by their rubber sna-- I mean god, Manda. Naturally, it's up to the crew of the super-sub Atragon to straighten their asses out. Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Special Effects: Eiji Tsuburaya, Directed by Ishiro Honda, Cast: Tadao Takashima, Yu Fujiki, Yoko Fujiyama, Kenji Sawara. **1/2 -Louis Smith

ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS- The 2nd of a trio of Gamera films in which our titanic reptilian terrapin befriends one Japanese boy & one American boy each, who are two friends into mischief & adventure. I guess Daiei producers felt that this would give their Gamera series films a wider international & U.S. appeal, instead of having one fat oriental kiddie who whines all through the feature claiming to be Gamera's personal friend. Released by A.I.P. to television in the late 1960s & later re-released to TV & video in the early 1990s by Sandy Frank as **GAMERA VS. GUIRON** (the film's original Japanese title). I prefer the AIP voice actor's dubbing because they seem to care about giving the asian characters accents. However, Sandy Frank's dubbing is worse! Everyone is dubbed with horrible mid-western "white-bread" voices! However, the Sandy Frank print is more complete. AIP edited out the part in which Guiron, a knife-nosed guard-dog like monster slices up a silver outerspace Gaos like a block of cheese! Personally, after watching either verison, I wish the two evil alien space chicks had eaten the two boys' brains & attacked Earth! But for old times sake, I'll rate the AIP version a three star epic. Daiei; 1969, Prod.: Hidemasa Nagata, Dir: Noriaki Yuasa, Starring: Nobuhiro Kazima, Christopher Murphy, Miyuki Akiyama. *** -Rajar Shy

A Second Opinion:

ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS (Daiei; 1969)- A typically entertaining (though juvenile as hell) Gamera flick. This time the big turtle journeys to some alien planet to rescue two Earth kids (as usual, one Asian, one not-so-Asian) who are to be the dinner of two brain-eating space cuties (there are worse ways to go...I guess). Problem is, they have this giant watchdog named Guiron. I always dug

the Guiron design as a kid. It's knife-like head which shoots ninja stars was (and is) great stuff. ****1/2 -Jeff Goodhartz

ATTACK OF THE SUPER MONSTERS-

The first stime I saw this strange flick, I didn't know what I was watching. It took a second viewing to get used to it. But now, this story of giant mutated muppet dinosaurs stomping cartoon humans while shouting in English lines like, "Human scum!", "Humans are vermon", and the classic, "You and your stupid human toys!" has become one of my favorites. Supposedly, this hysterically brain-damaged flick was edited from a TV series called **AIZENBORG** which I've yet to see. Producers: Tsuburaya Prod., 38 episodes (10/7/77-6/30/78), Creator: Noboru Tsuburaya, Writers: Keiichi Abe, Hiroyasu Yamamura, Kazuo Takagiwa, Shigemitsu Taguchi. ****1/2 -Jeff Goodhartz

BAMBI MEETS GODZILLA- I hope you haven't forgotten this minute and a half animation by Marv Newland, symbolically comparing the culture of Japan to America. The world of Make Believe (meaning pure ignorance) and the real world (human destructiveness). If you prefer the latter you're a loyal Godzilla fan. If not, you'll be stomped on just like Bambi. ***** -Linda Arroyo

A Second Opinion:

BAMBI MEETS GODZILLA- It never would have occured to me to include this early 1970s cartoon short, but when I saw Linda Arroyo giving it five stars, I had to offer an alternate opinion. I think this B&W skit is pretty stupid, the foot doesn't really even look like Godzilla's foot! My main gripe is that through out the 1970s and 1980s, I got stuck watching this lame waste of film way more than was necessary. I got especially annoyed at a Weird Al Yankovich concert when they showed it, and the audience applauded wildy, yelling loudly as though they couldn't see that one coming a mile away. Some dumb kid in the audience yelled out, "Bambi's dead!" (no shit!), which made even more obnoxious shithheads force out fake laughs, if only to shatter my eardrum. Did Toho ever sue the geeks who made this waste of space?! -Damon Foster

BATTLE FEVER J- See OC's "Sonny Chiba & JAC Issue", plus its "Giant Titans Issue" for info. ** -DF

BERMUDA DEPTHS, THE- According to this Tsuburaya/Rankin Bass co-production, Satan is actually a giant prehistoric turtle with glowing eyes, living in the Bermuda Triangle. This one actually gave me willies when I was a wee laddie (then again, so did those talking teeth

on **SESAME STREET**). Once past puberty, however, this fails to inspire emotions in myself of any kind. I'll give it two stars because the giant reptile looks pretty good. ** -Michael Keller

BIOMAN- I had more fun watching this series than Michael Jackson would have in a daycare center, but **BIOMAN** has been reviewed here before. See OC's "Sonny Chiba & JAC Issue", not to mention OC's "Giant Titans Issue" for info on this series, full title: "Shodenshi Bioman". **** -DF

BORN FREE- Not to be confused with the American series about Elsa the lion. For info, see page 11 of OC's "Giant Titans Issue" * -DF

CAPTAIN ULTRA- Despite the title, this is not an Ultraman-related show. It is, however, a very cool Japanese space opera, full of action, SPFX, monsters and aliens. It has an oldfashioned movie serial look (though in color), extremely catchy music (Tomita fans, take note!), and a fun, kind of free-for-all attitude. Very little formula here. Our stalwart hero uses his wits, gadgets and spaceship to battle the Balden Seijin for the first thirteen episodes. After the Baldens' defeat, a new adversary pops up in every episode. Lots of giant monsters as the series progresses. Note: The last episode is really, really wierd. *** -Alex Strang

CAR RANGER- I don't recall being especially impressed with this Sentai program when I sat through a couple episodes a few years back. It seemed pointless, about as senseless as asking O.J. Simpson, "How's the wife?". Today, **CAR RANGER** isn't currently available for me to review, but see page 12 of OC's "Giant Titans Issue" for info. -DF

CHANGEMAN- Ditto. *** -DF

DAI GORO VS. GOLIATH- See Christopher Elam's & David McRobie's reviews on page 12 of the "Giant Titans Issue", or Damon Foster's opinion of it on page 26 of the "Japanese Science Fiction Issue". *1/2 -DF

DENZIMAN- More predictable Sentai moronity; see Foster's review on page 14 of OC's "Giant Titans Issue". *** -DF

DESTROY ALL MONSTERS- Man, if you don't love this, what's wrong with you? Almost every friggin' reptile in Toho's stable is dragged out for the battle royale, due to the machinations of the Kilaaks (damn aliens). Worth watching if for nothing else than the big beat-down between King Ghidrah and every other monster at the climax. You know it's a

classic. Toho; 1968, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Dir.: Ishiro Honda, Music: Akira Ifukube, Starring: Akira Kubo, Yukiko Kobayashi, Jun Tazaki, Kyoko Ai, Yoshio Tsuchiya. **** -Louis Smith

A Second Opinion:

DESTROY ALL MONSTERS- This 1968 production is one of the best, classic Godzilla films due to its large reptile cast. Starring the Big G himself, Rodan, Angilas, Mothra, Gorosaurus, Spiga, Manda, Minya, King Ghidora, and brief appearances by Baragon and Varan. Toho; 1968, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Dir.: Ishiro Honda, Music: Akira Ifukube, Starring: Akira Kubo, Yukiko Kobayashi. **** -Linda Arroyo

A Third Opinion:

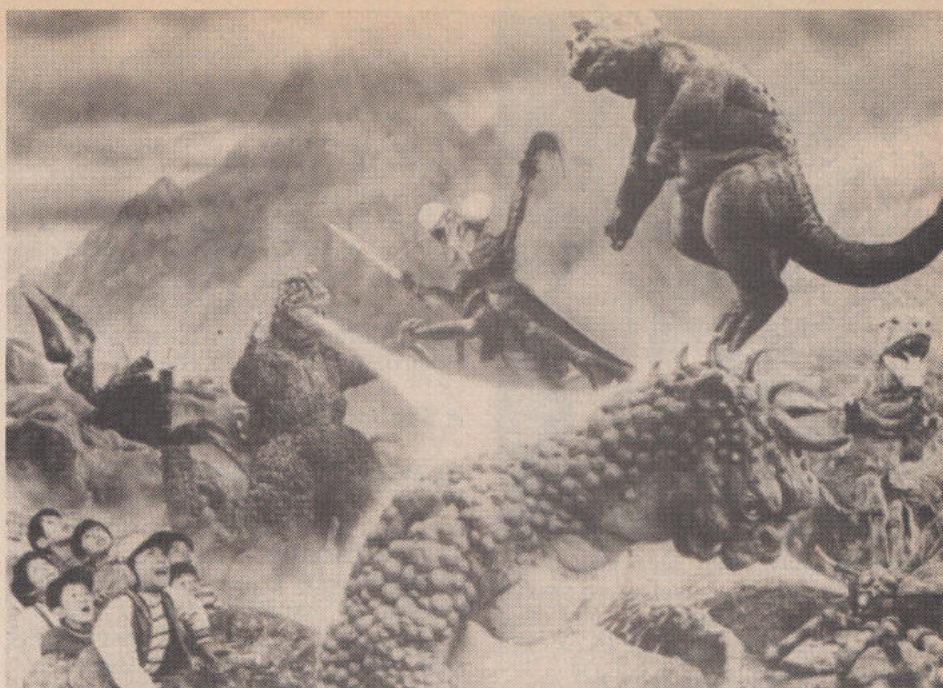
DESTROY ALL MONSTERS- Ah, bliss! What else can you call this assemblage of the best giant monsters Toho has to offer? Alien invaders seize control of the inhabitants of Monsterland and also the island's staff. A masterpiece of plot, art direction, SPFX technique, and, of course, monster action. Miss it at your own peril! ***** -Christopher Elam

DYNAMAN- See reviews in OC back issues like: "The Japanese Superhero Issue", "The Sonny Chiba & JAC Issue", and "The Giant Titans Issue". ***** -DF

THE FAIRY AND THE DEVIL- Wacky, wild, Chinese style--fantasy, that is. The mindbending exploits of hero Long Wang Son-tai are chronicled in this nearly impossible to describe excursion into the surreal. You will see; wizards, goddesses, swordplay, suicide attempts (?), giant snakes, giant lake monsters, a fuzzy toy becomes a giant ape, wicked demons and blatant sampling of STAR TREK music. The only way it could be better would be if it was dubbed or subtitled, so I could at least try to figure it out. Dir.: Chiang Tai, Supervisor: Chang Wan Hsing, Asst. Prod.: Li Chain Chaing, Starring: Chang Tsang Ling, Yang Hsiao Chin, Chen Hsiu Chen. *** -Christopher Elam

A Second Opinion:

FAIRY AND THE DEVIL, THE- Shock upon shock! To come across a Chinese film that features giant reptiles is about as rare as spotting Spike Lee at a KKK meeting! Since my understanding of Japanese, English & Spanish far exceeds my understanding of Chinese language, I can only highly recommend the giant monster fight scenes. A giant white ape (King Kong's albino bastard child) battles a giant werewolf wearing Majin-like armor, plus traditional-looking Chinese dragons (one is green, one is orange)



fight as well. Fans of STAR TREK will laugh because the opening music to the film is stolen from the STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION series! /DF here, I first rented THE FAIRY AND THE DEVIL back around 1986, so I think it actually predates the TV show! Either the Americans stole that song from this Taiwanese film or the song originally came from one of them boring "Star Trek" movies-DF/ Later on in the film, a giant cat-faced "creature-from-the-black-lagoon"-type of monster appears and is killed & briefly returns as a giant ghost in the sky, near the end of the film! Hardcore giant monster film fiends should check this one out! Dir.: Chiang Tai, Supervisor: Chang Wan Hsing, Asst. Prod.: Li Chain Chaing, Starring: Chang Tsang Ling, Yang Hsiao Chin, Chen Hsiu Chen. ** -Rajar Shy

FIREMAN- I tell ya! If those boys (& maybe girls) at Tsuburaya Productions weren't busy enough knocking out ULTRAMAN sequel TV serieses in the 1970s, they also were producing a ton of what I like to call Ultra-wannabe TV shows! The format is the same as the original ULTRAMAN series: A Japanese guy who turns into a gigantic, dome-eyed superhero who fights wacky-looking large dinosaurs, and our hero has a beta-capsule to transform & belongs to a special science team called S.A.F. Instead of coming from M-78 in outerspace, Fireman gets his powers from a race that comes from the center of the Earth! Fireman's over exaggerated large, red-domed eyes made me laugh when I saw still photos of this character. However, after I collected the entire series on video, I was impressed with the energetic fighting style & performance of the stuntman who plays Fireman (which I think ex-

ceeds the fight scenes in any other series of this genre!).

Tsuburaya; 1973, 30 episodes, Prod.: Akira Tsuburaya, Music: Toru Fuyuki, Cast: Naoya Sei/Makoto, Jun Nishiji, Goro Mutsu, Shin Kishida. **** -Rajar Shy

A Second Opinion:

FIREMAN- By Tsuburaya (who else?), but they only made 30 episodes! Damn! They should have did more! It's good! Very good! Fireman with large bug-eyes fights giant reptiles and aliens to protect Earth! Another serious ULTRAMAN-wannabe. Cool FX, monsters look nice (although they make the monster sounds of the Gamera movies), stories are humorous, and Fireman fights like a wild cat! One of the most serious giant hero shows in the 1970s. It's on Japanese video, if you know where to look. Tsuburaya; 1973, 30 episodes, Prod.: Akira Tsuburaya, Music: Toru Fuyuki, Cast: Naoya Sei/Makoto, Jun Nishiji, Goro Mutsu, Shin Kishida. ****1/2 -Lenell Bridges

A Third Opinion:

FIREMAN (1973-'74; 30 epi.)- One of the more interesting attempts by Tsuburaya to emulate their own Ultra programs. Fireman is a fetchngly designed variation on the standard Ultraman-look, and his monster adversaries are very well executed, especially compared to most 1970's efforts of this type. I think it's so much fun watching Goro Mutsumi as the heroic captain of the SAF (Scientific Attack Force). You keep expecting him to light up a stogie and take a swig of brandy, ala his Black Hole alien characters in the Mechagodzilla films. *** -Christopher Elam



FIVEMAN- Have you seen any other Sentai program? If so, well, then you've seen this clone. Want more info? See Chris Elam's review on page 16 of OC's "The Giant Titans Issue". **1/2 -DF

FLASHMAN- Take all the info from the FIVEMAN review (above), except that the review in question is by Foster. **1/2 -DF

FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD- Atmospheric film and soundtrack. The miniature effects are on a different scale than a Godzilla movie (as Frankenstein grows throughout the film, the scale keeps changing). Unsuccessful effect: A miniature horse, kicking in a miniature horse-stall. Oh, well...I guess they had to try. Anyway, there's strange, goofy "German" scenes, a quick scene of the Hiroshima bombing, and of course, that lovable, puppy-dog reptile, Baragon. Frankenstein starts out kind of pathetic, like a beggar, then gets harrassed by the local gentry. Once he's roaming the countryside, he turns into a sort of superhero! That's right, he chops, kicks and flips, like a caveman version of Ultraman! Check out the gorgeous mountain sets and the blazing fire FX, then try and figure out why so many people love that weird Baragon. Watch the "alternate ending" and be amazed by the giant octopus. Although the octopus makes no sense, it does provide for a more interesting ending. The laserdisc also includes some cool outtakes. It's a classic movie, so you should have it. **** - Alex Strang

GAMERA (aka GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE)- You should know about this one by now. -DF

GAMERA: GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE- Hands up, everyone who hasn't heard the buzz by now. Is it really necessary to repeat that Daiei has come out with the best Japanese giant reptile movie

since the 1960s? There are many films in this genre that are more well liked than others, but there's always at least a certain portion of fandom that will disagree with the popular view. This movie has changed that. I can't think of any other film that everyone in the Jap-fantasy fandom world can agree on. That is a feat no Godzilla film has ever managed, no matter how good it was. Daiei; 1995, Dir: Shusuke Kaneko, Screenplay: Kazunori Ito, Cast: Ayako Fujitani, Takeshi Ihara, Akira Onodera, Yukijiho Hotaru. ***** -Michael Keller

A Second Opinion:

GAMERA: GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE (1995)- The flying turtle's comeback film that took Japan by storm! Our reptilian friend returns to stop the evil & carnivorous Gyaos (updated) from feeding on mankind! Updated effects! A good story! A great air & land battle! Lot's of death & destruction! That's what a kaiju eiga should be. Daiei and Gamera kicked Godzilla and Toho's ass with this film! What can I say?! Daiei; 1995, Dir: Shusuke Kaneko, Screenplay: Kazunori Ito, Cast: Ayako Fujitani, Takeshi Ihara, Akira Onodera, Yukijiho Hotaru. ***** - Lenell Bridges

GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE- That B&W classic which launched the career of Daiei's reptilian star! It nearly follows the same theme as the original Godzilla '54. Atomic bomb explosion in the Arctic frees a monster turtle who thrives and feeds on any heat source and is friendly to the brats! Just like the original Godzilla, GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE (Daiei; 1965) is a classic! When they dubbed, they did a fair job. The first dubbing is better than that awful, 1980s Sandy Frank dubbing, GAMERA. Hey, just like Godzilla, I love Gamera! /*Since when does Godzilla love Gamera?* -DF/ Presented by Harris Associates, Art Dir: Hank Aldrich, Producer: Noriaki Yuasa, Starring: Albert Dekker, Brian Donlevy, Eiji Funakoshi, Michiko Sugata, Harumi Kiritachi. **** - Lenell Bridges

GAMERA, SUPER MONSTER- The less said, the better. -DF

GAMERA 2: ATTACK OF THE LEGION- Also known as GAMERA 2: THE ADVENT OF LEGION, GAMERA VS. LEGION, GAMERA 2: THE REAL GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE, and GAMERA 2: REGION NO SHYURAI, this follow-up to 1995's GAMERA: GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE is at least its equal. A charismatic turtle and fine special effects highlight an otherwise standard sci-fi drama. As always, the reptile/monster costumes are the greatest things in the movie, but other breath-taking FX include more

miniatures, super-impositions, astonishingly beautiful mattes & visuals, colorful lighting techniques, and of course an abundance of computer-generated and/or morphing-style gimmicks, but none are over-used; this is definately a movie about giant monsters, not computers. There's a scene of large-scale props- bugs attacking men in a subway which reminded me of the American giant-ants-run-amok thriller, THEM. But there are obvious plugs for sponsor Kirin Beer, and yet again, the useless human characters do their best to make some of GAMERA 2 quite confusing, dull, and at times, stupid. Why so much filler is given to these time-wasters, preposterous scripts and talk-addicted characters is beyond me, since there are no interesting people anywhere in the script, much like in GAMERA: GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE. Even Gamera himself is showing signs of wear & tear already, there are constant reminders that he's just a Godzilla imitator; in this case, the most obvious swipe is that he too now, like the Big G, has that tendency to have a newly designed costume for each flick! In this case, his arms can now stretch out like that of a sea-turtle, something never seen in other Gamera flicks. Plotwise, the spinning turtle is flying around helping soldiers to rid Japan of a "legion" of hungry monstrous insects & exploding plants from outerspace. Gamera's battles with the huge "Queen Legion" are the highlights of the movie, but the smaller, parasitical bugs add a few thrills too. Dir: Shusuke Kaneko, Produced by Daiei & Nihon TV, Released: 7/13/96, Starring: Toshiyuki Nagashima, Miki Mizuno, Ayako Fujitani, Tamotsu Ishibashi. Running Time: 100 Min. **** - Damon Foster



A Second Opinion:

GAMERA 2: ATTACK OF THE LEGION-

A mysterious ateroid crashes to Earth carrying two alien life forms; a plant that can grow to giant heights and the alien creature Legion, which resembles a giant crayfish on steroids. The plant takes over, I mean, grows over, the city of Sendai and no sooner Gamera arrives! He blasts the plant with his plasma fire ball and seemingly destroys the plant. This gains the attention of human-sized "worker" legions who quickly swarm over Gamera's body and practically kill him. Gamera revives with the help of psychic friend Ayako Fujitani (Steven Seagal's cute daughter) and attacks Legion in a final nighttime battle with lasers, explosions, a huge Legion swarm and a huge heh, heh, "Gamera Blast" (check out the movie to see what I mean). This movie is a totally fun ride with healthy doses of everything that makes a good monster movie work- a good script by Kazunori Ito, good direction from Director Shusuke Kaneko, great special effects by Shinji Higuchi and a good musical score from Ko Otani. Daiei studios is batting 2 for 2 with their "revived" 90's Gamera films. Can GAMERA 3 possibly get any better? Dir.: Shusuke Kaneko, Produced by Daiei & Nihon TV, Released: 7/13/96, Starring: Toshiyuki Nagashima, Miki Mizuno, Ayako Fujitani, Tamotsu Ishibashi. **** - Rob Dagg

GAMERA VS. BARUGON- Everyone said this is the best of the old Gamera movies. It's definately the most grown-up. There's no kidding around amid the human drama, monster fights or classy-looking special effects. You feel like you're actually watching an old, classic movie. The Barugon costume makes a very convincing quadraped (no walking-on-the-knees problem), and he has a very large head. I say this is worth getting on laserdisc. Daiei; 1966, Starring: Kojira Hongo. ****1/2 -Alex Strang

GAMERA VS. GUIRON- Yet another wacky chapter in the life story of that firebreathing turtle, the one and only Gamera. Two bratty kids hitch a lift on a flying saucer and crash on a planet inhabited by brain-eating alien babes and their knife-headed pet Guiron. Loaded with colorful gadgetry, passable comedy and monster battles galore. The dubbing on the Sandy Frank version is wince-inducing, but the old A.I.O.-TV version (entitled ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS) is suppose to be better. *It's only better if you like censorship.* -DF/ Daiei; 1969, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, Starring: Nobuhiro Kojima, Christopher Murphy, Reiko Kosahara, Hiroko Korakana. **1/2 -Christopher Elam

GAMERA VS. GYAOS- The most popular of the original reptilian series. Even though GAMERA: GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE is easily the best of the flying turtle movies (I haven't seen LEGION yet), I still prefer the original design of Gyaos used in this film. Why do these old Daiei monsters look like Tim Burton creations? Oh well, the movie's downfall is an annoying (and lumpy) kid who looks like Minya without the tail. I like the colors in this movie. I know that's a wierd comment, but there, I said it. Daiei; 1967, Dir. of Photography: Akira Uehara, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, Cast: Kichijiro Ueda, Kojiro Hongo, Hisayuki Abe. ***1/2 -Michael Keller

A Second Opinion:

GAMERA VS. GYAOS- Gyaos used to be the poor man's Rodan: Just another flying prehistoric reptile. After Daiei's semi-remake in 1995, he and Gamera got a little more respect. Don't tell me you've only seen GAMERA VS. GYAOS (aka RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS) on MST3K. *** Patrick Macias.

GAMERA VS. MONSTER X- See Michael Keller's review in "The Giant Titans Issue", or DF's review in "The Gamera Issue", or whoever the hell reviewed it in "The Japanese Sci-Fi Issue". -DF

GAMERA VS. ZIGRA- See Chris Elam's review somewhere. -DF

GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER- Don't be fooled by the title, Godzilla is back. He looks a little shabbier, but he gets a playmate this time, Angirasu (short for anklyosaur). This flick was Toho's quick sequel to cash in on the Big G, and it shows. Everything is cheap. This time Osaka gets wacked, the hero is a flyer who felt killing himself might be a good way of getting off this flick. But the clever director incorporated it into the plot. Nice ending though, the marauding reptile Godzilla buried in ice cubes. I think I'll add some to my glass here. Oh yeah, two stars. Toho; 1956, Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Special Effects: Eiji Tsuburaya. ** -John Emma

A Second Opinion:

GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER (aka "Godzilla Raids Again"; Toho 1955)- Any title you call it, this movie is still a lot of fun if you can overlook a few technical flaws that I won't get into, because I've better things to do than complain! In the second Big G movie, Gigantis and another monster, Angilas, are beating the crap out of each other! Soon, their island isn't big enough for both of them,

and both head to Japan to settle their differences! From there, we are blessed with great monster fights and lots of explosions and utter destruction! Yeah! **** -Kevin Loneragan

GODMAN- See Michael Keller's review on page 19 of OC's "Giant Titans Issue". -DF

GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS

(1954)- The birth of Godzilla, as we all know from this classic B&W flick. However the most horrible, terrifying (and let's not forget stupid) part to GODZILLA: KING OF THE MONSTERS was America's blundering interference. Toho; 1954, Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Dir.: Ishiro Honda, Music: Akira Ifukube, FX: Eiji Tsuburaya, Cast: Raymond Burr, Momoko Kochi, Takashi Shimura, Akira Takarada *** -Linda Arroyo

A Second Opinion:

GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS-

The American release of Toho's GOJIRA. Arguably the granddaddy of the reptilian Kaiju Eiga and the best of the lizard-on-the-loose films of the 1950s. Although the effects in Harryhausen's BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS were more realistic, the scope of Godzilla was just so much bigger, it kind of overwhelmed me as a ten-year old. Does anyone need this plot rehashed? Monster awakened by radiation, goes on rampage, wrecks Tokyo, killed by selfless scientist. The Japanese version is far superior. Toho; 1954, Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Dir.: Ishiro Honda, Music: Akira Ifukube, FX: Eiji Tsuburaya, Cast: Raymond Burr, Momoko Kochi, Takashi Shimura, Akira Takarada **** -John Emma

A Third Opinion:

GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS-

Let's see, Dir. Ishiro Honda, Special Effects Master Eiji Tsuburaya, and Music Composer Akira Ifukube decide to make a monster movie. The movie concerns a radio-active giant reptilian monster terrorizing Japan and the efforts of Dr. Daisuke Serizawa with his "oxygen destroyer" weapon trying to destroy the monstrosity, known as "Godzilla". Godzilla manages to do some pretty good damage to downtown Tokyo (how come he doesn't trample through a city that actually needs it like Detroit?!) */Because nobody would notice a difference.* -DF/ before Dr. Serizawa sacrifices himself by using his Oxygen Destroyer at the bottom of the ocean to finally "kill" Godzilla. The end. We all know by now that this wasn't really the end of Godzilla, now don't we, kiddies?! Great story. Great Effects. Great music. Great music. Not so great Godzilla "hand puppet" in some



scenes! Best scene: Godzilla walking through a burning Tokyo skyline. ***** - Rob Dagg

GODZILLA 1985- Tied with GODZILLA's REVENGE as some of the worst kaiju eiga to ever be issued. Yawn along with the cast as we recreate Godzilla's famous march through Tokyo, searching for...a better movie to be in. The American version compounds the problem by dumping in American actors who I hope really aren't that dumb in real life. Throw in a completely asinine ending (Godzilla falls into a volcano- oops, watch that last step, big fella'), and you have...crap! Toho; 1984, Film Editors: Yoshitami Kuroiwa, Michael Spence, Dir. of Phot.: Kazutani Hora & Steven Dublin, Cast: Raymond Burr, Keiju Kobayashi, Ken Tanaka, Yasuko Sawaguchi, Shin Takuma, Tetsuya Takeda. 1/2 -Louis Sit

GODZILLA'S REVENGE- Ugh! Cooked up in the laboratory of a disgruntled Nazi

scientist- oops, sorry, it just feels that way. The sickeningly saccharine story of doormat Ichiro and his incredibly overactive fantasy life, which sets him down the road to evil. Or something. Most of the monster stuff is stock footage, but a whole reel of stock footage would be more entertaining than this. A laxative waiting to happen. Toho; 1969, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Writer: Shinichi Sekizawa, Photog.: Kunio Miyauchi, Cast: Machiko Naka, Kenji Sahara, Isei Amamoto, Hideyo Amemoto. 1/2 -Louis Sit

GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE- See any number of several reviews in previous back issues. -DF

GODZILLA VS. DESTROYER (Toho; 1995)- The supposed "final" Godzilla film! The story is not bad. the battles were super, especially between Godzilla Jr. and Destroyer. Even Godzilla's death made me cry. At least Junior survived to reign as the new Reptile King! However, I think Godzilla was double-crossed by his own company for that lame "American" Godzilla film that Toho and Tri-star want to do; which sounds pathetic! In any case, DESTROYER was good! ***1/2 - Lenell Bridges

A Second Opinion:

GODZILLA VS. DESTROYER- The best modern Godzilla movie? Godzilla, in flames and incredibly pissed off, spews steam on his way to his final meltdown as Destroyer, a monster cooked up from the old Oxygen Destroyer from the very first movie (in a movie that will confound continuity geeks for years to come) goes through its various forms, kills Godzilla Jr. (yay!) and engages the big G in the bloodiest fight to the death in any G-movie since 1985. A true classic, but don't take my word for it; watch the movie! **** -Louis Sit

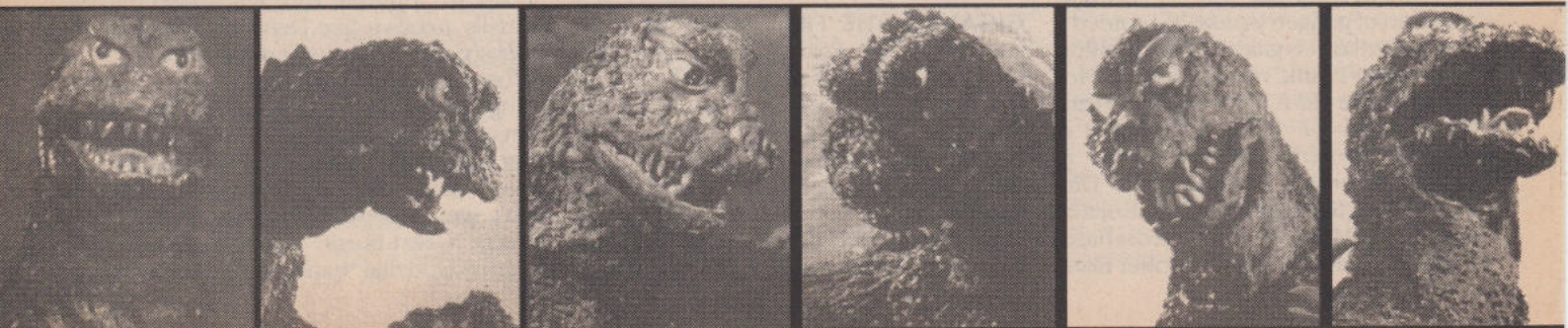
A Third Opinion:

GODZILLA VS. DESTROYER- Actually should have been called "Godzilla vs. ALIENS" as this movie "borrows" (a nice term for "ripoff") almost every aspect of 20th Century Fox's excellent 1986 film ALIENS, directed by James Cameron. A lot of people have praised this film, but I just can't believe Toho couldn't have

come up with something better than this retread of ALIENS. The movie is about Godzilla going nuclear (colony on the planet Acheron in ALIENS was also going nuclear, remember!) and the appearance of a new monster "Destroyer" who happens to bleed bright yellow blood like the "Alien" creature that shoots out at its victims. Destroyer ends up kicking Godzilla Jr.'s ass before Godzilla comes to its aid (Ripley coming to the aid of Newt when face-huggers threaten her!). Godzilla goes critical, the Japanese self-defense forces shoot out Destroyer's wings. Godzilla melts down. The End. More similarities between GODZILLA VS. DESTROYER and ALIENS include Self-Defense forces using "motion trackers", Self Defense Forces using "pulse rifles" (almost exactly copied from ALIENS), the advance artwork poster for GODZILLA VS. DESTROYER strongly resembles the damn Queen Alien from ALIENS! Putting all of that aside, Destroyer ends up being anti-climactic and predictable. Some of the fight scenes are decent. That's about it. Still resembles ALIENS too strongly for my tastes. * -Rob Dag

GODZILLA VS. GIGAN- Cockroaches from space come to conquer Earth by building an amusement park. Well, we can't have that! There are too many fuckin' theme parks as is, thank you very much. Godzilla & Angilas step in to save the day, but the roaches (Maggie, Terry & Suzy, I think) have space-monsters Gigan & Ghidrah as over-size security guards (I hear Disney uses Gulala and Baltan). Ghidrah is killed, which makes it death #4 out of a total of 4 for the big dragon - this must be some kinda' record, isn't it? The crazy theme song at the end of the film is the best part, which is definately a bad sign. Toho; 1972, Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Director: Jun Fukuda. * -Frank Strom

GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDRAH (1991-92)- Enjoyable, if completely incomprehensible romp detailing the "first" match-up between Godzilla (in his new "highly pissed mode") and King Ghidra. Don't try to analyze the plot, just laugh along with the rest of us at the antics of the two Navy captains. Don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue. Written & Dir.: Kazuki Omori, Music: Akira Ifukube, Cast: Isao Toyohara, Megumi Odaka, Yoshio Tsuchiya, Anna Kakagawa, Shoji Kobayashi, Katsuhiko Sasaki. *** -Louis Sit



A Second Opinion:

GOZILLA VS. KING GHIDRAH (Toho; 1991)- Confusing at times, but still an entertaining movie if you put away your realism for a while! See, there are these time-travelers from the future who look like Americans because as we all know, we Americans are a bunch of evil bastards who want to rule the world! Their plan is to prevent Godzilla's existence, so they can really rule the world with their own monster, King Ghidrah! After some great fight scenes and lots of explosions, and the usual carnage, the Big G sends them back to the next afterlife! Featuring the "Classic" scene between pre-Zilla and some U.S. soldiers from WWII! **** -Kevin Lonergan

GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA-

The best of the non-original new wave Godzilla films. Godzilla's best moment: Coming back to life and kicking Mechagodzilla's ass. My second favorite Kawakita supervised G film after *BIOLLANTE*. Ryoko Sano is a stand-out among a great cast, because she really creates viewer sympathy for an otherwise silly looking Baby G. This creature (designed by Masakazu Amaki) was obviously created for the kiddie market, I guess Minya was a bit freakish looking, but this thing was downright Disneyesque. Who could know how much worse it could get? Probably the best thing about this film was the outstanding soundtrack compositions by Akira Ifukube, easily the best of the new Godzilla films, and among the finest of his long career. **** -Dan Reed

GODZILLA VS. MEGALON- The movie which Godzilla was at his glory as a superhero-reptile. Angry inhabitants of Seatopia unleashed their monster bug Megalon to destroy mankind in rage of man's attack on them in nuclear testing! This movie, among other 1970s Godzilla films sullied Godzilla's reputation! It's fun in some ways, and awful in others, the dubbing is bad! The kid in it is a brat (his voice sucks!)! Gigan is in it too. I can't stand that Ultraman-like clone, Jet Jaguar, with that Jimmy Carter-like grin! They should have scrapped him! Godzilla acts very bad. It's just bad! Toho; 1973, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Dir.: Jun Fukuda, Screenplay: Shinichi Sekizawa, FX: Noboru Tsuburaya, Music: Richira



Minabe, Cast: Yutaka Hayashi, Katsuhiko Sasaki, Hiroyuki Kawase, Robert Dunham, Kotaro Tomita. *1/2 -Lenell Bridges

A Second Opinion:

GODZILLA VS. MEGALON-

GODZILLA VS. MEGALON is truly the only over-played Godzilla film I've seen. However, it remains a personal favorite, particularly due to Jet Jaguar and especially the battle scene where our heroes whop Megalon and Gigan. Toho; 1973, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Dir.: Jun Fukuda, Screenplay: Shinichi Sekizawa, FX: Noboru Tsuburaya, Music: Richira Minabe, Cast: Yutaka Hayashi, Katsuhiko Sasaki, Hiroyuki Kawase, Robert Dunham, Kotaro Tomita. **** -Linda Arroyo

A Third Opinion:

GODZILLA VS. MEGALON (Toho; 1973)- Overlook the stock-footage and the talking scenes between the humans, and this little film isn't as bad as most people say it is! Colorful and full of action, this movie features some excellent miniatures as well as some great looking monster suits in the form of Megalon, Gigan, and Jet Jaguar! Anyway, it's all about the Seatopians, who live beneath the Earth and are tired of the bomb testings by we upper dewheads (who can blame them?)! So they send Megalon to knock some sense into us, and ends up in a great

tag-team fight where you-know-who wins! ***1/2 -Kevin Lonergan

GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA- This 1992 kaiju flick is big on monsters and short on just about everything else. Even the mighty lizard Godzilla doesn't get as much screen time as he should. Although I will say that the British dubbed version, which I've seen, leaves you begging for the Japanese original. Seriously, the monster stuff is nice. That's all I'll say. Toho; 1993, Written by Kazuki Omori, Dir: Takao Ogawara, FX: Koichi Kawakita & Tadaaki Watanabe, Exec. Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Cast: Tetsuya Bessho, Satomi Kobayashi, Takehiro Murata, Megumi Odaka, Shiori Yonezawa, Makoto Otake, Akira Takarada. *** -Michael Keller

GODZILLA VS. THE COSMIC MON-

STER- Some aliens from a Black Hole want to use Earth for their own after they fuck up their own dying planet. The ape aliens also keep trying to steal a statue that will resurrect the ancient god of protection King Seesar, who they know will probably end up screwing up their plans if they don't steal it before hand. They send their weapon "Mechagodzilla", a robotic clone of Godzilla, to battle the pissed off Godzilla and his friend Angilas, and the now resurrected King Seesar. Godzilla and King Seesar form a tag-team and trounce the living shit out of Mechagodzilla, thwarting the aliens' plans to conquer Earth. Now they can just go find some other helpless planet to pick on. The end. Nicely directed monster battles by Jun Fukuda, Akihiko Hirata gives a nice performance as Hideto Miyashima, even Angilas shows up briefly to get his ass kicked! The ape (!) alien costumes are terrible. Decent for a rainy day, nothing more. Toho; 1974, Exec. Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Orig. Story: Shinichi Sekizawa & Masafumi Fukushima, FX: Teruyoshi Nakano, Cast: Kazuya Aoyama, Masaaki Daimon, Reiko Tajima, Barbara Lynn, Hiromi Matsushita. *** -Rob Dagg

A Second Opinion:

GODZILLA VS. COSMIC MONSTER-

Any moron who believes *MECHAGODZILLA '93* is better than this 1974 originator is a traitor to the Godzilla genre! *GODZILLA VS. THE COSMIC MONSTER* is a personal favorite to this



date. Godzilla, with a guest appearance by King Seesar battle Cosmic Monster defending the Earth from alien invasion. Toho; 1974, Exec. Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Orig. Story: Shinichi Sekizawa & Masafumi Fukushima, FX: Teruyoshi Nakano, Cast: Kazuya Aoyama, Masaaki Daimon, Reiko Tajima, Barbara Lynn, Hiromi Matsushita. ***** -Linda Arroyo

GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER-

Not a bad story! A group of adventurous men steal a yacht, wind up castaways on a strange island, and discover a terrorist group called Red Bamboo building nuclear weapons for world conquest. They rescue a lovely native girl called Dayo (who's from Infant Island), who joins them. The giant lobster Ebirah terrorizes everybody but not for long. The reptile king, Godzilla is here and saves the day! Even Mothra lends a hand (wing, that is). Great battle sequences between Godzilla, Ebirah (especially underwater) and a giant condor. The dubbing is good to fair; the best is seeing Godzilla scratching his nose - that's a cool monster for you! Toho; 1966, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Dir.: Jun Fukuda, Music: Masaru Sato, FX: E. Tsuburaya, Cast: Akira Takarada, Kumi Mizuno, Akihiko Hirata.

*** -Lenell Bridges

GODZILLA VS. SPACE GODZILLA- It's okay by Godzilla standards (which still means it blows almost anything else away), and I've heard people complain that the climactic fight scenes are too long. Fight scenes can never be too long! The new Mogera is decent enough, though it irks me that Toho ignored the robot's extraterrestrial inspiration. What, did the Mysterians sell blueprints to G-Force? Genuinely emotional moment when Little Godzilla is captured by Space Godzilla. It's really the most memorable scene. Space Godzilla is cool, but hey...what's the deal with the cheap-looking outerspace sequence?? *** -Alex Strang

GODZILLA VS. THE THING- The most intelligent and worshipped monster in the Godzilla universe, Mothra. Mothra's realistic look was exceptional in **GODZILLA VS. THE THING**. Focusing on Mothra's egg and man's destructive nature, **GODZILLA VS. THE THING** brings a surprise ending of the victor. Toho; 1964, Screenplay: Shinichi Sekizawa, FX: Eiji Tsuburaya, Phot: Hajime Koizumi, Art Dir.: Takeo Kita, Dir.: Ishiro Honda, Cast: Akira Takarada, Yu Fujiki, Kenji Sahara. **** -Linda Arroyo

GOGGLE V- See where I reviewed this one in at least a couple different back issues, a while back. **** -DF

HEAVENLY SPELL- Unfortunately, there

was no subtitles (except Korean) for this obvious low-budget Chinese production with unimpressive sea serpents, I might add. Actually, **HEAVENLY SPELL** only has a brief appearance of sea serpents which one happens to be a young woman who drowned in some lake. You'll hear Halloween's theme just before she falls into the lake with her sister. The sister survives and a shrine is built in honor of her departed sibling. Those not showing respect would drown in the lake where she lay (I assume, anyway). But then, this story suddenly turned into mystical battles between two guys. Honestly, with or without subtitles, this 75 min. flick sucks! -Linda Arroyo

IRON KING- See my review (page 24) in OC's "Giant Titans Issue". It's not that I don't want to review this great show again, but my asshole hurts and don't want to sit down. ***** -DF

JETMAN- Sentai, five heroes, giant robot battling monsters, etc., blah blah blah. See page 24 of OC's "Giant Titans Issue", for Frank Strom's & Chris Elam's opinions on the Toei program. -DF

JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT- Toei Co.'s most beloved series. Young Johnny Sokko, with the aid of a wrist-watch can control a giant warrior robot who, with the aid of the Unicorn Organization, battle the evil Emperor Guillotine, his minors, giant reptiles and monsters, to save our hapless planet. No need to point out the aspects of this classic live-action series! I grew up with it since childhood! I love it! I'll take this live-action show over that anime crap any day! Toei; 1968, Released to U.S. TV by A.I.P.; 1969. **** -Lenell Bridges

JUMBORG ACE- One of Tsuburaya's **ULTRAMAN**-like clone heroes. Stories center on a pilot who transforms his airplane into the super giant cyborg Jumborg Ace, and fight various aliens and their giant reptiles and monsters! Stories are good, good FX, and the reptilian monsters are good! It's good! Just like **FIREMAN** and **MIRORMAN**! Jum-Fight! Kokusai Films; 1973, Creator: Hajime Tsuburaya, Writer: Shigemitsu Taguchi, Dir.: Shunkei Suzuki, Music: Shunsuke Kikuchi, Starring: Naoki Tachibana. ****1/2 -Lenell Bridges

JUSPION- This entry in the "metal hero" series is one of my favorites. Non-stop action and FX. There's giant reptiles, regular-size monsters, cool alien assassins, spaceships and robots, gorgeous babes, hip music, an endless variety of special effects techniques, stunts-a-plenty, and a fun, energetic hero. The lead villain is Mad Gallen, sort of an "anti-Space Sheriff", and he is definitely suave. There's

even Meiko, an annoyingly helpless side-kick alien, but that's okay. Anli more than makes up for it. With a stunningly beautiful android assistant like Anli, who'd have time to fight bad guys? **** -Alex Strang

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

KAIJU OUJI- See reviews in OC back issues: "The Giant Titan Issue" and "The Japanese Sci-Fi Issue". ***** -DF

KAKU RANGER- Kane Kosugi in some stupid Toei crap about a ninja Sentai, which would later mutate into more **POWER RANGER** garbage. * -DF

KING KONG VS. GODZILLA (Toho; 1972)- Okay, now that I've seen a subtitled copy of the Japanese original, I can understand the popularity that this particular entry enjoys in its home country. Before the U.S. butchering (which is even more severe than the first Godzilla), this was a fast-paced, humorous and thoroughly enjoyable entry. It amazed me how much tampering was done for its release here. The thing that struck me the most (aside from so much of Mie Hama's footage removed; the bastards!) was the way the first half-hour of the Jap version runs so much smoother and quicker than the Yank one. Hell, scenes that were even left in were rearranged with the apparent motive to make things even more tedious! Godzilla's first appearance in the original, for instance, doesn't even happen until after they land on the island. In the local version, he appears way too early and the next 20 to 30 minutes drag a bit. Pacing can be everything. In short (oops, too late), the Jap print is the one to catch. Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, FX: Eiji Tsuburaya. ****(Jap. Version), *** (U.S. version). -Jeff Goodhartz

A Second Opinion:

KING KONG VS. GODZILLA- Taken as a satire, this is probably the greatest giant monster film ever made. The Kong suit is so strange looking it transcends silly and becomes sublime. My biggest complaint about this film is too little of Akemi Negeshi as the Farou Island dancer. Ichiro Arishima gives a terrific comic performance as the head of the pharmaceutical company out to exploit Kong for higher television ratings. Not a classic in the sense of **GOJIRA TAI MOSURA** (1964), but a sentimental favorite none the less. Wasn't it Forry



Ackerman that started that phony rumor about alternative endings? **** -Dan Reed

LADY TERMINATOR- Indonesia's ripoff of TERMINATOR about an anthropologist who conceals a serpent in her vagina which castrates her lovers. Not available for review, but it deserves four stars for its ingenious concept. **** -Linda Arroyo

LAST DINOSAUR- You could say Richard Boone was more successful at killing his career than the T-rex in the film. Nonsense about a hunting party after the last T-rex in a hidden continent. Bad acting, bad effects, bad waste of time. The end is fitting though, after Boone hams his way through this one, he gets stuck with the ugliest leading lady of all time. He should have slept with the dinosaur! An Arthur Rankin/ Jules Bass Film; 1977. Dir.: Alex Grasshoff, Coproducer: Tsuburaya Co., Exec. Prod.: Noboru Tsuburaya, Art Dir.: Kazuhiko Fujiwara, Cast: Richard Boone, Joan Van Ark, Tetsu Nakamura. ** -John Emma

A SECOND OPINION:

LAST DINOSAUR- This U.S./Japanese co-production takes its premise straight from THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT. A lost world of dinosaurs, cavemen & prehistoric plant life is discovered existing underneath the ice in Antarctica. A scientific expedition checks out the prehistoric flora & fauna, headed by alcoholic big-game hunter Richard Boone. Joan Van Ark (with her splinter thin plucked eyebrows) plays a spoiled wench who Boone can't stand at the beginning because she's going along on the expedition; but by the last reel he's fallen in love with her and tries (unsuccessfully) to get her to set up house in the prehistoric wasteland, "bump uglies" and live happily ever after. But Joan goes back to civilization with a younger ugly actor and even uglier Boone stays behind with a young Japanese cave-chick to forever hunt a Tsuburaya-built T-Rex that roars just like Godzilla. I guess Godzilla's roar is public domain because Toei's MAGIC SERPENT (1966) also roars just like Big G and so does ULTRAMAN's Red King monster (but at a higher pitch). Oh yeah, the T-Rex suit from T.L.D. also was the main dinosaur leader in the animated/live action Japanese series AIZENBORG (1978) which was later re-edited & re-released to U.S. video as the feature-length ATTACK OF THE SUPER MONSTERS. Personally, THE LAST DINOSAUR has cursed me for the last six months! How? Six months ago, a girlfriend gave me a pre-record on VHS video for free & then last week, a dealer gave me a 16mm film print of it for free, as well! With my luck, Richard Boone & Joan Van Ark are coming over for din-

ner tomorrow! Help! One star for the Tsuburaya FX! Also, look for Noboru Tsuburaya in the press conference at the beginning of the film! For completists only! * -Rajar Shy

LEGEND OF THE DINOSAURS- I brought /He means, "bought". -DF/ it from a videostore for \$6.99, looked at it for about 25 minutes then turned it off! It sucks! No plot! Very bad effects! Toei and Sandy Frank can't do it! Even the American version of KING KONG VS. GODZILLA eats this movie for breakfast! Used the tape the same day to record GILLIGAN'S ISLAND and MORK AND MINDY! LEGEND OF THE DINOSAURS stinks like dog shit! Toei: 1977, Released to U.S. Video by Sandy Frank. Producer: Kaiichi Hashimoto, Screenplay: Masaru Igami, Isao Matsumoto, Ichiro Otsu, Dir. of Phot.: Sakuji Shiomi, Art Dir.: Yoshimitsu Amamori, Special Effects: Fuminori Ohashi, Dir.: Junji Kurata. Rating: None! -Lenell Bridges

A Second Opinion:

LEGEND OF THE DINOSAURS (Toei; 1977)- I saw this movie only once, on the USA Network, way, way, back in that ancient year 1987, and believe you & me, once was more than enough to handle! This movie is an utter disappointment to look at, and I don't want to even waste my time telling you the plot (or lack of) of this cinematic crap, which concerns a couple of prehistoric beasts on the loose! I'd rather watch a Pauly Shore movie than this junk! Then again now, I don't need any more pain and misery, so please, anything but Pauly! Anything but that...-Kevin Lonergan

LIVEMAN- A Sentai; enough said. -DF

MAGIC SERPENT (Toei; 1966)- This has some decent swordplay and FX. Cool monster fight at the end as well. One interesting thing (well, semi-interesting, anyway) is that the familiar monster roars (combining Godzilla, Rodan and the Green Gargantua) are used only in the U.S. version. The Japanese original version uses what I think are original roars, making it seem less cheesy. Why anyone would bother taking the extra time to redub monster roars over here is beyond me. ***1/2 -Jeff Goodhartz

MAJIN HUNTER MITSURUGI- Definately not your typical superhero series. Set in feudal Japan, this one concerns three superheroic fighters (in modern garb?) who protect the peasants from some evil demonic supervillains. The catch to this show is that the heroic giant vs. evil giant show is stop motion animated. Though incredibly crude, this effect does separate this series from countless oth-

ers. I must admit though, that as far as the giant superhero stuff goes, I definately prefer the man-in-costume stuff. But this is a nice change of pace, and it includes some cool swordplay and lots of action. However, the opening theme, surprisingly, really sucks! Creator: Takeo Nakamura, Writers: Susumi Takahisa, Masayuki Shimada, Toshiaki Matsushima, Directors: Keinosuke Tsuchiya, Ichiro Harusuki, Music: Yukikazu Suzuki, 12 epi. (Fuji TV; 1/7/73-7/31/73), Starring: Jo Mizuki. **** -Jeff Goodhartz

MASKMAN- No comment. -DF

MEGALOMAN- Done by Toho Eizo Co. A mixed-in blend of ZONE FIGHTER, ULTRAMAN, FIREMAN, and SPACE GIANTS. Megaloman, who has long white hair, fights an evil alien and giant monsters to save Earth. Lot's of invaders, reptiles, monsters, good FX. Megaloman uses kick-butt kung fu fighting equal to that of Ultraman 80. Even actor Susumu Kurobe (Hayata from ULTRAMAN) plays one of the assistant villains! But that boss alien with that goofy-looking helmet he wears looks silly. Also, they need to put it on tape! But you know who owns it Toho! Bet they don't know it exists! 1979, 31 epi., Creator: Tetsu Ganya, Broadcast on Fuji TV. **** -Lenell Bridges

MIRRORMAN (1971; 51 epi.)- Ishiro (Godzilla) Honda directed some episodes of this ULTRAMAN-derived superhero show. A monster called "Spiked Gojira" even shows up in one episode. Mirrorman is a big silver dude who fights dinosaur monsters like Magumagon and Andorasaurus with moves like the "Mirror Knife" and "Silver Cross". 51 epi., Tsuburaya; 1971, Created by Hajime Tsuburaya, Writers: Fumizo Wakatsuki, Bunzo Wakatsuki, Dir: Yoshiyuki Kuroda, FX Dir: Koichi Takano, Nobuo Yajima, Cast: Noboyuki Ishida, Shin Kishida. *** Patric Macias

A Second Opinion:

MIRRORMAN- One of my favorites of ULTRAMAN-wannabies. Good series, FX are great, the monsters & reptilian villains are cool-looking! It's a cool show! If you don't have it yet, where have you been? In the Mirror Dimension? MIRRORMAN is a must! Oh, those invaders fight seriously! But those damn sunglasses they wear are too cool! MIRRORMAN is a must, again! 51 epi., Tsuburaya; 1971, Created by Hajime Tsuburaya, Writers: Fumizo Wakatsuki, Bunzo Wakatsuki, Dir: Yoshiyuki Kuroda, FX Dir: Koichi Takano, Nobuo Yajima, Cast: Noboyuki Ishida, Shin Kishida. ***** -Lenell Bridges

MONSTER FROM A PREHISTORIC PLANET- Reviewed in enough back issues to make even mentioning it obsolete, so never mind. I do, however, remember enjoying it almost as much as Michael Jackson would enjoy hiding in a Jr. High boy's locker room. *** -DF

MONSTER ZERO- Inhabitants of Planet X (who resemble the band Devo) want Godzilla and Rodan to defeat Monster Zero (aka King Ghidrah) on their planet in trade for miracle drug. Of course, it's all a hoax. What they want is to conquer Earth (all aliens do). Watching **MONSTER ZERO** as a child, I would leave the television room returning only during the battle scenes, finding the film dull and boring. Now an adult (old woman), I still feel the same. *It sucks!* Enough said. Toho; 1966, American release: Henry G. Saperstein, Movie Script: Shinichi Sekizawa, Dir: Inoshiro Honda, FX: Eiji T., Cast: Nick Adams, Akira Takarada, Kumi Mizuno, Akira Kubo. *1/2 -Linda Arroyo

A Second Opinion:

MONSTER ZERO- A few astronauts fly to Planet X to explore it. They are kidnapped and taken underground to be protected from the rampaging monster King Ghidorah, who flies around on the surface of the planet, attacking anything it sees. The astronauts Glen (Nick Adams) and Fuji (Akira Takarada) are told by the "X" people that they will trade useful knowledge (isn't all knowledge useful?!) to the earthlings if they can "borrow" Godzilla and Rodan to rid themselves of King Ghidorah. The earthlings find out that the "X-men" are actually lying and want to "control" Godzilla and Rodan, to overthrow the Earth and drain its natural resources bone dry! The earthlings find a way to outsmart the X guys by playing piercing sounds that foul up their circuitry and the control they have over Godzilla and Rodan. Godzilla, Rodan and King Ghidorah then tumble off the edge of a cliff and King Ghidorah and the X guys are defeated. The End. Honda, Tsuburaya & Ifukube continue their masterful ways as **MONSTER ZERO** is a fun film. Again, nice battle scenes, some nice matte shots, nice acting performances, not so nice Planet X alien costumes. Would make a great Halloween costume, though. Toho; 1966, American release: Henry G. Saperstein, Movie Script: Shinichi Sekizawa, Dir: Inoshiro Honda, FX: Eiji T., Cast: Nick Adams, Akira Takarada, Kumi Mizuno, Akira Kubo. *** -Rob Dagg

NAGINA- First, for those unfamiliar with Hindi terminology, "nagina" defines a snake woman. This 1990 musical star-

ring Prem Chopra, Komal Mahuvakar, Sushma Seth, Jagdeep and Amrish Puri is rated a B movie production without subtitles produced and directed by Harmesh Malhorta. A musical Hindi fan,

Dir: I. Honda, FX: E. Tsuburaya, Music: A. Ifukube, Cast: Kenji Sawara, Yumi Shirakawa, Akihiko Hirata, Akio Kobori, Yasuko Nakata. **1/2 -Linda Arroyo

NEVER A
HORROR
LIKE
IT!

THE KING BROTHERS
present A TOHO PRODUCTION



NAGINA's score was brilliant, combined with excellent choreography and costumes. Story by Jagmohan Kapoor tells about an Indian woman who is pursued by a priest out to destroy her. **** -Linda Arroyo

PEACOCK KING- Average, late 1980s HK fantasy with Yuen Biao, but it features a couple dinosaurs, so check it out. *** -DF

REDMAN (1972; 138 epi.)- The best thing about this Tsuburaya short subject is the theme song, "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa, Redman!" Redman fights Ultraman's left-er lizards (including Jiras and Eleking) with his Red Kick, Red Chop, and Red Arrow. Every show was only five minutes long. Whoa! ** -Patrick Macias

RETURN OF THE DINOSAURS- Not available for review. -DF

RETURN OF ULTRAMAN- See Ed Holland's review on page 29 of OC's "Giant Titans Issue". **** -DF

RODAN- The best looking Rodan without the limp neck shown in **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS** or **MONSTER ZERO**. First described as a UFO, Rodan (actually two Rodans) later reveal themselves demolishing Tokyo. With an annoying and over-exaggerated storyteller, **RODAN's** moderate pace and melancholy end is similar to that of **GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS**. Toho; 1956

A Second Opinion:

RODAN- Easily one of my favorite Toho movies, it ranks up there with **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS** and **WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS**, and if you don't agree, then you're a bloody, ignorant peasant who deserves a good flogging! Anyway, this movie features great miniatures and beautiful props, such as the two berserk pteradons and the man-eating bugs! As always, man's atomic testing soon wakes up the Rodans, who decide to get back at humanity by creating some urban renewal of their own! Those sneaky humans finally have the last laugh by having a big roast in their honor! Actually, one does escape to do a couple more movies, while the other gets to feed millions at the nearest Roy Rogers! Check out the dubbing for someone sounds a bit like 'Boris' from the old **ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE SHOW!** ***** -Kevin Lonergan

RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE- Also called "Zone: The Meteor Man", and "Human Comet Zone", not to mention "Zone Fighter". See several OC back issues for details. OC's "Godzilla Issue" featured a complete episode guide. ***** -DF

SILVER KAMEN (1971; 26 epi.)- I've only seen the first few episodes of this show, and it's pretty boring stuff. Endless dialogue and fairly uninspired battles. Not the height of Japanese superheroism, to

be sure! But I now understand that some of the later episodes are fast-paced and enjoyable. Can that really be? I'll have to find out for myself at some later time, but for now, two stars will suffice. Creator: Mamoru Sasaki, Starring: Toshio Shibamoto. ** -Jeff Goodhartz

SIX ULTRA BROTHERS VS. THE MONSTER ARMY- The Ultra Brothers and monkey god Hanuman battle a monster army lead by the reptilian Gomora. It's not bad, just okay; however, get rid of that dancing fool Hanuman! [Chinese title: "Fei Tien Cha Jen", which means: "The High-Flying Supermen"] [Jap. title: Urutora roku kyodai Tai Kai"] Produced by Shaiyo Film (Thailand) and Tsuburaya Prod. (Japan), Dir: Shohei Tojo, Production Manager: Hideyo Kawaguchi, FX: Kazuo Sagawa, Lighting: Yasuo Kamada, Producer in Bangkok: Sompot Saengduenchai, Screenplay: Bunzo Wakatsuki, Cast: Ko Koeoduendee, Anan Pricha, Yodchai Maksuwan. ** -Lenell Bridges



SON OF GODZILLA (Toho; 1967)- I guess I've come to terms with this one, over the years. I used to consider this one of the worst in the series. But now I've mellowed somewhat with it. Once I got passed the ugly, pug-faced Minya, I discovered a pretty enjoyable little adventure. The giant mantises look good and Spiga is a worthy change-of-pace adversary. In all, it's a minor effort, but a fun one. Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka,

Dir: Ishiro Honda, FX: Eiji Tsuburaya, Starring: Akira Kubo, Beverly Maeda. *** -Jeff Goodhartz

SPACE GIANTS (aka MAGUMA TAISHI)- This was always the greatest show. It had everything: Catchy music, the most memorable villain in sci-fi history (forget it, Darth Vader!), plenty of giant reptiles, robots, spaceships, and endless variety of special effects (including cartoon animation), lovable good guys and in interesting serial format. This was back before formulas took over Japanese sci-fi. You never knew was was going to happen next. Being a tokusatsu fanatic, I can only recommend the original version. It has a truly magical quality about it. Do everything you can to track down every single episode of this history-making series. Nothing else has been made like it since. P Productions; 1966, Starring: Masumi Okada. ***1/2 - Alex Strang

SPACE WARRIORS 2000 (1985)- Aaarrrggghh!!! Please stop this torture! This badly dubbed, badly transferred hodgepodge of footage from ULTRAMAN ZOFFY and SIX ULTRA BROTHERS VS. THE MONSTER ARMY is one of the worst films ever made. Even I (the man who likes almost everything) can't find anything good to say about it. Avoid, no stars. Prod: Cinema Shares Intl. TV in Assoc. W/ Tsuburaya, Presented by Dick Randal & Steve Minasian, Cameraman: Jon Knoller, Music: De Wolfe, Starring: Robert Sessions, Nicholas Curror, Sarah Taunton. -Christopher Elam

A Second Trashing:

SPACE WARRIORS 2000- I wanted to puke when I saw this badly dubbed (in English) parody of a movie to our beloved hero Ultraman! Bad dubbing, used stock footage from a number of Ultra serieses, including the movies ULTRAMAN ZOFFY, and 6 ULTRA BROS. VS. THE MONSTER ARMY (a flick which pits a Thai ape Hanuman against a squad of re-hashed reptiles). Have only seen it on TV once, and turned it off after 30 min. The company who did this shamed our family of Ultra heroes! They had no brains nor balls! Prod: Cinema Shares Intl. TV in Assoc. W/ Tsuburaya, Presented by Dick Randal & Steve Minasian, Cameraman: Jon Knoller, Music: De Wolfe, Starring: Robert Sessions, Nicholas Curror, Sarah Taunton. * -Lenell Bridges

SPECTREMAN (1971-'72; 63 epi.)- Cheapjack but endearing giant superhero series from the boys at P Productions. The Overlords, the snobbiest group of aliens you'd ever hope to not meet, send the heroic cyborg Spectreman to smash the schemes of hilarious space apemen Dr. Gori and Karas. The priceless dub-

bing is a definite plus as we watch Gori unleash his beasties on our polluted world. Karas gets my vote as one of the top ten villains ever to wear bad 1970s clothes. Starring: Toru Ohira, Tetsuo Narikawa, Takamitsu Watanabe, Koji Ozaki, Kazuo Arai. **1/2 -Christopher Elam

A Second Opinion:

SPECTREMAN- Okay, okay! Maybe many think this series is not up to par with ULTRAMAN! I think it's fun, serious in some ways. Rather watch this series than watch that trash by Saban! To save mankind, Spectreman fights the evil Dr. Gori, and his giant reptiles he creates. Monsters are a little fake-ish, the dubbing is not bad, but Gori and Karas steals the show! U.S. version is good, but I've seen the Japanese version! More violent, that's what I like. They should have dubbed the Japanese version in that format. Both in both versions, Spectreman is great! P Productions; 1971, American Version: Richard L. Rosenfield, Mel Welles, Originally Broadcast on Tokyo's Fuji TV, 63 epi., 1/2/71 thru 3/25/72. ****1/2 -Lenell Bridges

SPIDERMAN- Strange Toei variation on Marvel's comicbook character, but you already knew that. ** -DF

TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA- Godzilla retired from the big screen until ten years later, but at least it went out with a bang! Here the Big G goes up against its old, formidable doppelganger, Mechagodzilla and a new foe, Titanosaurus, who has a rather cool, cackling sound! /It's the noise of an elephant, played backwards. -DF/ Again, those alien apes with the cool-looking helmets decide humans have polluted their world long enough (and besides, their world is about to be "Black Holed", so that's reason to take over) and decide to clean house! They recruit a disgruntled scientist (who resembles "The Colonel" from KFC) and his cyborg daughter, and together now with Mecha and Titan, have a ball wrecking Tokyo, then Godzilla shows up, and the real fun begins! Great fun, all the way! Toho; 1975, Exec. Prod: Tomoyuki Tanaka, FX: Teruyoshi Nakano, Starring: Katsuhiko Sasaki, Akihiko Hirata. **** -Kevin Lonergan

THUNDERMASK- See August Ragone's review (page 31) in OC's "Giant Titans Issue". **** -DF

TURBO RANGER- Forget I even mentioned it. -DF

TYRANNO'S CLAW- One of the best Korean dinosaur vs. cavemen movies ever! I've reviewed it too many times

though, and nobody else sent in a review. **** -DF

ULTRAFIGHT- I've only seen a few of the 3-minute episodes that make up this goofy show, but I like it enough to rank it as a guilty pleasure. Pretty much all it seems to be is men in Ultra Brother and Ultra monster costumes having some kind of 'elimination tournament', wrestling event while an announcer gives us a play-by-play. Did I mention it's also ultra cheap?! No budget in sight, just a nice time-waster. You could do worse. God knows I have! **1/2 -Jeff Goodhartz

ULTRAMAN (1966)- Yes! Yes!! Yes!!! This is the one I've really really been waiting for! The series that created a legend and started a craze that has not stopped for over 30 years! Also, the series that started me on the road into this popular genre! The series centered and centers on an Intergalactic policeman from Planet Ultra in the M-78 system, who in pursuing a space monster comes to our planet, and saves an Earthman named Hayata when their ships collide head-on. By giving Hayata his life and the ability to call our red & silver giant hero by using the popular device called the Beta Capsule and alongwith the first of many teams of the Ultra Series called the Science Patrol (one of my favorite teams!) our red & silver leader (of his fans) fights gruesome aliens and giant monsters to protect our planet for destruction! What can I say about Ultraman? Well, for one thing, he kicks ass! Our late special effects genius Eiji Tsuburaya created the hero of heroes! Ultraman even puts many heroes in this country to shame! The series has it all: excellent special effects, lot's of humor, comedy aspects, seriousness, excellent storylines, great scripting, lot's of loads of memorable aliens & reptiles (some of which would be popular to this day like Red King), and an excellent cast that puts the icing on the cake to complete it! If you haven't seen ULTRAMAN yet, see it before you go mad and have to go to a padded room with a straight-jacket! You don't know what you are missing! Maybe you can't find it; don't worry because I have good news! He came out on video in November, to offi-

cial home video; here at long last! It's a wonderful series! ULTRAMAN is my favorite #1 TV series! /You don't say. -DF/ Tsuburaya; 1966, 39 epi., Main Writer: Tetsuo Kinjo, Cast: Satoshi Furuya Susumu Kurobe, Hiroko Sakurai, Shoji Kobayashi, Masaya Nihei, Mitao Dokumimashi. ***** -Lenell Bridges

Three ULTRAMAN sample Episodes Reviews:

ULTRAMAN epi. #4; "Five Seconds to the Explosion"

reason the music didn't tame the now-giant Ragon in ULTRAMAN is because the creature had been altered and mutated by radiation, that's why it's suddenly so big. -DF/ Anyway, a nuclear missile is lost in the ocean because of a typhoon. Meanwhile, ocean tankers are being attacked by a gigantic sea creature, Ragon. The Science Patrol finds out Ragon has the missing nuclear missile attached to his arm(!) and must find a way to defeat the creature. Naturally, Ultraman arrives, kicks Ragon's ass, fires his Spacium ray at Ragon's race which prompts Ragon to jump off the edge of a cliff to it's death. Ultraman takes the bomb into outerspace where it safely detonates, keeping the Earth intact for some other monster to come and fuck it up for the next episode! Scenario: Ryu Minamikawa, Dir.: Samaji Yanagase, FX Dir.: Koichi Takano. **** -Rob Dagg

ULTRAMAN epi. #10;

"Enigma of the Dinosaur Base" [aka NAZO NO KYORU KICHI and "Dinosaur Base Mystery"] The famed "Godzilla" episode, this episode is probably the most talked about entry in the original series. Godzilla is thinly disguised as the monster "Kira" (Jirass in Japanese) who is an experiment of a mad scientist kept at the bottom of his lake. Ultraman fights Kira and rips off his "frill" around his head and then charges at Kira where the two collide and Kira falls over dead. The End. Probably as close as we'll ever get to a legitimate "Godzilla vs. Ultraman" episode. Of course, Superman would beat them both. Scenario: Tetsuo Kinjo, Dir.: Kazuho Mitsuta, FX: Koichi Takano. **** -Rob Dagg

ULTRAMAN epi. #14;

"The Pearl Defense Directive" [aka "Operation Pearl Oyster"]

The monster Gamakujira (say that ten times fast) likes eating pearl oysters. Fuji of the Science Patrol likes wearing pearls. Fuji sits on the beach at night and watches Gamakujira eat all her pearls. The Science Patrol attacks Gamakujira but only

when Ultraman arrives, is the creature defeated. The End. A very weird and "moody" episode. Scenario: Mamoru Sasaki, Dir.: Akio Jisoji, FX: Koichi Takano. *** -Rob Dagg

ULTRAMAN epi. #24; "The Undersea Science Center" [aka "The Submarine Lab"]

A new underwater aquarium has opened and some of the Science Patrol are invited. The monster Gubira shows up with his "screw-driver" nose to make life miserable for the new aquarium. Ultraman shows up and rides Gubira like a horse before he decides to smoke him with his Spacium Ray. You gotta' have



What the hell, Damon said to review anything about giant reptilian beasts, and Ultraman #4 with undersea baddie Ragon certainly qualifies! /DF here. Ragon's appearance proves ULTRAMAN is a sequel to the series ULTRA Q, where this Lagoon Creature-ish monster first appeared. In ULTRA Q, it's revealed that the human-sized Ragon can be appeased by music. In this ULTRAMAN sequel, the Science Patrol remembers this, and again tries to use music to calm Ragon down. Naturally, the English version tries to cover up this connection, with the lame excuse, "Music Soothes the Savage Beast". But notice that in no other episodes of ULTRAMAN did our heroes resort to music?! For the record, the

some fun sometimes, even if you're Ultraman!
Broadcast Date: 12/25/66.

***-Rob Dagg

ULTRAMAN ACE- Size of...a giant space-man! Form of...a silver & red superhero! Who would have ever guessed that the Wonder Twins from TV's SUPER FRIENDS would get to star in their very own Ultra show? Certainly not!! But that's about the size of it, this ULTRAMAN ACE. Otherwise, it's the usual formula: Science Team vs. monster-of-the-week, with plenty of talky scenes, followed by a scant couple of minutes of Ultraman Whosit at the end. The girl half of the Wonder Twins is eliminated eventually, probably it was two radical a departure from formula, for an Ultra Clone show. Creator: Hajime Tsuburaya, 52 epi., 4/7/72-3/30/73, Main Writer: Shigemitsu Taguchi, Starring Keiji Takemine. *-Frank Strom

ULTRAMAN COMPANY- The second phase of the new ULTRAMAN "WONDERFUL WORLD" film. An updated version of that "Charlie Brown"-ish cartoon, ULTRAMAN KIDS. It's just as bad as the original, plus it's anime, and anime is not my thing! Tsuburaya strikes out with this one. Hope ULTRAMAN ZEARTH saves Tsuburaya from losing this game! *-Lenell Bridges

ULTRAMAN 80- My 3rd favorite of the Ultra series. Lot's of fun, very serious, lot's of touching stories. Fx are cool! My favorite is when Ultraman fights using his most kick-ass kung fu and acrobatics, some of the best I've ever seen! It has me on the seat of my pants! Produced by the Tsuburaya Co. Broadcast on TBS, 50 Epi., 4/2/80 thru 3/25/81. Cast: Hatsunori Hasegawa, Gin Nakayama, Eri Ishida, Daisuke Muso, Shuhei Nitta, Yuriko Kosaka, Masaaki Daimon. ****1/2 -Lenell Bridges

ULTRAMAN JOE- The animated Ultra series centers around Ultraman Jonias protecting the Earth from giant reptiles, monsters and aliens. It's good animation but I prefer the real thing, live action! They should have kept it that way! Like I said before, anime is not my thing! 1979, Tsuburaya, aka "The Ultraman". **-Lenell Bridges

ULTRAMAN KIDS- Tsuburaya Productions should stick to live action. What the hell is this? 1986, Tsuburaya, etc.* -Rob Dagg

A Second Opinion:

ULTRAMAN KIDS- I've seen this anime special, and it sucks so badly! As an Ultraman fan, take my word for it. It sucks! -Lenell Bridges

ULTRAMAN LEO (1974-'75; 51 epi.)- A healthy smattering of dynamic violence makes this more fun to watch than some of the other Ultra shows of the '70s. Leo fights all kinds of creatures (lizards included), sent to Earth by the space alien Magma. **** -Patrick Macias

ULTRAMAN LIVES- First part of the movie ULTRAMAN: WONDERFUL WORLD (aka "Wonderful World of Ultraman") released on video by Tsuburaya, about a year ago. It's supposed to be a follow-up to episode 39 of the original 1966 series! ULTRAMAN LIVES is a big let-down to this reviewer. Has stock-footage galore, with little new scenes, it has new music and some computer-generated graphics but it's so silly, even the story is so bad. If fans were expecting a "lost" episode to the original series, think again! In the first play, Tsuburaya has fumbled the ball which they could have scored a touch down, but didn't. *1/2 -Lenell Bridges

ULTRAMAN STORY (1984)- One of the best Ultra-movies! Ultraman Taro (our sixth Ultra Brother) is learning the ways of Ultra, to become a true Ultra-Fighter! Whole movie takes place on Nebula M78! Just about every Ultra (from Ultra Father to Ultraman, to Ultraman 80) is in it, but with the story centered on Taro. Good plot! Excellent SFX, great final battle scene between the Ultra Brothers and the monster Grand King! A little bit of stock footage from all the previous Ultra-shows to help Taro in his training blend very well in the movie! God, I wish it was either dubbed or subtitled in English! They need to do it! If you don't have this in your Ultra collection, you are not a die-hard Ultra fan! ***** -Lenell Bridges

ULTRAMAN TARO- The usual Ultra rigamarole, but a little faster and funnier than most of the others. Don't let the many poor reviews fool you; TARO isn't bad at all, thanks to its fast & funny qualities. The SFX are ace, as is Taro's costume. The monstrous reptiles are quite ridiculous looking - I mean, more so than usual for an Ultra show, and that's saying something. Cerator: Shigemitsu Taguchi, 53 epi., 4/6/73-4/5/74, Broadcast station: TBS, Starring: Saburo Shinoda. **1/2 -Frank Strom

ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO- 1994 Tsuburaya Productions in Association with Major Havoc Productions and Ultracom Inc. I can't believe how terrible ULTRAMAN THE ULTIMATE HERO is. I had sky high hopes for this "American" series, but those hopes were shot down as fast as a fly getting hit with a stream of extra strength Raid. I don't even consider this a "Tsuburaya Produc-

tion", instead I believe this to be an Ed Wood, I mean, King Wilder production with the ever hard working "Ultracom Inc. (T.M.)" at his side. /Ob come on; give it a rest! I'm sick of all this Ultracom bashing! Sure, they failed at nearly everything they started, but the company is dead now. Let them rest in peace. They tried their best, but it just goes to show you that American business people don't know how to market Ultraman. If production of the series had been put into the hands of us fans, we would have made one killer show that could put POWER RANGERS to shame. Ultraman is a unique commodity, and not just anyone, especially Ultracom (interested in money first, art second) can make him a success. -DF/ Well, with help like that, this production was doomed from the start. The "series" is a 13-episode mini-series featuring the Baltans returning to Earth to kidnap the inhabitants of Ultracom, Inc, I mean, take over the Earth. Kenichi Kai meets up with Ultraman Powered and gets the new "Beta Capsule" to fend off Earth from King Wilder, I mean evil monsters and aliens. Zeton shows up again in the last episode and kicks Ultraman Powered's ass again. The end. Terrible acting, terrible story-line, terrible directing, terrible handling. One of the reasons Ultracom probably got their asses canned from Tsuburaya of Japan. Avoid this one at all costs. -Rob Dagg

A Second Opinion:

ULTRAMAN, THE ULTIMATE HERO

(1994)- Is that what it is? I think it should be called "Ultraman, the Ultimate Insult"! It deserves to be swept under a rug and stay there! This god-awful remake of one original, beloved series is just plain bad! Bad stories, bad acting, bad FX, and especially very, very, very, very bad battle scenes! Only the monsters are cool-looking! The U.S. cast and crew of this series should have known better! Somebody horse-whip them! Glad it wasn't picked up. Could have ruined & damaged Ultraman's reputation! It's just too, too god-damn bad! They didn't even include Ultraman's fight sounds! *-Lenell Bridges

ULTRAMAN, TOWARD THE FUTURE

(1990; 13 epi.)- Letting the Australians produce an Ultraman show wasn't the best idea that Tsuburaya ever had. The results are pretty painful to watch, kind of like CROCODILE DUNDEE II. Dore Krauss played Ultraman's alter ego, Jack Shindo. In one episode, Ultraman fought a reptile named Gerukadon. *-Patrick Macias

ULTRAMAN ZEARTH (1996)- Part of the 3-part ULTRAMAN WONDERFUL WORLD festival. Story centers on new

Ultra Fighter "Zearth" battling gold-sucking alien Benzen and "kaiju-kotten" people to protect Earth with the help of M.Y.D.O. Team. Good story! There's an excellent fight scene at the end, between all three. However, I think Tsuburaya should have made this portion a little more serious, rather than making this mainly a comedy! Zearth can't stand getting any kind of dirt on him! However, he overcomes his fear of getting dirty. Even the cast of the original ULTRAMAN series make guest appearances in the movie! FX are very good. I'll coose ZEARTH to watch, over the disasterous ULTIMATE HERO crap! Tsuburaya is trying to make a comeback for Ultraman's 30th Anniversary, and ULTRAMAN ZEARTH was a good place to start! ***1/2 -Lenell Bridges

A Second Opinion:

ULTRAMAN ZEARTH- The best entry in the recent 30th Anniversary ULTRAMAN WONDERFUL WORLD MOVIE. The story concerns the evil alien Benzen who is feeding on the Earth's gold (!) supply. He uses his reptilian friend Cottonpoppe (a very fear inducing, evil name; I might add) to process the gold and then transfer it to Benzen himself. The MYDO (Mystery Yonder Defense Organization) team who happen to have their base of operation at a local gas station (!), come across a myserious man who drives around in a black minivan and likes getting his car serviced at the station. The man (Alien Benzen in human form) finds out that a member of MYDO happens to be the alter ego of Ultraman Zearth, his only threat to his diabolical plans. A climactic battle between Ultraman Zearth, Benzen and Cottonpoppe takes place with Ultraman Zearth finally overcoming his fear of getting dirty (!) and kicks Benzen's and Cottonpoppe's asses in one of the most well-done fight scenes from Tsuburaya in a long, long time. A

tear welled up in my eye, yes; Tsuburaya was back! This is the way Ultraman (minus the comedy) is suppose to be! ***** -Rob Dagg

ULTRASEVEN- I have always said that no Ultra series has been able to match ULTRA Q and ULTRAMAN as far as monster design goes. I will say, though, that a few of the creatures in ULTRASEVEN, notably Eleking, Giladoras, Alian Icarus and Starbeast Gion, did manage to maintain the creativity of the classic Tsuburaya kaijus. After this series, monster design would become increasingly more outlandish, repetitive and uninspired. ULTRASEVEN seems to also have more adult drama than any of the other series (the TNT version managed to completely botch this, though). There aren't many other shows that can match its style or charisma. Tsuburaya/TBS; 1967, 49 epi., Main Writer: Shinichi Ishikawa, Dir.: Kazuho Mitsuta, Music: Toru Fuyuki, Cast: Koji Moritsugu, Mitao Dokumamoshi, Tomoko Umeda. **** -Michael Keller

A Second Opinion:

ULTRASEVEN- The second and most popular Ultra series. Another Ultra (Agent 340) Hero, Ultraseven, continuing to fight for right, on our blue planet, Earth, along with the T.D.F. team and his monster-capsule kaijus. My second favorite Ultra series! Powerful stories, lots of weird aliens, monsters and occasional reptiles. Great special effects (I like the effects they do with Ultraseven's Eyeslugger!). God, they need to show the Hawaiian dubbed version over here! They did buy the show up there in Canada, but when those fools at TNT got their stinking paws on it, they fucked it up! Bad dubbing & editing galore! Argghhh! I can't take it anymore! Get the Japanese version which I rate four and a half stars! The TNT version gets

no stars! Screw TNT! Tsuburaya/TBS; 1967, 49 epi., Main Writer: Shinichi Ishikawa, Dir.: Kazuho Mitsuta, Music: Toru Fuyuki, Cast: Koji Moritsugu, Mitao Dokumamoshi, Tomoko Umeda. ****1/2 -Lenell Bridges

VOYAGE INTO SPACE- Feature length compilation of JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT episodes. ** -DF

WAR OF THE MONSTERS- See back issues, I'm sick of reviewing this one all the time, even though I like the flick a lot. ****1/2 -DF

X FROM OUTERSPACE- It's been a while since I saw this one, so forgive my shaky memory. Some astronauts in outerspace come across some alien "spore" and when they get back to Earth, the spore becomes a giant monster called Guila or something like that. Good effects and a unique monster, from what I recall. Produced by Shochiku, Screenplay: Eibi Motomachi, Morioshi Ishida & Kazui Nihonmatsu, Dir. of Phot: Shizuo Hiraze, FX: Hiroshi Ikeda, Dir: Kazui Nihonmatsu, Starring: Peggy Neal. *** -Rob Dagg

YAMATO TAKERU- Not available for review. Actually, it was, but I haven't the time to watch it. -DF

YOG, MONSTER FROM SPACE- The best thing I can say about this film is it inspired some nice soft-vinyl toys and garage kits. After a promising start with the launch of the exploratory spacecraft Helio 7 at dawn (the promise of a new day), it quickly shifts gears into a somewhat familiar South Seas adventure. * -Dan Reed

ZYU RANGER- The world would be a much nicer place if this dumb little program never existed; its exploits are legendary. ** -DF



田中友幸氏

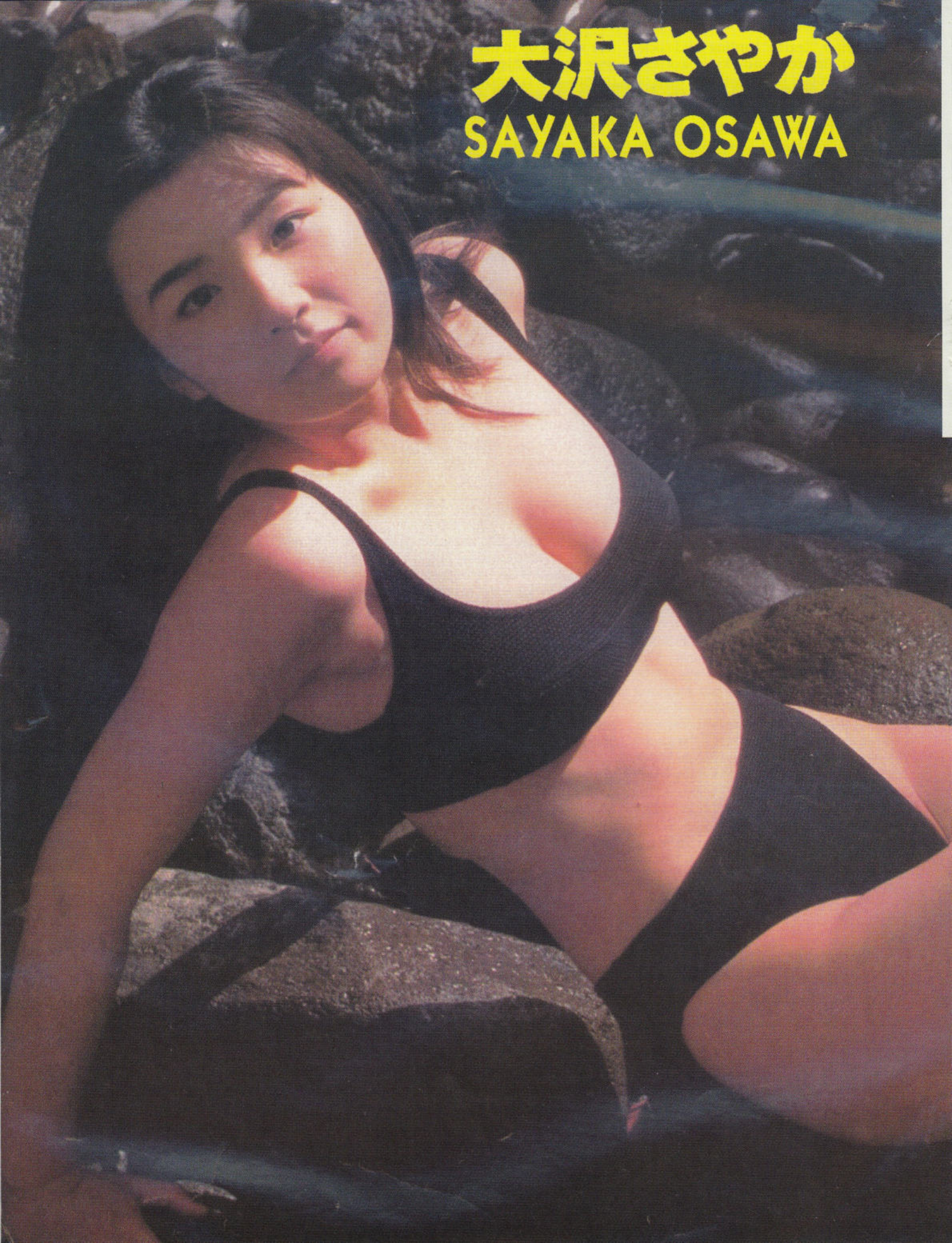
GODZILLA PRODUCER DIES Tomoyuki Tanaka (1910-1997)

According to the Yomiuri newspaper (4/3/97), Mr. Tanaka died April 2, 1997, at 5 p.m. He died of a stroke at the age of 86.

Tomoyuki joined the Daiho Movie Co. in 1940, and later joined Toho and became the company's president. He produced about 220 Toho movies, including not just monster films, but also YOJIMBO, AKAHIGE and KAGEMUSHA, directed by Akira Kurosawa.

大沢さやか

SAYAKA OSAWA



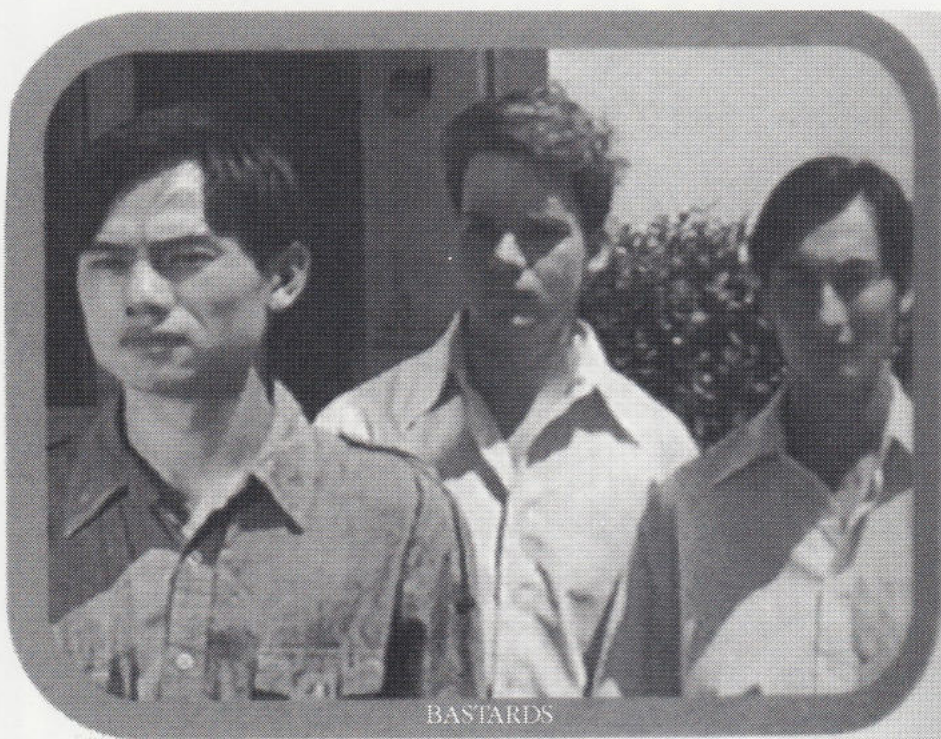


WHAT'S NEXT IN OC; A VIETNAMESE SECTION?!

To all my detractors; like it or not, OC virtually set the pace (kinda' sorta') for Asian zinedom in America. Though there were pre-OC publications like Greg Shoemaker's granddaddy zine The Japanese Fantasy Film Journal and Karen Schaub's The Jade Screen (well ahead of our current trendy "know-it-all's in the HK rag scene), OC was one of the first to promote HK's so-called "New Wave" movie genre in the 1980s, while continuing to remind everyone that the equally popular Japanese monster movies still existed. Even this wasn't enough for a magazine intended to cover a wide variety of neglected genres, so over the years, I've strived to seek out the truly obscure stuff from Korea, the Philippines and India. While everyone else was still writing about John Woo and Godzilla's latest model kit, I was trying to find out about Korea's Shim Hyung Rei and Filipino comedian Rene Requiestas.

By no surprise, one genre lacking from OC was Vietnamese entertainment. Though I did trash their movie TAY DU KI many years ago, locating other Vietnamese productions has been like finding intellectuals at a BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD convention. I did encounter a couple Vietnamese videostores here & there, but most of the movies appeared to be mere HK hits dubbed in Vietnamese. I gave up and assumed that this formerly war-torn country had bigger problems on their hands than movie making. But my assumption that Vietnam had no entertainment industry was premature. I realized this when I spoke to some Asian immigrants I worked with. To prove me wrong, my friends located a number of Vietnamese movie/entertainment magazines for me to browse through. Due to minimal time & patience, I wasn't able to go heavily into researching this stuff, but I did spend an afternoon or two locating as much Vietnamese material as I had time for.

According to the limited resources I managed to uncover (thank god for the Bay Area's large Vietnamese community!), there are indeed Filipino movies being made today. In late October, Orange County residents were given a rare opportunity to see Vietnamese movies on the big screen. The

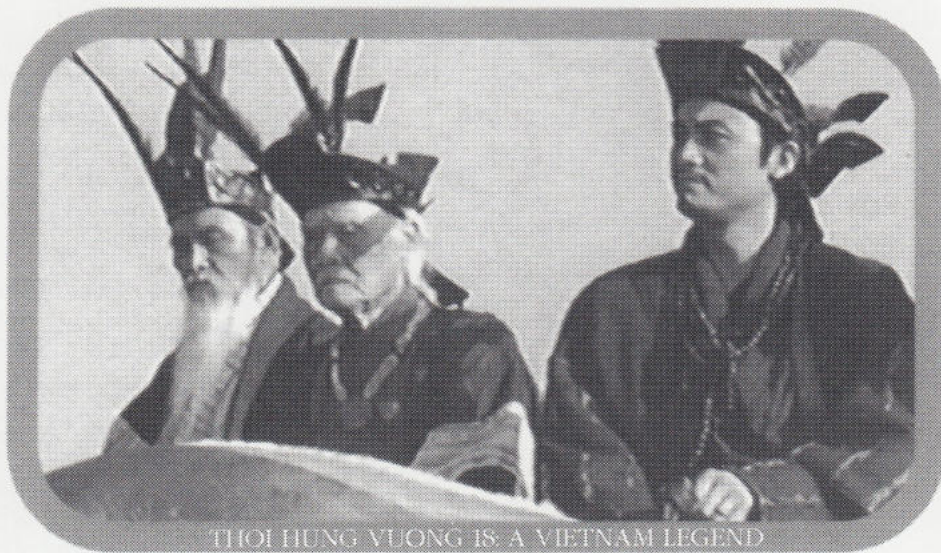


BASTARDS

Thu Do Theater (in Garden Grove) held Vietnamese Cinema Week, which was in celebration of the 10th Annual Viet Nam Cinema Day. I'm curious to know if any of OC's Southern California readers managed to attend this all-too-rare event, and if any of you would care to review & send in whatever films (ranging from emotional dramas to martial arts!); inquiring minds want to know! Opening night debuted BASTARDS (Dir.: Phuc Loc Do). Though shot in America, it seems to follow the pattern of a few familiar HK films about immigrants coming to

America: Amerasian brothers immigrate to California and get mixed up with some Vietnamese streetgang. One brother turns "bad" and joins the gang, and the other does not.

What sounds more interesting is THOI HUNG VUONG 18: A VIETNAM LEGEND (Dir.: Charlie Nguyen), a low budget period film about warring clans and sword-wielding peasants during Viet Nam's ancient times. Director Nguyen also stars in this combination of myth, adventure, romance and martial arts swordplay. This movie is of particular interest to OC readers



THOI HUNG VUONG 18: A VIETNAM LEGEND

for its incorporating of martial arts, since, as you know, martial arts films & TV shows are something OC has always seeked out: Kung fu, sword-fantasies, cybernetic superheroes, ninjas, and as many other martial arts sub-genres as is possible (hell, OC even located and reviewed a Korean wrestling movie a couple years back!).

Other illusive movies at this unique



A TALE OF LOVE



event included such titles (most are completely new & alien to me) as Trung Hanh's NGUOI CO DON ("The Loner"), and NUA ANH MAT TROI ("Half Sun"), by Louis Phan. Naturally, more wellknown Viet Nam flicks (ones which even I had heard of!) like SCENT OF GREEN PAPAYA (Dir: Tran Anh Hung), and the breakthrough, art-house hit A TALE OF LOVE (Dir: Trinh T. Minh-ha) were shown too. Another award winner was TEARS OF ICE (Dir: Vo Doan Chau). Also on hand were shot-on-video, no budget productions made by immigrants, videos like: BUI BOLSA ("Dust Life"), DUONG CUNG ("Terminal Alternative") and

GIA DINH CO TU ("Auntie's Family"). For historians and nostalgia buffs, also showcased were movies made in South Vietnam before 1975, like MIS- SION 709 (Dir: Bui Son Duan), and Ha Toan Can's SAT KHO ("Land of Suffer- ing").

But as is always the case when ex- amining a culture not known for its cinema, trying to find info on these films is quite difficult, where as sing- ers and teen idols are every where. Viet Nam's music scene looks pretty predictable; full of traditional melo- dies, the sappiest pop (somewhere inbetween Menudo and Donnie & Marie) garbage imaginable, and pretty women. As I understand it, Vietnam- ese popular music manages to be ev- ery bit as bad as H.K.'s Canto-Pop. There would appear to be a consider- able lack of originality, the only real rock band I heard of was A.N.D.I. (for- merly 17th Parallel), and of course, even that was a Viet-American band located here in California. But in Viet- nam itself, there's a shortage of genu- ine metal, punk or grunge (apparently, alternative music still hasn't caught on over there), and people continue to flock to the weak, easy listening tunes of Nhu Quynh, Huong Lan, Manh Quynh folk singer Ai Van, and curva- ceous beauty Khanh Ha (the Vietnam- ese Amy Yip; or better yet, Khanh Ha is the Vietnamese equivalent of the Philippines's Anjanette Abayari). Sup- posedly, there's some sort of contro- versy in the music industry; although the pop singers are making decent salaries (by Vietnamese standards) for their performances, the actual song writers (like "hit makers" Pham Duy and Duc Huy) are not always paid for writing songs which are making a lot of bucks for the producers of CDs and videos. Because most of these money- making hits were actually written many years ago, and due to the lack of copyright control Viet Nam had back then, the distributors & produc- ers can get away with not paying any royalties.

The only other actual movie info was about the porn industry, but unfortu- nately, even that too seemed to de- scribe the Asian American angle; little was said about the topic in question (in this case pornography), as it hap- pens (if it happens) in Vietnam. It's about some Viet-American porn star- let called Annabel Chong (real name Grace Quek). It seems that pornogra- phy is one industry that does not dis- criminate, there are plenty of roles for

Asians in this field. According to what I read, Annabel Chong was actually born in Singapore, to strict Christian parents. It seems her first sexual ex- perience was during a pre-pubescent time in Catholic School-- it was not with a dude, but rather a cucumber! Not only that, but she discovered she was bisexual, and being at an all-girls' school, this proved convenient. The article goes on to tell of her growing up and moving to America, and find- ing work in L.A.'s porn industry, to pay for her college. I suppose info like this is interesting to hardcore porn freaks, but I would rather have been able to locate a biography on some- thing more interesting; like a martial arts actor. But I'll leave it to you read- ers, what's the verdict? Should OC regularly cover Asian pornography? After all, it is a part of Far Eastern Cin- ema, and therefore, theoretically, could fit in with OC's subject matter. Per- sonally, I have no taste for the stuff (some things are better to do than watch), but if there was a demand for it, it could become part of OC.

Obviously, this vague, incredibly in- complete "introduction" (hah!) to the Vietnamese entertainment industry can't even begin to do justice to the big world of Viet Nam's movies, TV and stars. This is my attempt at get- ting my foot in the door, to at least get a feel for the work of a country who's entertainment and pop culture is so little known out here. If there are any Vietnamese Americans or fans of this stuff out there, who are willing to write for OC, and shed a little more light on this stuff, I'm eager to hear from you. -DF





KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE



BIG BAD BEETLE BORGS

Saban; 1996, Producer: Robert Hughes, Supervising Producers: Michael Montgomery & Scott Page Porter, Main Writers: Shuki Levi & Shell Danielson, Cast: Wesley Barker as Drew, Shannon Chandler as Jo, Herbie Baez as Roland, Billy Forester as Flabber, also with: Vivian Smallwood & Kim Delgado, Reviewed by Damon Foster

The latest piece of garbage from those shithheads, Saban Entertainment, best known to OC readers as the perpetrators of such evil bastardizations of Japanese superhero programs like ZYU RANGER, KAKU RANGER, OH RANGER, KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX, SPIELVAN, SHIDER, METALDER, and now, of all things, B-FIGHTER (AKA "Beetle Fighter")! For more on the original Japanese version of this live action Toei series, go back and read my review on page 39 of OC #23 (No. 8; The Japanese Sci-Fi issue). Why the American releasers decided to rip off B-FIGHTER (Toei; 1995), of all programs, is anyone's guess, since the series was never great to begin with, and will not go down in history as being a Japanese TV classic.

But no matter how stupid B-FIGHTER may have been in its original Japanese language version, this Fox TV ripoff somehow manages to be infinitely worse! /Lenell Bridges here! I've seen one episode of this latest Saban piece of shit, based on Toei's BEETLE FIGHTER series. It stinks like an over-washed skunk! I'll

let Damon review & trash this bastard show. He's better at doing it than I am. My favorite animated heroes of Filimation, HE-MAN, SHE-RA, BLACKSTAR & BRAVESTAR and FLASH GORDON would easily kick this show's ass in TV ratings if they were back on TV. BIG BAD BEETLE BORGS? Even the name stinks like horse-shit! Go ahead, Damon! This crap is all yours to piss on. -Lenell Bridges/ To be this poor, this bad, this pathetic must be a challenge in itself, but these idiots managed to reach new level in inferiority, and, were it not for the temporary existence of TATTOOED TEENAGE ALIEN FIGHTERS FROM BEVERLYHILLS, I would say that BIG BAD BEETLE BORGS is the worst of the post-POWER RANGERS ripoffs. Naturally, BEETLE BORGS is cheap, that's to be

expected. But the staggeringly bad humor just boggles the mind. And don't give me none of that "It's humor for children" nonsense! Plenty of kiddy programs have a tendency to be honestly funny on occasion, like FREAKAZOID, REN & STIMPY, PINKY & THE BRAIN, and probably even ANIMANIACS. I'm not claiming that I wake up early each Saturday morning to watch this stuff, but on those rarest of occasions, when I've seen it, I'm always intrigued to see comedy that I wouldn't imagine little kids would even understand. The fact that children's TV now has advanced humor (that some adults may chuckle at, but I chuckle at it too!) shows that the youth of today isn't quite as stupid as Saban's feeble comedy writers want us to believe.





The only things I can praise (well, almost--and even then, I have to be in a good mood; a rare occurrence) about BIG BAD BEETLE BORGs are the acting of the TV show's young cast, and of course, the special effects. Acting: For the most part, these annoying runts don't seem to over-act or ham it up too much. And considering that their dialogue, drama & comedy was written by a bunch of underpaid dumbshits under the tightwad thumb of them Saban egomaniacs, the mere fact that the sight of these brats doesn't induce vomiting proves that their performances fall somewhere between tolerable & acceptable. As for the FX, some of it, of course, was spliced out of the original Japanese series B-FIGHTER (Toei; 1995), so naturally, these inserts are fine and dandy, the brief highlights of this otherwise lackluster farce. For the American footage, everything is done by computer morphing stuff of course, and it's the type of computer crap that serves its purpose, but looks like computer FX. There are also numerous costumes. Most of the hero and monster costumes used look just as good (or bad) as the ones in the Japanese originator. The 1 hr. pilot ("Beetle Rock"), which debuted on Saturday morning, Sept. 7, 1996, also introduced some ghost-like monsters (a skeleton, vampire & a frankenstein) not in the Japanese version.

Even the opening credits & theme song get things off to a poor start. It's a horrendous opening theme song, even worst than that for V.R. TROOPERS, easily rivaling MASKED RIDER's opening for sheer lackluster opening

graphics & poor music. The sappy bubble-gum pop lacks the grinding rock guitars of POWER RANGERS, and the visual images concentrate too much on the inferior American characters like Flabber. Speaking of Flabber:

Flabber, played by Billy Forester, is some sort of magical ghost or phantom who lives in a haunted house along with other clown-like spirits. He looks like a mutant offspring of Jack Nicholson's Joker, Beetlejuice, and Jay Leno, but acts like a wannabe James Carrey. Flabber gives three kids the power to become superheroes called: Red Striker Borg, Blue Stinger Borg, and Green Hunter Borg. The opening pilot looks more than similar to the script for the Filipino Sentai movie, BIO KIDS (Filmstar; 1989), a feature-length superhero farce about kiddies who venture into a haunted house where they're turned into space-age warriors. In the case of BIG BAD BEETLE BORGs (which, amazingly, makes me respect the Filipino movie!), these characters were conjured from a comic book; the whole concept is strikingly similar to an amateur video (THE ADVENTURES OF MYSTERON; VOLUME 1) I made a couple years before BIG BAD BEETLE BORGs came into existence! Coincidence?! But the catch is that this magic spell went out of control and accidentally conjured the comic's villains into real live existence too. So these monstrous, madcap muppet-rejects become the main villains of the series, and it's up to our heroic, childish robots to battle them, using the usual rays, explosions, futuristic vehicles which are ploys to sell

overpriced toys, bad puns, electrical charges and acrobatics. From what I've bothered to sit through so far, this useless TV show is not only stupid & unfunny, but also manages to be slowpaced and boring. I very much doubt this series will be a hit; it sucks and receives no star. -Damon Foster

RONIN WARRIORS

*Produced by: people, Directed by: person,
Reviewed by Joe Arroyo*

Over-sized eyes, wild-ass hairdos, and yes, a brat to boot, RONIN WARRIORS have it all with the exception of an overdrawn sexpot, unless you include shorts-wearing computer whiz Miya. Mystical armored samurai-like teens utilize the armor of Lord Talpa (demonic ruler of the Dynasty). RONIN WARRIORS, one of the more enjoyable TV anime since RAIDEEN and GO LION (VOLTRON), is action packed.

Thunderous battle scenes and continuity make this a highly recommended action adventure. At times, it can come off as heavy handed and operatic, but impressive nonetheless. Each of the five Ronin Warriors have the enormous capability to match Godzilla's own destructive breath of death! When combined, they form "The Armor of Inferno", replete with white hot thermal energy coveted by all Dynasty Warlords. **** -Joe Arroyo



From India:

NAGINA

1990, Produced & Directed by *Harmesh Malhotra*, Story by *Jagmohan Kapoor*, Screenplay by

Ravi Kapoor, Choreography: *Saroj Khan*, Special Effects: *Krishan Malik & Baldev Malik*, Starring: *Prem Chopra, Komal Mahuvakar, Sushma Seth, Jagdeep & Amrish Puri*, Reviewed by *Joe Arroyo*

This B-budget (Western standards) musical thriller deserves much adulation, not only for its musical score and choreography but for the snake-hipped Hindi honey bun in the title role! The lead actress (who also starred in *HIMMATWAIA*) possesses huge luminous haunting eyes. When angered a metamorphosis occurs, Nagina's orb-like pupils turn crystal-blue. As in Hindi norm, this actress sings, dances, acts and shakes for all she's worth! Most American "actresses" can't manage one, let alone all four talents!

Nagina's archenemy, some kind of Maha-Yogi, played by Amrish Puri (aka archenemy of *INDIANA JONES: THE TEMPLE OF DOOM*; 1984) looks like a real-life Klingon, and no makeup was used!

One deadly scene has a poisonous snake sent by the mad priest to kill Nagina's man, Radu. In a battle using real snakes, Nagina transforms into snake-form and terminates the assassin. Later,

the mad monk and his troupe attempts to control Nagina, using ancient snake charm melodies. Nagina breaks out into a snake dance and fights off his circus of apostles.

An overwrought father vows revenge for his daughter's unrequited love. He didn't count on his foe's new woman, Nagina, and meets his end. Ensuing an overdue grudge match between Nagina and the over enthusiastic priest sworn to eliminate her kind. Culminating into a plot replete with deceit, secrets, battle of wills, soul saving and death. Watch it for the music, the costumes, the snakes, or just for the honeyed-ham-butt-shakin' Hindi babe. The choice is obvious! ***** - Joe Arroyo

NAGINA PART 2

Running Time: 2 Hours and 40 Minutes, Starring *Sri Devi*

Reviewed by *Joe Arroyo*

Sri Devi, star of *NAGINA*, again wiggles into the role of Nagina's daughter. Any film with Sri Devi is worth my life's blood! Her very name is worth a five star rating! Swiveling and undulating her plump, snake hipped buns with grace, Sri Devi portrays a more passive persona in the film onset, however culminating into a climactic confrontation with the over-zealot monk whom pursues her.

A bit slow, the music and choreography are excellent distractions. Voluptuous as ever, Sri Devi (a top actress in India) could mesmerize any sentient and non-sentient beings, watching or not! The battle scenes FX were low-budget

by Occidental standards, but I don't give a damn! Sri Devi is as big a budget as you can imagine! You bastards can jerk off to Amy's fake as hell "Yips" all you want, I'll stay with Sri Devi's very real honey bun and dumplings!

Some over-zealot maha-monk wannabe (who likes talking to statues) seeks to vindicate his late tutor's death, and aims his vengeance on our titular snake goddess. Martial monks, snakey assassins, and eye-beaming cobras are the impetus toward the Nagina, awakening to her reptilian heritage. She discovers that her lover is actually a killer snake in human-guise and under the control of her nemesis! Not only does Nagina save her man, she also kicks the monk's ass! ***** - Joe Arroyo



From America:

YEAR OF THE DRAGON

Dino De

Laurentis presents a *Michael Cimino* Film, Music: *Michael Mansfield*, Executive in Charge of Prod.: *Fred Caruso*, Based on a Novel by *Robert Daley*, Screenplay: *Oliver Stone & Michael Cimino*, Produced by *Dino De Laurentis*, Dir.: *Michael Cimino*, Rated R, Running Time: 2 hrs. & 16 min. (approx.), Starring *Mickey Rourke, Ariane, John Lone* Reviewed by *Peter Huston*

There are several ways to review this controversial film. The simplest would be to lampoon its constant violence, its incongruous lofty speeches, its unlikable protagonist and the way in which characters frequently turn into self caricatures. Yet this has been done before, most notably by Joe Bob Briggs, in a humorous yet offensive review included in the book, *Joe Bob Goes to the Drive-In* (Delacorte Press, N.Y.; 1990). Another is to judge it by how well it stands up as a movie. Yet by now, pretty much everyone has heard this is a pretty mediocre film by any standard. If you like action films, it's not bad, but then again, it's not exactly a classic of the genre. As Joe Bob states, Michael Cimino "is the only guy makin' drive-in movies that cost \$40 million." Instead, here I'll attempt to judge the realism and accuracy of the film.

In 1985, when this film was released it created quite a stir. Its depiction of a racist white cop in Chinatown combatting hordes of evil Chinese gang members and their adult leaders was offensive to many Asians and Asian American civic groups. It's difficult for whites to understand this at times. After all, there have been several instances of white gangsters and few, if any, resulted in an outcry. Yet depictions of Asian American life in big screen, mainstream productions are few and far between. When a movie with this kind of budget

comes along, showing an unrelenting cascade of negative portrayals of Asians, it's only natural that protests would result. And the movie producers, it could be argued, did nothing to prevent this sort of reaction. For instance, one of the many changes they made in their adaptation of Robert Daley's better novel was to make the white protagonist overly racist, spouting several anti-Chinese, anti-Asian and even anti-Italian & anti-Polish statements. There are, of course, racist cops (even though there shouldn't be), yet why put one in this movie?

Ultimately, a disclaimer was attached stating the following: "This film does not intend to demean or ignore the many positive features of Asian-Americans and specifically Chinese-American communities. Any similarity between the depiction in this film and any association, organization, individual or Chinatown that exists in real life is accidental." However, this is not, in fact, the case. Robert Daley did a great deal of research in preparing his novel. Several of the characters and organizations which he depicts are intended to represent real life counterparts. When the novel was adapted to a film, much of this was carried over. In fact, Peter Kwok's book, *The New Chinatown* (Noonday Press; 1987) discusses these comparisons and even tells who the main gangsters are supposed to represent. Yet some of these were changed in the movie, so who can say just which cinema gangster is based on which real life person?

In North America, there are essentially three kinds of Chinese groups involved in crime. These are the tongs, the gangs, and the triads. Basically, the tongs are old organizations, men's clubs dating from the 19th century, who are not explicitly organized for crime, but are involved in much of it, particularly gambling. The gangs are new groups, made of younger and more violent people, who tend to be involved in a great deal of crime, particularly extortion. Finally, the triads are the recently imported to America, organized crime groups who are involved in pretty much everything.

Probably, the biggest flaw in the movie is that it blends these three different categories, each of which contains several different individual organizations, into one big amalgamation, "the Chinese mafia". There is a great deal of controversy over just how integrated these groups are with one another or how really organized the organized crime groups really are. Yet generally, the monolithic structured entity shown in this movie is not believed to exist as such. Instead, there exists a much more fractured variety of competing organizations. Perhaps the film would have been much less offensive if the producers had more accurately represented Chinese-Ameri-

can organized crime as several pervasive gangs and secret societies, rather than as one ponderous, hulking illuminati-type group.

The gangs are a major fact of Chinatown life in this film, but this is largely correct. The movie's depiction of gangs as being under the control of an older gangster, a representative from a tong or a triad, is also often the actual case. A tong often has a patron-type alliance with a specific gang, he is a valuable asset to it. Neither is he the leader. The gangs and the gang members often strike out on their own, meaning that they are not controlled by a tong or triad, although they might from time to time engage in tasks for it. Ironically, one of the main reasons why tongs aid gangs is that in return, the gang will defend the tong from extortion and other threats from rival gangs. Nevertheless, there are several independent, non-tong affiliated Chinese gangs.

One particularly shocking scene shows teenage gang members entering a classy Chinese restaurant with automatic weapons and blasting everything in sight. Although such incidents are rare, they have occurred as a portion of inter-gang or inter-tong warfare. Most notable was in 1977, when members of the Joe Boys gang shot up the Golden Dragon restaurant in San Francisco, or in 1982 New York City, where gang members shot up the Golden Star Bar. A similar massacre took place in 1990 when members of the Chinese Ghost Shadows gang opened fire at the funeral of a member of the rival Vietnamese Born To Kill gang. So, although the scene is authentic and based on real life incidents, it can not be said to be typical, but instead shows a rare

but troubling occurrence. In fact, one of the "advantages" of the tong-gang alliances is that the tongs exercise some control over the gangs and try and avoid outbreaks of such disruptive, financially unhealthy and attention grabbing activities.

All in all, *YEAR OF THE DRAGON* is a rather mediocre film, which contains much unnecessarily offensive material and dialogue. This generally offensive tone is not changed by its many awkwardly placed, obviously forced speeches praising Chinese culture. As I re-watch this film today, I was struck by just how generally unlikable and maudlin the cinema cop is. It contains many flaws in its depictions. Yet to dismiss everything depicted out of hand as having no bearing on anything in real life is not realistic either. -Peter Huston

From Italy:

THE THREE FANTASTIC SUPERMEN

[Italian title: I

FANTASTICI 3 SUPERMEN, Spanish title: *LOS TRES FANTASTICO SUPERMEN*, German Title: *DIE DREI SUPPERMANNER RAUMEN AUF*, Mexican title: *3 SUPER HOMBRES*] 1967; A Film By Frank Kramer, Perdsented in America by 21st Century Distribution Corp., Prod. Manager: Ernesto Gentili, Original Story: Frank Kramer, Screenplay: Marcello Coscia & Frank Kramer, Asst. Dir.: F. Gianni, Asst. Prod. Manager: F. Massigi, Scretary of Prod.: A. Addobati, Continuity: G. Fliayiz, Costumes: Vigano Lofaro, Foot Gear: Arditi, Musical Score: Ruggero Lini & Jimmy Fontana, Music



Publishers: RCA Italiana, Assoc. Prod.: Jim Marcovik, Exec. Prod.: Tom Ward & Mike Jusco, Dir.: Frank Kramer, In Eastman Color (Widescreen Co-Production), Lab. & Optical FX: S.R.E.S. (Dir.: E. Catalucca), Sound: Marvel Sound, Film Editor: Edmonzo Lozzi, Dir. of Phot.: Francesco Izzarelli, Sets: Nico Natul, Stunts: E. Mattes & the Italian Acrobatic Team: Sergio Mioni, Salvatore Borgese, Enzo Maggio, Giovanni Siarciasolo, Cameraman: A. Manthoniello, Makeup: G. Mecacco, Hair Styling: G. Mandina, Asst. Editor: E. Lopez, Wardrobe Asst.: M. Serrand, Studios: Ysafilm (Milano), Cinemadolor: Rome, Parnass Film (Munich), Starring: Tony Kendal, Brad Harris, Nick Jordan, Gloria Paul, Patricia Carr, Tony Lancaster, Charles Tamblin, Reviewed by DF

An Italian martial arts film, from the 1960s, no less? I really couldn't believe it about five years ago when I discovered one of the coolest, most unusual, non-Asian (until later) karate movie series ever. Watching this movie gets me more excited than Michael Jackson in a nursery! This Italian, French, German & Yugoslavian co-production really threw a monkey wrench into my whole theory of the modern kung fu film; I assumed it was the Chinese who first started making serious chop-sockey films, and that wasn't really even until the 1970s! But *THREE FANTASTIC SUPERMEN* is really just an offshoot of all them spy movies of the 1960s: The James Bond films, James Coburn's "Flint" movies, and of course, Italy's *KARMISSAR X* films, which, by no coincidence also starred this flick's two main stars, Brad Harris and Tony Kendal. It just so happens that

THREE FANTASTIC SUPERMEN tends to toss in more karate-inspired action than the average James Bond ripoff, and obviously there are enough chops & kicks to qualify this one as a martial arts film; otherwise I sure as hell wouldn't be reviewing it in a magazine meant to cater to Oriental movies. Over the years, this caper has become a personal favorite of mine, and now, finally, I get a chance to review and praise it (I did mention it a few years back in a back issue, and discussed its historical importance in the magazine *Heroes on Film*, however).

If there's one thing that amazed me more than the karate-style fights, it's the acrobatics; another trait I thought the Asians invented for films. It's obvious that director Frank Kramer loves gymnastics, I hear he even directed a war movie where a squad of soldiers carry a mini-trampoline around! History tells us that the original circus acrobatics wore capes and leotard-like attire, clothing which would later inspire the costume for comic book hero Superman. Since our three "Supermen" (it amazes me that the film's producers didn't get sued by D.C. Comics!) dress a lot like both Clark Kent's alter ego and the trapeze artists of old, perhaps it serves as a reminder of where America's favorite hero may have got his influence from. Regardless, the acrobatic antics in *THREE FANTASTIC SUPERMEN* really amaze me, not only are they ahead of their time (pre-dating Japan's *KAMEN RIDER* by five years), but exceptionally good; I imagine some of these stunts looked as impressive in the 1960s and Jackie Chan did in the 1980s.

There's also quite a talented cast in this film. The best known is Brad Harris, an

American bodybuilder from the 1960s who's first film shot in Italy was Charleton Heston's *BEN HUR* (which reminds me of a joke: Q. What do you call a gay charioteer? A. Ben-Him). According to an issue of Bill Connolly's exceptional fanzine, *Spaghetti Cinema*, Brad Harris remained in Italy to do lower budgeted Italian movies, but getting much larger roles. OC readers will be interested to know that he would later appear with Bruce Lee in *GYMKATA KILLER*.

His co-star, Tony Kendal is an Italian actor, real name: Luciana Stella. Third hero, Nick Jordan (one hell of an acrobat back then!) would later appear with then-HK action star Yueh Hua in *AMAZONS AND SUPERMEN*. There's really nobody else in *THREE FANTASTIC SUPERMEN* that I'm familiar with. But I suspect Gloria Paul had some clout back in the 1960s. I watched both the American and Venezuelan (same English soundtrack, but with Spanish subtitles) prints of the flick, and in the Spanish credits, they write: "And with the Special Participation of Gloria Paul", though in the American video release, she's just another name in the credits. While I'm on the topic of the two versions I watched back-to-back, there are only two minor differences: 1. The credits are written differently and placed at different points in the film. 2. A five minute, dragging scene is thoughtfully removed from the USA, non-Spanish subtitled tape. The sequence, apparently seen by Latinos only, has Nick Jordan and Tony Kendal dancing with women in what appears to be a dressing room at their gym. This five minute scene also serves to intro-

BOOK REVIEW • BOOK REVIEW • BOOK REVIEW • BOOK REVIEW • BOOK REVIEW • BOOK REVIEW • BOOK REVIEW

BARROOM BRAWLING -The Art of Staying Alive in Beer Joints, Biker Bars, and Other Fun Places. Paladin Press. VHS Video, Color, 35 Minutes, \$29.95., Reviewed by Peter Huston

Paladin Press is a rather peculiar company with a series of rather peculiar products.¹ They specialize in non-fiction works dealing with military and police science, weaponry, detective techniques, and, yes, they do have an extensive line of martial arts and self defense books. Granted, this line may at times take on a peculiar flavor. For instance, we have such fine books as *A Bouncer's Guide to Barroom Brawling* -Dealing with the Sucker Puncher, Streetfighter, and Ambusher by Peyton Quinn² and an entire series of self defense books by a man who goes by the moniker of Marc "Animal" MacYoung. MacYoung's books are something of an acquired taste, as illustrated by titles such as *Pool Cues, Beer Bottles, & Baseball Bats -Animal's Guide to Improvised Weapons for Self-*

*Defense and Survival or Street E&E - Evading, Escaping, and Other Ways to Save Your Ass when Things get Ugly.*³ Here these authors, and a gentleman named Mike Haynack, have created an instructional video on the fine art of saloon survival. The result, although informative, at times resembles a twisted parody of school room instructional films.

Following opening credits, we watch as the three ride motorcycles into town. When they enter a bar to have a few beers, MacYoung makes the mistake of speaking to the wrong woman. Her thuggish boyfriend and companions soon attack them. Quinn, MacYoung, and Haynack defend themselves using a variety of martial arts techniques and then flee the tavern. Its strange.

What's even stranger is the next scene where we find our three instructors, Quinn, MacYoung, and Haynack, sitting in chairs, sipping brewskies from the bottle, facing the camera, as they

begin to lecture us, the viewers, on what we should have learned from watching the preceding episode.

"Entering bars," they state, "is like when the people on Star Trek visit another world. You must learn the proper behavior and customs in order to avoid unpleasantness." For the next half hour the viewer is offered a variety of lessons and demonstrations on how to survive in such environs.

For instance, we are told to be aware of other people's body space, to sit with our backs to the wall whenever possible, and, above all, to be cautious about approaching women lest we offend their boyfriends and get beamed with an empty bottle. These lessons are imaginatively and interestingly presented. My favorite being the lecture on body space which is illustrated at one point by a "national geographic"-type clip of two bison headbutting each other to settle a territorial dispute.

Soon, we're treated to a lecture on

duce us to some seemingly "important" female agents who are never really given much else to do in the remainder of the film. Perhaps this is why this pointless scene was removed, or maybe because U.S. distributors felt Americans weren't interested in scenes not involving Brad Harris.

Though virtually forgotten today (that's why I keep trying to keep their memory alive; through my zines), the movie seemed popular enough in the 1960s to spawn about five or six sequels: *THREE SUPERMEN IN TOKYO*, *THREE SUPERMEN IN THE JUNGLE*, *THREE SUPERMEN AGAINST THE ORIENT*, *THREE SUPERMEN IN THE WEST*, *THREE SUPERMEN AGAINST THE GODFATHER*, *THREE SUPERMEN IN ISTANBUL* and *SUPERMEN IN SANTA DOMINGO* (aka *CRASHBOYS*), a few of which I've seen. Unfortunately, it seems to be rather a downhill thing, the series sure as hell didn't improve as it got older. But then, how could it? The first film is an immensely entertaining farce which combines adventure, spy stuff, comedy, martial arts, a gun shot or two, perhaps a car chase, and on occasion, it even borders into science fiction -- though the FX are kinda' cheap. Despite the tumbling & fights which are kinda' ahead of their time, it's possible to see what are some of the things which influenced it: Japan's *Starman* films, *BATMAN* and *THE GREEN HORNET*, secret agent farces, and most definitely the Mexican wrestling movies of El Santo, Neutron and the Blue Demon. So if you're a fan of any one of these genres, you'll like *THE THREE FANTASTIC SUPERMEN*.

In short, *THREE FANTASTIC SUPER-*

MEN is a lively little film. Aside from the fast-pace, there are two things which really stand out and make it fun: 1. The music! I love 1960s theme music, especially when it's poppy and flavorful like this. There were a lot of slick (yet occasionally tacky) themes in films before *STAR WARS* came along and made all movies sound like front row at a Lawrence Welk tribute concert. The amusing, silly yet catchy tunes in *THREE FANTASTIC SUPERMEN* are a wacky combination of lounge, circus and mambo music; they just don't write songs like that any more! 2. The energetic performance by Nick Jordan. His acrobatics are superb, I don't think he ever used a stunt double. His character is supposedly mute or dumb, so he never actually pronounces words. Lots of pantomime, perhaps even a little sign language. His body language communicates well, but he gets annoying after a while. But then, the print I saw is an English dubbing, so we probably aren't really hearing his real voice, perhaps the high-pitched, retarded-sounding groans & sighs aren't really his own.

Scriptwise, we're talkin' the mythical country of Shimushir. We're talkin' conniving FBI agents. We're talkin' a scientist kidnapped by a rich evil dictator. We're talkin' the scientist has a pretty daughter whom the villain will torture if the scientist doesn't assist the bad guys in their diabolical plan. As for our three red-suited, wall-walking, midair somersaulting supermen, two of them (Tony Kendal, Nick Jordan) are thieves with hearts of gold. The third guy to get his hands on a bulletproof Superman suit is FBI agent Brad Harris, who tricks and

later joins the other two to fill out the three. Brad doesn't always get along with his two fellow heroes, but the three eventually unite to thwart the nefarious plans of a large arsenal of bad guys who've got a machine which can make counterfeit money. Their secret base is located under an orphanage on some island. Plenty of gags, fights and gorgeous woman appear before the climax: Brad's character is cloned by the machine (called a "Universal Duplicator"), therefore pitting Supermen against Supermen! In the end, the villains are destroyed and the scientist (& mini-skirt attired daughter) is rescued. ***** -Damon Foster



From America:

BLOOD ON THE SUN

United Artists/

Warner Bros.; 1945, Screenplay: Lester Cole, Additional Scenes by Nathaniel Curtis, From a Story by Garrett Fort, Production Designed by Wiard Ihnen, Produced by William Cagney, Ri: Frank Lloyd, Starring James Cagney, Sylvia Sydney, Porter Hall, John Emery, Robert Armstrong, Wallace Ford, Rosemary DeCamp, Reviewed by Damon Foster

A year or two ago, I read somewhere that *BLOOD ON THE SUN* was one of the earlier American movies to depict any sort of Asian martial arts. Though I've heard of even earlier ones like *JIU-JITSU: THE JAPANESE ART OF SELF-DEFENSE* (1901), *JAPANESE WARRIORS IN ANCIENT BATTLE SCENES* (1904), a British oldie from 1907 called *LADY ATHLETE* (aka *THE JIU JITSU OWNS THE FOOTPADS*),

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the behaviors of barroom "ambushers", and how best to avoid them. In between demonstrations, key points are flashed on the screen for the viewer to read. "A fight avoided is a fight won." "Awareness is the key to Avoidance." and similar messages from the lectures are thus reinforced.

Following the prevention lecture, the film next discusses fighting methods and self defense. Lectures are offered on how typical martial arts principles can be applied to actual combat. For instance, the film discusses the principle of "pushing and pulling, as seen in Aikido". Granted, many Aikido-ists will be shocked as the instructors demonstrate that "pushing and pulling" can be used to pull people into walls or push them headfirst into pool tables. Naturally, we are advised that this is not a nice thing to do, but, gosh, it sure looks like it'd work, and somehow my Aikido teacher never taught me that during my brief study of that fascinating art. "Us-

ing your environment as a weapon" is flashed on the screen.

Other key lessons are the importance of "Relaxation"; "Not Contesting Power"; "Economy of Movement"; "Continuous Attack"; "Attacking on the Enemy's Preparation for Attack".

Although some might question whether such a tape encourages violence by teaching effective violence, the authors do state quite clearly that violence between adults is very serious in a moral, medical and legal sense. Still, the sad fact is that many adult teenagers (i.e. 18 years +) might simply shrug this off, until they or someone they know is hurt or arrested following a fight. Nevertheless, the filmmakers can't be blamed for raging testosterone combined with a lack of real world experience.

All in all, this is a peculiar video, but I found it interesting and informative.

Having watched it several times, I've shown my copy to a number of people.

The overall response was something to the effect of "you know, that video wasn't quite as stupid as we expected it to be." In fact, it's safe to say that they liked it. (Except for one guy who says it really sucks and the acting is terrible and even the cursing seems forced. I don't know if I agree, but now you've got all sides of the issue.)

I must question, however, whether a 35 minute video is worth \$29.95. Nevertheless, I have found that I do tend to watch this one more than a lot of my longer videos, and a lot more of my non-martial artist friends have sat down to watch it than would sit through a longer, more standard film. Although such a tape is not for everyone, for some non-martial artists this might be just the thing to get them to sign up for lessons. To some experienced martial artists this might be a welcome change of pace. Nevertheless, some might find it just a little too bizarre for their tastes. -Peter Huston

France's *LESSONS IN JIU-JITSU* (1919), *A DANGEROUS AFFAIR* (1919), *PEGGY DOES HER DARNDDEST* (1919), *DAUGHTER OF THE DRAGON* (1931) and *CHINATOWN AFTER DARK* (1931), 1945's *BLOOD ON THE SUN* was the oldest non-oriental, martial arts movie I could find.

The judo scenes only happen about three times maximum, and although one of them is a judo class complete with gis, this old, B&W movie doesn't appear to break a whole lot of new grounds (even for its time) when seen today. Judo and jiu-jitsu were probably the first oriental martial arts (not including kendo, which I imagine settlers & colonists discovered first-hand) to become known outside of the Far East. As such, most of the fist fighting consists of stereotypical over-the-shoulder throws, and American boxing hook-punches, but with the occasional stereotypical karate-chop thrown in for good measure. During its fights (few though they are, and most are pretty brief), the battle stances look more like that for wrestling, but since judo often looks more like wrestling than karate or kung fu, this is understandable. James Cagney's climactic fight with a Japanese policeman (in a dingy little boat-house) is pretty nice, especially for 1945! Interesting to note that it's the fierce judo tosses which really look painful and dynamic, while the boxing punches look comparatively weak-- it's not hard to see why martial arts would later take over at the box office, since these oriental techniques are so much more fun to watch than American boxing.

It's always funny to see such-propaganda laden material, labeling Japanese as bad, and all Americans as good! In current, Politically Correct times, there are, of course, those who would consider this racist, and others who are so uptight that they feel movies like this should be banned. Personally, I always get a kick out of movies which depict certain races as evil, since I'm smart enough to know the difference between celluloid and reality. Hell, I've seen enough Hong Kong movies (perhaps the most racist films ever) to convince me that all caucasians are scum of the Earth, and you don't see them being petitioned to have these blatantly prejudice (yes, even Jackie Chan films!) movies censored or banned! Keeping in mind that nobody is innocent, I really got a kick out of all the whities in *BLOOD ON THE SUN* who wear slanty-eye makeup and try (unsuccessfully, of course) to talk with Japanese accents, and yet nobody in the movie can correctly pronounce a name as simple as Tanaka!

Other than the two or three judo spats, *BLOOD ON THE SUN* seems pretty typical for old dramas of the 1940s. It's talky, boring at times, and with crackly, cackling sound problems adding to the crude-

ness. The script is needlessly complex, but I still managed to pay attention and get enough of the script in. Being filmed so soon after WWII (or during?), it's obvious that none of this was really filmed in Japan. The sets are too stereotypically "Japanese" to be convincing, and there are Americans galore (of course! Most Japanese Americans were probably still in concentration camps when it was filmed). There are Japanese signs on walls in the background, and although I'm not good at reading any kanji, I'm not convinced that all these calligraphy symbols are actual words. Though the movie isn't set during WWII, the political climate at the time is pretty obvious, as "Jap" is uttered more than once.

Plotwise, we got this Japanese villain called Baron Giichi Tanaka who hopes to conquer China, then Manchuria, and eventually, America! Why, them cold-blooded Japs! Obviously, this movie was made during the tale-end of WWII, when Americans still thought the Japanese were bent on world domination. Anyway, James Cagney (who I had heard of but never seen in a movie before; I'm not much for old films) plays an American journalist working in Japan. He studies judo occasionally, which comes in mighty handy when the Japanese police & soldiers come after him for some controversial article he wrote. Seems our hero is uncovering some top-secret plans where that mean military leader, Giichi Tanaka aims to attack and conquer China, and hopes to wipe out America too. Here's where the script gets more complex than a maze (that which you call "corn"), one minute, our boy is accused of slander, then somebody gets framed, there's a quest for a confidential document, toss in a who-dunnit murder or two, and of course, talk of a traitor. It all adds up to another drama about intrigue. Like I said before, the only thing which makes this one really stand out from any other detective/intrigue talker from that decade are its few judo fights. It ends with Cagney getting diplomatic immunity so the Japanese baddies can't kill him, and the American Embassy protects him, to insure a safe departure from Japan. *1/2 -Damon Foster



From Japan:

**BULL NAKANO
VIDEO SPECIAL**

Cinema Paradise Co. Ltd.; 1992

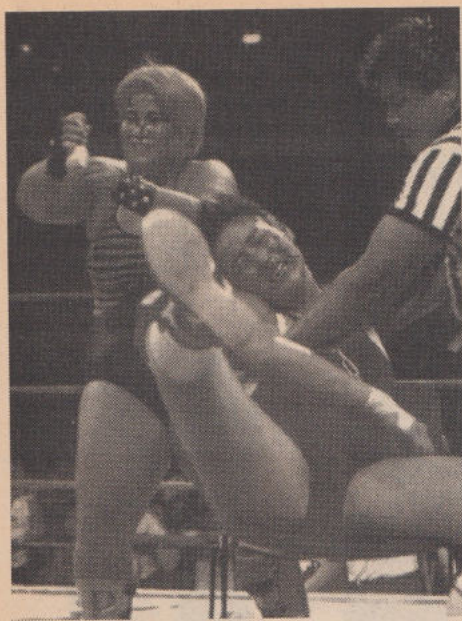
Released by Taki Video, Reviewed by Frank Strom

This direct-to-video special was conceived to commemorate the ten year mark of wrestler Bull Nakano's career. The special is comprised of two or three matches and a lot of filler. The matches are current (for 1992) rather than histori-

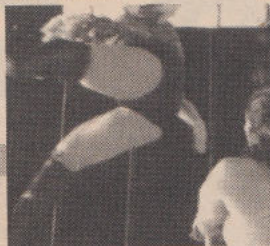


cal, poorly filmed (hand held videocam; very unprofessional) at small spot shows (no big rooms like Tokyo's Korakuen Hall or Osaka Castle). Top stars like Akira Hokuto, Aka Kong and Kyoko Inoue share the spotlight. Framed around the bouts are video verite sequences; Nakano walking around town wearing a biker jacket that reads "fuck" on the back, watching boats, watching trains, shaking a chainlink fence, and other nonsense. There's also a segment at home, where Nakano's mother and the camera crew "surprise" her in bed while she's asleep. The whole thing plays like MTV's "The Real World" or "America's Funniest Home Videos". Is this the best they could manage? Nakano rates a real career retrospective, and this contemptible piece of fluff ain't it.

Keiko "Bull" Nakano began her career as a professional wrestler in 1982, at the tender age of fourteen. She tried out along with a thousand other girls for a position with All Japan Women's Wrestling, and made the grade -- In the early 1980s, All Japan Women's annual try-outs attracted thousands of girls, each year vying for a mere seven or eight spots. At the time, the promotion was riding a wave of enormous popularity, with a huge television audience tuning in each week to follow the grappling exploits of the Crush Gals, Rimi "Jaguar" Yokota and Devil Masami. Nakano was soon paired up with monster heel/villain Dump Matsumoto as part of Dump's gang of "bad girls" (along with Crane Yu and later, Condor Saito), who regularly battled the heroic Crush Gals. Unfortunately, a mandatory retirement age of 26 was in effect at the time, and before the decade was out, most of the major stars were gone, taking the bulk of the promotion's audience (teenage girls) with them. A



**BULL
NAKANO
VIDEO
SPECIAL**



period of decline followed, which led the promotion to rebuild itself around its last remaining star from the glory days -- Bull Nakano. Nakano was given their version of the World Heavyweight Title, and over the next two years with Nakano on top, All Japan Women gained acceptance with the new audience -- Men in their 20s (the traditional wrestling audience in Japan). After dropping the title to rival Aja Kong (another mowhawked, 200 lb. monster in the Dump Matsumoto vein), Nakano went into semi-retirement, only working big shows. Since then, Nakano spent a year in America, holding the WWF Women's Championship for about six months. She then returned to Japan, broke ties with All Japan Women and became a free agent. In 1996, Nakano worked six shows for Ted Turner's World Championship Wrestling, but hardly did anything in her home country. An often overlooked legend, Nakano was one of the best all-around ring performers ever, with an amazing work ethic. Today, after years of straining her physical health for the sake of a good show, Bull Nakano's knees are shot to hell -- It looks painful for her to walk, and she's only 28 years old. In spite of this, she continues to put in above average performances. *1/2 -Frank Strom

Tseng & Gloria Yeager, NTA Home Entertainment; 1984, Running Time: 59 Minutes, Exec. Prod.: Hank Simon, Glenn Turner, Roland Tseng, Prod. & Dir.: Hank Simon & Glenn Turner, Reviewed by Damon Foster

This has got to be the most unlikely martial arts video I've ever reviewed! Aerobic kung fu? I suppose it's no surprise, since the 1980s had endless videos depicting assorted variations of aerobic fitness. I guess a karate tape or two was inevitable. Did any of you see that episode of NIGHT STAND (Timothy Stack as host Dick Dietrich in a hilarious spoof of talk shows!) where a female guest combined martial arts and high-impact aerobics to form her own system, called "Self-Defencercise"? I guess this AEROBIC SELF DEFENSE tape is what they're spoofing. While I'm on the topic of that funny program NIGHT STAND With Dick Dietrich, I thought I'd mention at least one other episode of this enjoyable series, which may be of amusement to OC readers. Dick, the host, talks about a celebrity called "Jackie Wang", one of his films being FISTING THE SNAKE!

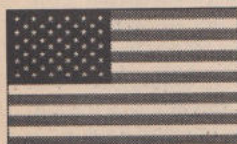
Anyway, the host of AEROBIC SELF-DEFENSE, Roland Tseng, wisely avoids being seen in any of the Aerobics Class scenes, and actually probably only appears on the video a few times, to give us basic karate tips ("if you're attacker does this, then you do this" etc.). Though he's the youngest martial artist ever to achieve a 5th degree black belt in Kempo, and I don't doubt his skill as a martial

artist, the guy is a geek and a half! This dumb video was made in 1984, and even then, he still had a dorky, 1970s-style Kieth Partridge hair-cut! And that high-pitched voice, what a dweeb! He's wearing some funky gym-type jacket, but it's yellow with black stripes, making it look like a costume of Nova (aka Yuki) from that boring STARBLAZERS cartoon!

Anyone who believes this tape will turn you into a martial artist (the video box boasts, "Not just another workout...this one may save your life") has got to have a brain the size of an amoeba. Fortunately, this standard exercise video make no such claims. The idea seems to be that by incorporating elbow jabs [into your workout] may make such defensive moves into instinctive reflexes, so that when a mugger or rapist comes up behind you, you'll automatically treat him to some elbow, and get the chance to run away while he's stumbling. Just don't get in the habit of standing there checking your heart rate or doing "cool down" stretches, as your attacker may not have seen the tape.

As is always the case with well-built women in shiny spandex (not to mention revealing & skin-tight) leotards, ample opportunity for masturbation presents itself. In this way, the tape is enjoyable. Babester Gloria Yeager has some nice hips on her, and that hour glass figure will make you drool like Mike Tyson at a beauty contest! But she married Steve Yeager (catcher for that Basketball team the Los Angeles Dodgers) back in 1976, so she might be pretty old today. If this is true, I think it justifies my suspicion that without makeup, her face may in fact have a slight case of the uglies. Don't get me wrong, I mean, I'd still jump at the chance to do the old "Poke-a-Rama" in bed with her, but that buck-toothed overbite tells me a blowjob from here could mean accidental castration! There are prettier gals in the class behind her. The one who really made me shoot my wad was some green-spandex attired lady (Beth Slattery) to Gloria Yeager's rear left. Not fat, but perhaps the heaviest of all the women shown. Therefor, she also appears to have the best knockers of the bunch. She too has a face that could scare Freddy Kruegar, but her bouncing titties (not big, but noticeable since the other women are nearly anorexic) reminded me of water balloons in the hands of an epileptic having a seizure.

But this is an exercise video, and should be reviewed as such. I'm certainly not an expert on aerobic fitness. Over the years, I've occasionally dabbled in a number of different types of exercises to remain healthy, including: martial arts, gymnastics, and maybe a little weight training almost every decade. But aerobics were always out of the question, not



From America:

**AEROBIC SELF-
DEFENSE**

Hosts: Roland



because I considered them "unmanly", but because they're so incredibly strenuous, and absolutely exhausting! They require no apparatus and no gym, all you need is some room and an aerobics videotape. So there's no excuses for not doing them, they're cheap and effective.

Roland Tseng starts us off by saying how these techniques not only improve your health, but can give you sort of an automatic reflex, so that if an attacker suddenly grabs you, the tape has already given you the strength and reflexes to give the bastard a good smack. Though this information is useful in introducing the concept behind the tape, this talky scene is a boring wait for anybody who just wants get right to the exercising. So then the sexy women take the stage and bounce through their moves, but there are distractions: One is that the girls are so sexy that I wanted to "slam the old ham" again, but also, sometimes each seems to be doing a different variation of the move, and it becomes difficult to know which of them to follow. I tended to follow Beth Slattery, the one with the biggest tits. But it's a safe assumption that I quickly developed respect for Gloria Yeager, Beth Slattery and the other dames (don't get me wrong though, I still looked at them as sex objects; I'm male, after all), they really know their stuff and it's not hard to see why they're in perfect condition. I kept having to pause the tape and catch my breath, these Karate Aerobics are staggeringly exhausting! But I just kept thinking to myself: If I can get the hang of this stuff, I'll be in great shape and attractive enough to fuck girls who look just like the ones in this video!

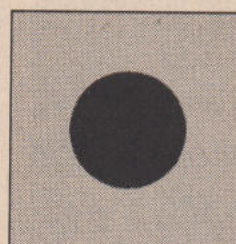
So I do all these punches and aerobics steps, sweating like Jessy Helms in

Harlem, and hopping around to what I believe is called "High Impact Aerobics". As opposed to Low Impact Aerobics, like the Jane Fonda tape in the 1980s, where at least one foot remained on the ground at all times, so the whole work-out was more gentle on your joints & muscles. So eventually, there's a pause, and I think the tape is already over. Even so, it was a strenuous workout, and I'm proud I managed to get through it all, in one piece. But guess what, my relief was short-lived! Gloria states, "and now for the workout!" Huh?! What?! You mean there's more?! Yep, I had managed to survive what turned out only to be the "Warm-Up", and I was beyond warm at this point. And so I sigh, and prepare to hop, do jumping jacks incorporating Bok Fu-esque hand sweeps, and of course, pant like an old-English sheep-dog in the Sahara Desert. After the tape's long-overdue, grueling end.....

I'm dying. Absolutely dying. 'Twas sweat-inducing to the max, and every bit as exhausting as I dreaded. It was mostly physically challenging, but mentally it was confusing too; sometimes it seemed there's not enough full-bodied shots, so although I was able to get the hang of most of the hand movements, what were the legs doing? After what seemed like an eternity, the work-out comes to a close. The ever fit & peppy Gloria Yeager tells us how to "find your pulse", basically search for it. This was not difficult for me, since my pulse was pounding throughout my body, I felt like a heart attack waiting to happen.

In the final analyses, though I did scoff at the mere thought of a martial arts aerobics tape, I really came to respect all those involved (except for myself, since I suddenly feel like I'm incredibly out-of-shape

and ready for the next STAR TREK convention). Though I doubt this tape will do much good in teaching young women to fend off large rapists & muggers, the workout was as intense as any other cardio-vascular tape on the market. However, I'm not giving it any kind of star rating, as there's just no way such a tape could possibly compare to any other video genre covered in OC. Well, I gotta' run, Beth Slattery is on my mind again, and despite her mug, my "one-eyed trouser snake" could use a massage. Or two (not that there's any energy left in me to do much of anything but collapse). - Damon Foster



From India:

BANDIT QUEEN

1995, *Running Time: 2 hrs. (approx.)*, *Producer: Sundeeep Singh Bedi, Director: Shekhar*

Kapur, Story by Mala Sen, Musical Composer: Nusrat Fateh, Ali Khan, Subtitled, Starring: Seema Biswas as Phoolan Devi and Nirmal Panday as Vikram Mallah, Reviewed by Linda Arroyo

A true story depicting the harsh life of Phoolan Devi- "Goddess of Flowers"; the Bandit Queen. BANDIT QUEEN focuses on castes (i.e. high-class and low-class) and sexism against women where they were seen lower than dung. A subject I researched for some years, a woman's sole position was to bear and rear children and burn alive at her husband's cremation acknowledging "Sati" (true wife), proving her love. Such practice has been barred since the 19th Century, but it's still performed in isolation. BANDIT QUEEN

displays violence towards woman and exemplifies the battle Hindi women face in achieving independence. Though this may sound like a feminist review, I have to add one thing. It's a label, a word which to me has no relevance.

Unlike India's musical productions, *BANDIT QUEEN* isn't for the weak stomach. However, it's educational and enlightening, especially to those Americans who read "Kama Sutra" and practice Hinduism without a fucking clue to the enormous amount of racial & sexist contexts. But enough of the lesson, I know you guys are more concerned about the true or false implications of Amy Yip's extra large dumplings.

Born 1957, Phoolan Devi was forcefully married and raped at age 11. Leaving her husband, Phoolan (a young adult) was seen as a sex object, a loose woman which wasn't the case. Ostracized from her village, Phoolan was soon kidnapped by bandits. After finding a bandit member she could trust, who shot his leader protecting Phoolan from his sexual aggressions, Vikram Mallah, her lover, made Phoolan a bandit, fighting alongside him. Unfortunately Vikram was murdered and Phoolan was raped by the village men. Later, Phoolan is given her own gang by the bandit's head honcho, taking revenge by killing all the men in that village (an enjoyable scene if you ask me). Also a female Robin Hood, Phoolan robs from the rich, giving to the poor.

Bringing terror to her enemies, Phoolan represented Durga - judge and executioner- and was a heroine to low caste villagers. Arrested in 1983 and released 11 years later, Phoolan Devi is a historical woman reigning as Warrior Queen of the lower caste during Indira Gandhi's position as female Prime Minister of India from 1966 to 1984. ***** -Linda Arroyo



From America:

ONCE A THIEF

Fox TV; 1996,
Producer: Wendy

Grean, Written by Glen Davis & William Laurin, Directed by John Woo, Executive Producers: John Woo & Terence Chang, Reviewed by Damon Foster

What a piece of shit! And that's putting it very kindly! It's common knowledge that TV movies are crude & poorly made, so bad in fact it's a wonder why anyone bothers making them, and this stinker from Fox Network is a perfect example of this. Other than *THE LAST DINOSAUR*, there really are no TV movies I could ever like. *ONCE A THIEF* is predictable, lackluster and absolutely stuffed-to-the-limits with cliches; it's as though the idiotic writers wanted us to predict every feeble plot-twist in this useless farce. I don't give a damn who directed it, this Americanized ripoff of

the original HK *ONCE A THIEF* is complete and absolute crap!

I was not impressed by the original HK movie *ONCE A THIEF* (Cinema City; 1992), but compared to this inferior U.S. bastardization, that Chow Yun Fat & Leslie Cheung vehicle comes off as a stunning masterpiece. Like I said, the theatrical HK originator wasn't great itself, but this cheap American imitation has me forgiving the predecessor, making me realize just how enjoyable it was! But comparing the two movies is impossible, but why the hell did John Woo agree to try and direct this one?! Didn't Woo refuse to direct the proposed, ill-fated, stillborn American ripoff of *THE KILLER*?! Contradictions can be pretty ironic, just as irony can be pretty contradictory.

Its only value is to hear the actual, undubbed voice of Micheal Wong, the brother of *VANISHING SON*'s Russel Wong. Micheal Wong is better known for his appearances in numerous HK thrillers including *LEGACY OF RAGE*, where he appeared with fellow Chinese/American halfbreed Brandon Lee. Michael Wong, being raised in America, like his brother Russell, speaks normal American English. But within minutes, the novelty of hearing Wong, who for years we've heard dubbed in Chinese in martial arts thrillers, wears off- big time! It doesn't matter that former HK movie celebrities (John Woo & Michael Wong) are involved in this, it's still typically poor American made, TV crap.

It's so funny to see how, after all these years, Asians are still given secondary roles in U.S. productions. I thought this sort of bias became out-of-date when people chuckled at David Carradine (well over 20 years ago) trying to talk with a Chinese accent to play a Shaolin Buddhist! It seems that this continues today, even though portions of this fiasco are supposedly set in Hong Kong! But guess what, not only is Michael Wong the only main Asian guy, but he himself obviously looks half caucasian. Don't get me wrong - I'm not complaining about prejudice; after all, HK movies themselves are among the most racist movies ever produced. Over there, the stereotype is that all Americans are evil, existing only as inferior, ugly villains to be wasted by the local Chinese heroes. Keeping this in mind, it's understandable & forgivable the *ONCE A THIEF* treats its Chinese dudes as villains who's only purpose is to be shot dead by our round-eyed heroes. However, this casting does lead me to a major gripe, and racial preference is not the issue: Superstar Michael Wong, a villain? Sure, he's cast as a villain in most of his HK movies (sometimes it just doesn't pay to be half & half; neither country likes you!), but that's because he's pitted against charismatic

super-doooper-stars like Donny Yen! Just who, who the fuck are these lame ass, no-talent whities in *ONCE A THIEF*?! Who are these absolute nobodies? And why were these unknowns (I don't know their names, I've never seen them anywhere) getting top billing over an established, talented actor like Michael Wong? Somebody has got their wires crossed, I think the casting agents have been sniffing Super Glue!

The gunplay does offer a dead (bloodless) henchman or two, and the climax has a couple decent explosions, but otherwise, all the action is weak. John Woo tried his best to make the gun-fights exciting, but they're almost as lame as the few martial arts fights. Haven't the Americans learned proper choreography yet?! Fuckin' aye, it's 1996 for Christ's sake; Jackie Chan is a household word even here in America! Yet the two or three fight scenes suck big time! What gives?! Hell, I can do more entertaining battles than that with a cheap cam-corder, a couple friends and a backyard! Are the idiots behind *ONCE A THIEF* deliberately trying to make unexciting fights? Shit, it must take up a lot of time to set out to make these fights so incredibly weak! These fuckwads don't know jack-shit about choreographing action scenes, and I bet John Woo really misses HK filmmaking, whether he admits it or not. Such inferior choreography staggers the mind; there are obvious stunt-doubles (if actors can't do stunts this simple, then they should go work at a fastfood restaurant) and chop-edit bullshit abounds.

Script starts off loosely similar to the original, with three thieves stealing paintings, etc., working for some old mobster; but this semi-remake follows an almost completely different story. Toss in a love triangle (distinctly non-Woo, to say the least!), more brief James Bond homages and uninteresting characters and you get a run-of-the-mill American crime drama set in Vancouver. From start to finish, the film is more obsolete than a lesbian without a tongue. -Damon Foster



From Japan:

THE GAMBLING SAMURAI

Tobo Co., Directed by

Shinkichi Taniguchi, Screenplay: Konebito Shindo, Reviewed by Jay Johnson

The Japanese samurai films of the 1960s are not unlike the monster films of the 1970s- both genres are painfully predictable in most respects. Not so with the 1960s film *THE GAMBLING SAMURAI*. The plot is not an unusual one, with a poignancy normally associated with the *ZATO ICHI* series or Kurosawa flicks, for that matter.

The main treat in this swashbuckler is the actors. The film is loaded with many of Toho's finest. Not only that, the real trick is that most of the actors are cast totally against type, and the result is incredible. First out: Yosuke Natsuki is Asa, the young yakuza. Natsuki usually handed out basic tough-guy leading parts, like those in *GHIDRAH THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER* and *DAGORA THE SPACE MONSTER*. Natsuki shows a bit of depth in this flick, portraying the troubled samurai torn between the responsibilities to his family, and to the loyalty he owes to Chuji.

Yu Fujiki is probably best known by anglo audiences as Tadao Takashima's sidekick in *KING KONG VS. GODZILLA* (he was the guy with the corn problem). Normally relegated to comic relief, Fujiki shows us what he is really made of in this flick, as the heavy-handed samurai-turned-gambler, Gantetsu. His most jarring scene in the film is his reaction when he discovers that he is partly to blame for the death of Asa's aging uncle (Gantetsu falsely accuses the uncle of being faithless to Chuji, prompting Asa to kill the old man unjustly).

The third unlikely casting is that of Jubei, the evil magistrate. He is played by Susumu Fujita, who always seemed to be typecast in most Toho films as a boring military commander (as in *DAGORA* and *GODZILLA VS. THE THING*). Fujita goes all out in this role, playing the classic villain-you-love-to-hate.

The most outstanding out-of-character performance in the film is that of Chuji's mentally disturbed sister Kiku, played by a very young Kumi Mizuno. Mizuno is absolutely great in this role, lending the character an air of tragic believability that is never rivaled in her other films. Jeez, she's always great, but she really trans-

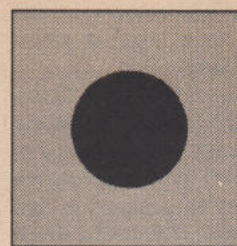
lates Kiku's pain and suffering across to the viewer in this movie.

The only actor cast in his usual mode is Toshiro Mifune, the guilt-ridden vengeful anti-hero. Also included are great cameo appearances by Tetsuro Tanba (*YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE*) and Daisuke Kato (*SEVEN SAMURAI*). All in all, for the samurai enthusiast anyway, *THE GAMBLING SAMURAI* should not be missed. Thanks to Steve Ryfle for turning me on to this excellent flick.

The film opens with a trio of samurai wanderers-- boss Chuji (Toshiro Mifune), Asa (Yosuke Natsuki), and Gantetsu (Yu Fujiki). These obviously high-society samurai are strangely generous, doling out their rations to a group of starving commoners.

It's soon revealed that the three are actually former samurai turned gamblers, and are leaders of a large group of yakuza. The men are returning to their home after a long absence. Chuji's return home is a shocking one; he arrives to find his home disheveled, his mother long dead, and his young sister has become a lunatic. He soon discovers that the town magistrate Jubei is the cause of all the trouble. The corrupt official has raped his sister and taken his family's property. To make matters worse, the sister commits suicide only hours after Chuji discovers the truth behind her illness. At this point the usual Nipponese "revenge" thing kicks in and the gratuitous violence gets started, with Chuji and his cohorts kicking the local government's ass, first by staging a failed assault on Jubei's stronghold, then by stealing money from the town's gambling dens. They give most of their stolen funds to the poor farmers in the area, and then, in true Robin Hood fashion, take to the hills and forests to withstand the eventual siege by the asshole cops. Several battles and

heart-wrenching plot twists later, Chuji and Jubei meet for their final confrontation. **** -Jay Johnson



From India:

HIMMATWAIA

Writer/Dir.: K
Raghavendra Rao,
A '90s Prod.,
Approx. Running
Time: 2:40, Re-

viewed by Joe Arroyo

Mediocre song & dance comedy drama tolerable only for its leading lady (who starred in *NAGINA*). As leader to a all girl school gang whom enjoys bullying deaf mutes, low caste females and stealing for past-times, she's a typical Daddy's Girl who cries "Daddy" whenever someone even smells the wrong way! Sporting her over 40 inch honey buns in extra tight leather pants would be shocking in Occidental films, but quite the norm in India (obviously, Hindi men have no mother fixations for they focus exclusively on her honey buns. She's Dolly Parton in reverse).

Simplistic plot or not, *HIMMATWAIA* is enjoyable. The evil King Pin -Daddy- appears more as a bumbling fool than a terrible tyrant. The hero, quite mundane. As for the Hindi honey bun, her dance scenes are more than worth it! Excellent choice of bodywear to boot! Finally a woman with some ass!

Starting off as enemies, our Hindi honey becomes romantically involved with the son of her Daddy's worst enemy, who's sworn to reinstate his family honor. Infused with false rapes, wife beating, mock pregnancy and murder, *HIMMATWAIA* proves more operatic than dramatic. ** - Joe Arroyo

BOOK REVIEW • BOOK REVIEW • BOOK REVIEW • BOOK REVIEW • BOOK REVIEW • BOOK REVIEW

SKILLS OF THE VAGABONDS, volumes I and II.

Leung's Publications, 440/442 Nathan Road, 8A/fl. Hong Kong;

Approximately 470 Words, Reviewed by Peter Huston

Recently, I reviewed a wonderful pair of books on methods of hoaxing the sorts of superhuman feats common to many Chinese chi gong (qigong) claims. Since that time, many have requested information on just where and how one can purchase these English language, Hong Kong publications. I suggest the following. First, martial arts book dealers carry them on a regular basis. The larger ones advertise in the many martial arts magazines easily found on newsstands. You might try: Asian World of Martial Arts (AWMA), 917-921 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-2477, Orders- 1-800-922-2962. Also try: SENSEI YANG C&S CO, 10816M W. 105th Street, Overland Park KS 66214 (No Phone Orders Apparently.).

There's also: BLT Supplies, Inc. SB 35-01 Queen Blvd., L.I.C. NY 11101-1720, Tel 1-800-322-2860.

Please note that I do not endorse any of these companies and provide names merely as a service. In the bulk of cases, I have not dealt with them by mail and cannot testify as to their service. I am fortunate enough to live in an area with a fine martial arts supply store whose owner loves special orders. You might try your local yellow pages to see if such a business exists in your own area. Secondly, you may contact the publisher directly: Leung's Publications, 440/442 Nathan Road, 8A/fl. Hong Kong, Telephone: 7800468/3884155, Fax: (852) 7808181.

If you do, please ask (or pester!) them about their proposed, as of yet unreleased, third volume. I want one as soon as it comes out!! Also, please be advised that if you wish the Chinese language editions of these works this is probably your best bet. One again, I have not

done business with them directly.

Thirdly, you may attempt to order them through another means. The exact titles, etc., are: Leung Ting, *Skills of the Vagabonds*, Leung's Publications. Hong Kong. Leung Ting's *Skills of the Vagabonds II - Behind the Incredibles*, Leung's Publications. Hong Kong. ISBN- There does not appear to be any ISBN number for either of these works. Such numbers are not always used with Asian publications. The author, Master Leung Ting, gives a series of seminars from time to time in the United States. These are on Wing Chun Kung Fu, not on hoaxing spectacular feats. The company which manages these seminars is:

AEWTO (American Escrima Wing Tsun Organization), 505 S. Beverly Dr. Suite #1400, Beverly Hills CA 90212, Tel (213) 883-0985, Fax (213) 883-0971. My single call to this company was not returned. Furthermore, I have not attended these seminars or have any contact with Master Leung Ting.



HONG KONG HEROES



THE SHAOLIN DRUNK MONKEY

Dir.: Godfrey Ho, Video Re-release: 1985, Asst. Dir.: Jim King Martial Arts Dir.: Eagle Han & Bobby Yuen, Exec. Prod.: George Lai, Screenplay:

Warco Shin, Costume: Wendy Wong, Editor: Leung Wing Chan, Starring: Elton Chong, Eagle Han, Mike Wong, Bruce Cheung, Sue Lee, Running Time: 85 Min., Reviewed by Linda Arroyo

A Saturn Productions Inc. re-release, **THE SHAOLIN DRUNK MONKEY** contains confusing editing and average martial arts direction by Eagle Han and Bobby Yuen.

Although dull, Elton Chong livens **SHAOLIN DRUNK MONKEY** with his comical demeanor and oriental skills which remind me a little of Jackie Chan. Even more so, Elton Chong can pass for Jackie Chan's living caricature. However, I don't believe Jackie Chan had the pleasure of hiding under a woman's skirt like Elton Chong did in this flick.

Eagle Han portrays sinister Silver Eagle in **SHAOLIN DRUNK MONKEY**. He also appeared in **DRAGON AGAINST VAMPIRE** opposite to Elton Chong. And an old beggar/teacher who appeared in **DRAGON AGAINST VAMPIRE** returns once again as Elton Chong's teacher. Script: A woman and servant (Elton Chong) seek revenge for the Shaolin master's death. ** -Linda Arroyo

DRAGON AGAINST VAMPIRE

Dir.: Lionel Leung Screenplay: Benny Ho, Video Re-release: Saturn Productions; 1988, Running Time: 87 Min., Cast: Elton Chong, Carrie Lee, Martin Kim, Robin See, Eagle Han, Oliver Cheng, Li Ying Ying, Roger Wang, Orson Chan, David Ma, Irene Kong, Paul Cheng Reviewed by Linda Arroyo

Fist of all, **DRAGON AGAINST VAMPIRE**'s box cover displays a partial idea of the flick. And the true hero is a woman who defeats Black Dragon, the vampire by a technicality.

No doubt an interesting story, **DRAGON AGAINST VAMPIRE** juggles



vampirism, magic and a little kung fu. Though the pace is a little slow, containing scenes which to me had small relevance for this short film, it was tolerable. Editing was really bad, cutting out scenes where Black Dragon performs cunnilingus on his victims, then killing them after climax. This was to insure ultimate power (ah yes, another male line). Followed by what looks like a case of syphilis due to his obsession of his victims's magic love fluids. Well, at least he was patient obtaining ultimate power, that's all I have to say. Though I know men prefer it the other way around.

Anyway, guys get to see a bit of Asian female flesh, nothing grand scale like any other Asian trash flick, but they'll probably get their fill. Script: A trial of female victims by a vampire is subdued by a cute Asian waitress who defeats the tongue slasher. ** -Linda Arroyo

KUNG FU SHADOW

Producers: Cheng Chien Nan & Tsai Kuang Hsian, Re-release: 1985 (Saturn), Dir.: Chen Chi Hua, Asst. Dir.: Wang Chung Kuang & Chen Ju Liang, Screenplay: Wang Chung Kuang & Tang Ming Chib, Starring: Tien Peng, Chia Ling, Chueng I, Yo Yang, Hsuan Ling, Chi Kuang Lung Running Time:

86 Min., Reviewed by Linda Arroyo

The flick's title (**KUNG FU SHADOW**) really had no relevance, unless you include the battle in the dark where villain Tiger Claws performs his overly dramatic death scene, deserving a comical applause. **KUNG FU SHADOW** should be called "Blood Rain Sword", the focus of the story.

This period flick contains fine direction and excellent sword battles done outdoors and indoors, noticing the painted skies and cheap forest greens. None-the-less, **KUNG FU SHADOW** has Chia Ling kicking ass in loose clothing. Accept it, guys! If you like tight-fitting garments that much, you wear it!

As beggar/waitress, Chia Ling possesses a bleeding sword ("Blood Rain Sword") which subdues her opponents. An apt weapon for a woman. There's also flying saws and large flying splinters; a sure body piercing experience. And then there's sexy Asian star Tien Peng (aka Roc Tien) as the mysterious man in red, later and much better in black, with his flexible belt sword (no pun intended). /None taken. (huh?) -DE/

Chia Ling and Tien Peng seek revenge for their parents' deaths by the hands of Tiger Claws, who wants to possess the Blood Rain Sword. **** -Linda Arroyo

REVENGE OF THE DRAGON

1982, Dir.: Robert Tai, Prod.: Chang Chi, Exec. Prod.: William Lan, Re-release: 1988 (Saturn Productions, Inc.), Running Time: 82 Min., Cast: Alexander Lou, Liu Hau Yi, Reviewed by Linda Arroyo

This period flick starring Alexander Lou and Asian babe (editor's definition) Liu Hau Yi deserves three stars for amazing acrobatic stunts and flying body parts- and not much else.

REVENGE OF THE DRAGON is fast-paced; simply about village kids battling ruthless costumed bandits who killed their families. *** -Linda Arroyo



BRUCE LEE AND KUNG FU MANIA

Running Time: Approximately 35 Minutes, Reviewed by Peter Huston

I picked this one up at K-Mart of all places! Essentially the video consists of two distinct halves. The first half is a documentary on the life and career of Bruce Lee. Approximately 30 minutes long, rather typical, but competently done. Good if you've never seen a Bruce Lee biographical documentary, but most of us have. I enjoyed it, but it doesn't exactly stand up to repeat viewing.

The second part of the movie is where things get interesting. Although the packaging claims that this contains "action highlights", this is actually a mild form of deception. Instead, what the video contains is nothing but trailers, the advertisements shown for a variety of 1970s martial arts films. Jam-packed on one cassette, there's an endless stream of mindnumbing advertisements for various martial arts films of the 1970s and perhaps earlier. The hyperbole and the sensationalism of some of these has to be seen to be believed! And a few oddballs are, of course, thrown in (i.e. *THE STRANGER AND THE GUN-FIGHTER*, a kung fu spaghetti western with Lee Van Clief and Lo Lieh). The over-all effect is fun, for those who enjoy hokey martial arts movies, although it does wear thin after a while.

Although I'm real glad that I've got this thing, the best use for it is probably to watch these classic trailers three or four at a time, maximum. After that, the thrill is gone, and the effect is reduced. Still, it's a fun video just so long as you know what it is you're getting yourself into.

*** -Peter Huston

監獄不設防

JAIL HOUSE EROS

American Distributors: Tai Seng Video, Filmed With A.F.G.A. (Geveart XT Products), Additional Work and/or Sponsors: The Melody Bank, Alastar Monteith-Hodge Soundwave Film Post Production; 1989, Starring: Shing Fui On and Amy Yip, Reviewed by Damon Foster

It's been a long time since I sat through an English-subtitled, Chinese-language comedy, and this worthless videotape reminds me of why. This unbelievably

dumb comedy alone is grounds for the immediate discontinuing of *HK Heroes*, if not the whole magazine *O.C.* itself! The first half of *JAIL HOUSE EROS* is embarrassingly stupid, packed with the two things I hate most about H.K. capers: 1. Talky, tedious, unwatchable boredom. 2. Infantile, incredibly stupid slapstick which defines moronity. These two elements drag on forever, making one hour seem like three. I would say this farce disappointed me, but my expectations were low to begin with; I knew I'd dislike it. These days, I am rarely entertained by these HK romps. The odds of me being completely entertained by one of these flicks is about as feasible as Lemmy (from *Motorhead*) getting a job as spokes-model for Colgate tooth paste.

By now you guys have noticed from the photo that a young Amy Yip is in





this one, in one of her earlier roles. She's really just a breast-- I mean, a face in the crowd; she's one of several characters. As far as the tits go, we really don't see nearly enough of them. She's covered most of the time, though there are a couple shower scenes where we get brief glimpses of some side tit, though as always, no nipple. In one scene, a hole is ripped in her dress, allowing for a short peak at some cleavage; this and the shower scenes don't make the movie worth the price of rental though.

Another cast member is that woman who played the female vampire in MR. VAMPIRE 2, and I believe she also was the Lin Quei ("Forest Demon") leader in MR. VAMPIRE 3. But when I reviewed it many years ago, I was of the mistaken impression (a rumor supplied by an unreliable source) that it was Yukari Oshima in that role. Regardless, in this film, the unknown actress (anybody know her name?) goes against typecasting by playing the opposite, the dreaded enemy of Chinese vampires, the heroic Taoist.

But here I go again, contradicting myself with a change of heart! As always with these sorts of HK films, the latter half nearly makes up for the first. The finale incorporates some fantasy & horror, it's out-of-place in an otherwise lackluster bore. Again, it's the acrobatic Taoist, and her magical duel with a scary (yet strangely attractive) ghost woman, which finally adds a little fun to an otherwise useless film. The antics are remotely exciting, and the FX are tolerable.

But on the whole, as a women-in-prison movie, it's still a piece of crap, so I'll only give it half a star. It's so dumb; in one scene a woman escapes by constructing a rope out of toilet paper! Not that I would really know, I mean, I've

never been convicted (snicker) of illegal doings so I've never been in jail; therefore, I don't know how I would go about escaping. But let's see, I bet I could come up with something. I know, I've seen this trick in movies: I put my carving skills to work, carving into a gun, producing a small bar which I can paint to look like real soap! Okay, so then I scare the guard by aiming the soap at the guard who, uh, wait, that can't be right!

Rival cliques of women are inevitable in any W.I.P. movie, so that cat-fight enthusiasts can beat off to plenty of scenes of women wrestling each other; and during the proceedings, there's some nudity. But other scenes aren't really very pleasant to watch, like rather unattractive women eating greasy chicken wings. A subplot involves these three geeks who get hired to do prison maintenance, and trying to bone several willing prisoners, including Amy Yip. Fiong Shu Fan plays the warden, who's got his hands full: Not only are the three guys trying to frolic among the sex-starved inmates who always seem to fight each other, but the prison is haunted by a couple ghosts! The good one (dressed like Madonna in her earlier years) is that of a prisoner who died in an attempt to escape, and the bad one (resembling a vampire) was a prison-guard who died in an unlikely, freak accident. Like I said, there's a Taoist heroine who pops in from time to time, and it's her acrobatic magic, and help from the good ghost, which defeats the bad one. 1/2 -Damon Foster

RETURN OF SILVERFOX

Produced by: people, Directed by: person, Reviewed by Joe Arroyo

Equal to DEMONESS OF 1000 YEARS,

RETURN OF SILVERFOX is tolerable and fun. Silver Fox (a villainess) could have appeared more often, however they chose to focus on the good fairy princess type (the heroine). Opening in ancient China, Silver Fox appears majestically evil with her white lion claw gloves. The goodie-goodie period costume was exquisite. But like DEMONESS OF 1000 YEARS, the film goes modern and fashion takes over (personally, I think women look better in said attire, much more appealing than tight pants any day).

SFX are minimally low budget but good; comedy relief silly; the female co-star (a ghost-finder) pitiful! With 3 sexy Asian cuties on the bill, I hardly noticed the male lead -who give a shit about him, anyway?! The asshole turns down the advances of his ghost-finding cutie (the obviously more appealing) for the bitchy, playing hard to fuck, needle-butt fairy! If only Silver Fox sucked him instead! (Silver Fox blows men for their energy to gain omnipotent and kills them in the process. But the faggot might enjoy it too much, and should just be shot!)

Anyway, evil Silver Fox is pursued through the ages into modern China by a pretty fairy warrior (with a tight asshole) who must subvert Silver Fox's intent to give men the blow-job they've been waiting for! Possessing her descendent, she utilizes her new body to wage war with the aid of her would-be suitor against the infinitely more open minded Silver Fox. ** -Joe Arroyo

☺+++▲+

靈幻童子

KUNG FU WONDER CHILD

Prod.: Fan Chien Kung, Dir.: Lee Tso Nam, Exec. Prod.: Chou Kuo Chung, Prod. Supervisor: Huang Chung Hsien, Prod. Manager: Lee Hsiang Chung, Photography: Chuang Yuang Chien, Martial Arts Instructors: Lo Chang An, Lee Shih Hsing, Art Dir.: Chang Lin Wan, Screenplay: Chang Hsien I, Starring: Lin Hsiao Lan, Yukari Oshima, Reviewed by DF

I do not own this tape, the flick is no longer in my collection; that's why I'm reviewing this infantile farce -- let me explain: I purchased this pre-record in Chinatown a few years back. Now that



my financial situation sucks so badly (I've made business decisions as bad as Whitewater, and you know what's really scary?! The guy who killed himself over that scandal, Vince, shares my last name! Is a pattern developing?!), I can't afford anything (i.e. pre-record videotapes) that's possible to sell. So by the time you read this, a customer will have bought it. But before I part with this videotape, I decided I may as well review it, so here goes:

KUNG FU WONDER CHILD appears to be a low budget, Hong Kongese attempt to ripoff the superior works (HELLO! DRACULAR, DRAGON BALL: THE ADVENTURE BEGINS, CHILD OF PEACH, etc.) of Kinco Yinki, a Taiwanese movie company known for their over-the-top fantasies. In fact, lead actress Lin Hsiao Lin bears a striking resemblance to Taiwan's Lin Wen Tein (see her small, brief bio in OC's "Chinese Vampire Issue"). It too, like it's supposed (pure speculation on my part) Taiwanese inspirations, combines comedy, colorful costumes, amusing special effects, martial arts and infantile stupidity. There's a good side and a bad side:

The Bad Side- Absolutely endless shinanegans plague the first half. This is most definitely Scan Button fodder! Childish bullshit abounds, including male nudity (ass shots, in a kiddie movie!), a prank or two, cliches & stereotypes a plenty, and a dragging musical number taking place in a Taoist classroom. All this pointless filler makes this pathetic attempt at comedy a real pain to tolerate.

The Good Side- Fuck THE BRIDE WITH WHITE HAIR! To hell with THE BRIDE WITH WHITE HAIR 2! If you wanna' see some truly entertaining period fantasy stuff, KUNG FU WONDER CHILD delivers! Like I said before, there are scenes of boredom and stupidity. But once you finally get to the battles

& FX, this lively little fantasy delivers! Unlike an over rated Tsui Hark eye-roller & head scratcher, the suspension wires actually highlight the martial arts and don't replace them! Wire work usually annoys me, but in the context of a quirky comedy (which doesn't take itself too seriously) like this, such nonsense induces chuckles -- not headaches! If you're yet another trendy, new, Johnny-come-lately, fan of HK fantasies who still drools over the like of BRIDE WITH WHITE HAIR, you haven't seen the real thing! The likes of KUNG FU WONDER CHILD and Taiwan's DRAGON BALL: THE ADVENTURE BEGINS (aka 7 DRAGON PEARLS) prove that not all wacky oriental fantasies are pretentious, gloomy dramas for arthouse dweebs to gawk at. KUNG FU WONDER CHILD has a superhero-like atmosphere at times, and is lightly sprinkled with good old 1970s-style chop sockey, but with a 1980s style stunt (or two) tossed into the mix, sort of the icing on the cake.

So between the "good" and "bad" paragraph, I've made my point; KUNG FU WONDER CHILD is okay, not bad. Its negative and positive qualities are both at about an equal. The script is fairly easy to follow thanks to ledgible (but with terrible grammar & spelling) subtitles. The story has something to do with a girl (Lin Hsiao Lin) masquerading as a man so she can remain in a classroom for Taoist wizards. Yukari Oshima and her beautiful legs gues star (occasionally) as a traveler in search for missing relatives or whatever. But what's a Chinese kiddie film without ghosts, demons, vampires and other strange critters? So inbetween comedic bits, expect a fair share of magic & kung fu. ** -DF

DEADLY MELODY

1993, Dir.: Ng Min Kan, Casting: Lin Ching Hsia, Starring: Bridgette Lin Ching Hsia, Running Time: 90 Min., Letterbox w/ Chinese & English Subtitles, Reviewed by Linda Arroyo

The English subtitles were very difficult to read, as it was smashed in with other languages. Nevertheless, the flick itself was fantastic! Now what's the deal with everyone disliking Lin Ching Hsia's period flicks? Not enough tight clothing?! There's more to life than watching women kill in their undies! There's yet to be a Lin period flick I didn't like, and could care less to see more breast exposure from Amy Yip! /I believe the correct way to spell the phrase would be "couldn't care less". For the record, I think most people do indeed like Brigitte Lin Ching-whatever's costumed fantasies! It's only me who's bloody sick

of them. As for your statements about Amy Yip, I don't think females are her target audience; and as a heterosexual male, I would continue to include any Yip shots I can find. But she's been retired for a while, so she's not really an active part of the HK movie scene. -DF/

Having said that, my best scene in DEADLY MELODY was the symbolic imagery where Lin decapitates her male opponent who wishes to learn the skill of the magic lyre. Lin projects fear (like Carrie Ng did in NAKED KILLER) onto her adversaries who killed her family (which she later discovered her young brother was saved by a jolly-always late-monk. Lin's adversaries are powerful/magical masters wanting possession of the lyre, and are called "The Six Cliques": The Hard-Hearted Witch, a few other unmemorable foes, Fire, and the personal fave of the lot, "Ghost".

Magnificent direction and grand choreography, DEADLY MELODY is recommended to all OC fans. DEADLY MELODY ranks with the best flicks like FIVE DEADLY VENOMS and FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH, with the exception of trans-sexuality, air surfing, explosions and flying body parts!

Lin leads The Six Cliques on a goose-chase for the magic lyre being protected by her brother. Great battles throughout, DEADLY MELODY ends with a climactic war between the gods. ****-Linda Arroyo

FIRST STRIKE

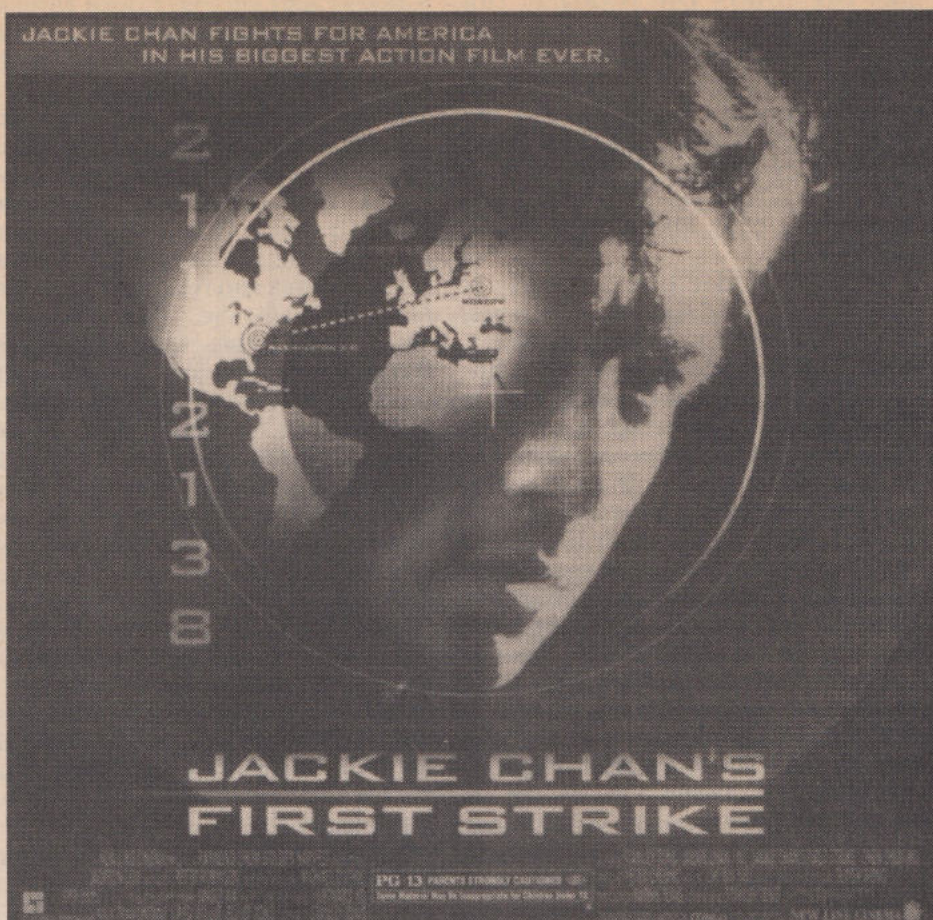
[AKA "JACKIE CHAN'S FIRST STRIKE"]

Golden Harvest, 1996, Executive Prod.: Raymond Chow & Leonard Ho, Prod.: Stanley Tong & Barbie Tung, Dir.: Stanley Tong, Edited by Peter Cheung, Screenplay: Stanley Tong, Prod. Designer: Oliver Wong, Presented by New Line Cinema, Starring: Jackie Chan, Chen Chun Wu & Bill Tung Pui, Reviewed by Damon Foster

At first, I thought the odds of me making an effort to see this one at a dumbshit, suburban theater were about as likely as an Oxford course in advanced "Ebonics"; I really had no interest in seeing Jackie Chan on the big screen, unless in an original Chinese print, in a Chinatown theater complete with grumpy old Chinese men with excessive phlegm they're so generous to share with other theater patrons. So anyway, how I ended up seeing the English version of this one will be described in the remainder of this paragraph. Okay, you've been warned; this paragraph will concentrate on my daily situation and is an attempt at humor. If you're one

of those who considers my shenanigans to be absolute bullshit and a waste of time & space, skip this paragraph. Anyway, here's how I ended up sitting through FIRST STRIKE in the lame-ass, overcrowded, East Bay: If you've been reading OC, you know my life took a nose dive due to serious financial problems in the past year. Out of desperation, I had to move back home just to make ends meet (I'm going to night school after work, which is one reason OC comes out so infrequently). My mother frequently nags at me for not being happy or rich. So rather than come home and be treated like a complete loser, I needed some way to kill time, and fortunately, FIRST STRIKE was playing locally! I mean, hell, I'd much rather watch Chan in action than come home and have my self-esteem torn to shreds (again) by being insulted & treated like a little kid!

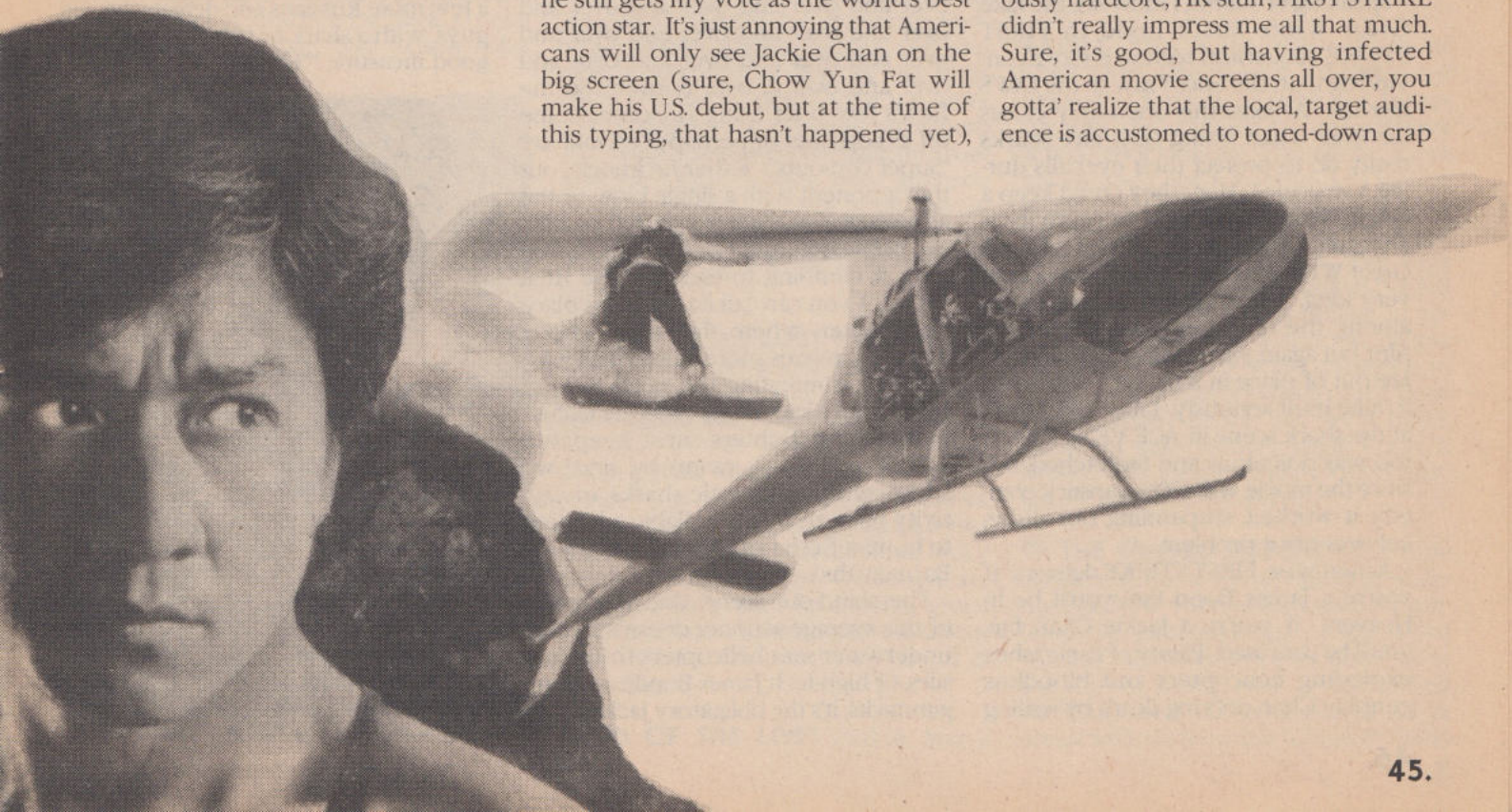
As for the film itself, isn't it kind of pompous that the official title for FIRST STRIKE seems to be JACKIE CHAN'S FIRST STRIKE? Do American movies do this? Have you ever seen TOM HANKS'S FOREST GUMP? PAUL REUBENS'S PEE WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE? JOHN TRAVOLTA'S PULP FICTION? HARUO NAKAJIMA'S GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER? This egotism doesn't surprise me, since Jackie Chan always has to be the only star, it really surprised me when he let an established actress (Michelle Yeoh) co-star with him in THE SUPER COP, where she damn near up-staged him. I'm not



saying that Chan should be denied his right to glory; he's worked hard for it, and physically suffered more per film than most Hollywood actors would in an entire career! No matter how over-rated he's gotten in the last couple years, he still gets my vote as the world's best action star. It's just annoying that Americans will only see Jackie Chan on the big screen (sure, Chow Yun Fat will make his U.S. debut, but at the time of this typing, that hasn't happened yet),

while there are plenty of excellent HK martial arts movie stars (some of which have worked with Chan) who are still completely unknown out here.

As a movie, FIRST STRIKE is okay, I guess. Having grown up on some seriously hardcore, HK stuff, FIRST STRIKE didn't really impress me all that much. Sure, it's good, but having infected American movie screens all over, you gotta' realize that the local, target audience is accustomed to toned-down crap



As always, Jackie Chan's comedy is pretty stupid. I did chuckle a few times, but I also rolled my eyes and shook my head at other childish attempts at humor. Most of the movie, amazingly, is meant to be serious, which is pretty ridiculous, considering the unrealistic, far-fetched approach. If they really wanted to go all out fake, they should have played up the comedy more constantly, perhaps to the level of a Steven Chow Sing Chi comedy, or one of Jim Carrey's hilarious ACE VENTURA movies. But instead, FIRST STRIKE takes a generally "serious" (snicker) approach, making the movie neither a "Drama" nor a "Comedy", and turning it into a "stupidity". I got an unintended laugh at the use of "man-eating" sharks-- in an aquarium! This is no joke! We all know that in real life, sharks rarely attack people (unless bathers & surfers start swimming dressed as seals & sea lions, this isn't too likely to change), and that for every shark attack, there are hundreds, possibly thousands of encounters where the shark in question merely swims past the human, sometimes not even acknowledging the existence of a person in the water.

Action-wise, **FIRST STRIKE** delivers. If you're a James Bond fan, you'll be in Heaven; if you're a Jackie Chan fan, you'll be confused. Plenty of car-crashes, exploding helicopters and bloodless gunplay; Chan defying death by scaling

On the topic of kung fu, that's where FIRST STRIKE rather fails. Martial arts are not a big part of this movie. This is forgivable, since, over the years, starting with 1971's SNAKEFIST FIGHTER, he's done the kicks & punches to death it's easy to see why he got tired of doing the same things over and over & over & over. So the flick's few brief kung fu scenes come off as cop-outs, or perhaps I should say "Super cop-outs". Either he knocks out the opponent with a single blow, or the adversary is so big & tough that no kick can phase him, and Chan resorts to running & climbing to escape. The final "fight", if you can call it that, takes place underwater, where the human body naturally moves more slowly anyway; therefor eliminating the need for any high-speed kickboxing. Another excuse is that both fighters must keep still whenever a shark swims by, since we all know that domestic sharks, in captivity have an uncontrollable addiction to human flesh (and Santa Clause visits Barmizvahs).

ingenuity, a cool little spat in a Chinatown church. Finally, there's a flashback to the Jackie Chan of old (or, Jackie Chan "of young"; depending on how you look at it), it's a nifty little battle utilizing poles and a ladder! The obligatory outtakes (set to a rockin' score) remind us just how dangerous even a small-scale fight [like this] can be. This kung fu fight was my favorite scene in **FIRST STRIKE**, but his kicking guys while wearing stilts (at some Chinese funeral/parade thing) was a real knee-slapper too.

You know, I don't really want to go heavily into the script, since it, like the characters, is pretty stupid and needlessly complex. Worst of all, everything is absolutely predictable from scene-to-scene, it's blazingly obvious what's going to happen in this routine espionage caper. It's so bloody predictable that I only halfway followed the plot. For what it's worth, Jackie follows some cute chick to Russia, and somewhere along the way discovers the Russian mafia (ex-KGB guys) are involved in smuggling a nuclear warhead or two. One minute, he's dodging bullets in the snow, and then nearly freezing in absolutely ice cold water, this scene was more painful to watch that it was entertaining. It's as though he thinks his audience needs to know how much he's suffering. Oh well, he's bloody rich, see if I care if he gets his balls frozen off! Anyway, his pursuit of the bad guys leads him down to the warm beaches of Australia, land of koalas and curvaceous babes in bathing suits. It's here that Jackie fights off a few more Russians and defeats the bad guys, with a shark or two thrown in for good measure. **1/2 -DF



TERROR YAKI

DAGORA THE SPACE MONSTER

1964; Toho Co., Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Director: Ishiro Honda, Screenplay: Shinichi Sekizawa, Special Effects: Eiji Tsuburaya, Music: Akira Ifukube, Released to TV by A.I.P., Producers: Samuel Z. Arkoff & James H. Nicholson, Reviewed by Jay Johnson

In the opening moments of DAGORA THE SPACE MONSTER, it seems this flick is business-as-usual for Ishiro Honda & crew. A weird "space cell" appears and inexplicably destroys a communications satellite barely thirty seconds into the picture, followed by the obligatory Nipponese hysteria leading into Akira Ifukube's heavy "Doom & despair" brass section delivering its usual fare. All in all, no surprise. Wrong. This Toho outing is decidedly different, the monster action abruptly lurching into yakuza/gaijin-diamond-smuggler-and-bad-cop-vs.-stupid-cop-whodunnit.

In short, the plot is all over the place, mainly concerned with the actions of a "odd couple"-ish pair of cops chasing some equally inept diamond thieves. The title monster only makes one major appearance -- the superb destruction of a suspension bridge by the fully-formed Dagora about halfway into the film.

The production team can't seem to make up its mind if this flick is a kaiju flick or a crime-drama, and the finished product is a mess. The American dub by Titra only adds to the stupidity, the cast reduced to spewing out inane, stuttering lines that leave the viewer pinning for William Shatner. Classic moronic one-liners abound, such as Robert Dunham's gaijin character (Mark Jackson) saying, "I'm what they--call--a--diamondGman!"

Yosuki Natsuke plays the part of Kumai, the stiffnecked pinhead policeman. Interestingly enough, Natsuke's voice is dubbed in the English version by the very same unnamed actor who

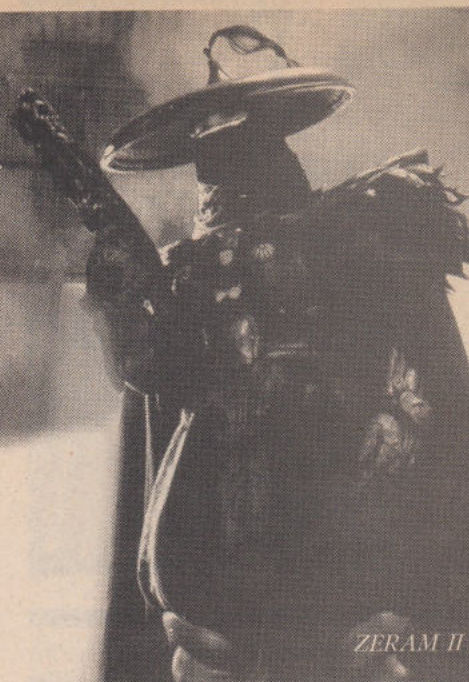
supplies his voice in 1965's major monsterfest GHIDRAH THE THREE HEADED MONSTER, the plot of which is nearly as wacky as that of DAGORA.

One of many unlikely scenes in DAGORA (DOGORA in the Japanese version) involves the narrow escape of Kumai and Jackson from a death-trap set by the crooks. The pair are left in a hotel room, tied up, with ignited dynamite sticks crammed in their jacket pockets. They barely get loose in time to toss the dynamite into a ledge outside the hotel, which promptly explodes next to a plate glass window. THE WINDOW DOES NOT BREAK. Go figure. Reminds me of that suspicious looking garden hose running up ULTRAMAN's leg as he puts out the oil field fire.

This nearly monsterless flick is one of the last truly "serious" attempts at adult-oriented monster entertainment by the Toho team, as this film was followed quickly by the often maligned monster-turns-hero entries that were widespread from 1965 to the middle 1970s.

The monster Dagora itself is boring, at least visually, anyway. Throughout most of the film the monster is a gooey blob of various sizes, which wreaks havoc by multiplying and consuming much of the world's carbon-based resources such as coal and diamonds. This scenario of a carbon-eating beast could have been exploited well by having the monster attack all forms of carbon on Earth, but Honda & Sekizawa limit themselves by having their beast ingest only inanimate objects. The monster's final form is a creature not unlike a big jellyfish, its central body surrounded by stringy tentacles.

Tsuburaya's effects in this outing go from really good to just plain bad. The fully formed jellyfish-beast is, for the most part, pretty cool (strange, since the behind-the-scenes photo of this particular puppet looks like an old douchebag on a wire)-- the added animation of the tentacles and the matte work in the coal-



ZERAM II

eating scenes are fabulous. The individual mini-Dagoras at the finale are really stupid-looking rock/dog-shit shaped glowing balls bouncing around on strings.

The single biggest flaw in this uneven film is that Honda tends to concentrate his attention on the inept cops & robbers in the plot, rather than on a monster which could easily be the most destructive critter ever unleashed on the planet! I mean, hell, neither Godzilla or King Ghidrah could ever pull off the tricks that Dagora does. ** -Jay Johnson

ZERAM II

1994; Directed by Keita Amemiya, Cast: Yuko Moriyama, Yukihiro Hotaru, Kunihiko Ioa, Reviewed by George Garvey



ZERAM II



ZERAM II

ZERAM II opens with a desert scene where there are some creatures straight out of STAR WARS, who are getting destroyed, then three creeps in weird outfits (w/ weapons) are at a beach waiting for Zeram II to arrive. But Ilia shows up and kicks their butts! They escape, switch back to Tokyo. Tempe is getting married. Fuji Crow, who is supposed to be Ilia's new friend is a traitor who tries to sabotage Bob the Computer. Ilia is now out in the countryside where she runs into the three creeps again. Next a great special effect with thunder/laser bolts and then about fifty bizarre-looking villains materialize. But so does Zeram II! He kills everybody!! Ilia doesn't understand why Zeram II protected her. But it doesn't last long. Soon Zeram II and Ilia are doing battle again. Ilia's battle suit is a little different this time and it looks like she's lost a little weight. Martial arts, guns, explosions!! Zeram II is a lot more dangerous than Zeram. He's faster, has more weapons and can transform materials. He can also fly! Tempe and Kamiya get dragged into it again. Fuji Crow is a real pain!! But he gets his!! Ilia and Zeram II have several battles and she eventually has to shoot him to death. Tempe and Kamiya help out with the heroics, the special effects through out the film are first class!! A lot of fun!!! ****1/2 -George Garvey

KINDAICHI KOSUKE UREZA ("Ghost Theater") Produced by TBS TV, Directed by Masahiko Okumura, Starring: Kazuyuki Furutani, Yukiyo Toake, Kotonu Shibuya, Takeshi Osawa, Sanji Kojima, Mitsuko Kawashima, Tanike, Reviewed by John Emma

may remember I wrote about "Kindaichi" once before; he's a teenage detective. So I was expecting more of the same when I started watching. Instead, a middle age man appeared. My wife explained, "This is the real Kindaichi, the young guy was just a spin-off". Actually his name is Kosuke Kindaichi, and he was created by author Seishi Yokomizo. He was the subject of a number of best selling detective stories in the 1950s.

Two things made this really enjoyable. The first is it's a period piece. It's set in 1957 in rural Japan. That's refreshing, since modern Japan is so westernized. Living here for four years now, I sometimes feel I'm still in the States, except everyone talks Japanese here. But everything is so westernized. In the 1950s, only very wealthy Japanese had TVs, so most common people went to community theaters. These put on plays and featured both male and female performers. Most of this drama centered on one of these theaters.

The second thing of interest is Kindaichi himself. The 'real' Kindaichi is very eccentric, far more interesting than the teenaged version. While all the rest of the people in the story wear western dress, he wears a kimono, geta, and a big floppy hat. He also is not a real policeman. He just kind of helps out. You never really know what he does for a living or how he gets paid. I'm reminded of a Columbo/Jessica-what's-her-name from Cabbage Cove combination. We probably stole the idea from Japan.

The plot is very complex, but I'll make it as simple as I can: Kindaichi stops to help someone fix a flat tire and falls head-over-heels in love at first sight with one of the car's occupants, who is the

leader of the local theater. Continuing on to police headquarters, they (the cops) are called to the scene of an apparent double suicide, a man and woman, and the police chief asks his buddy Kindaichi to come along. It turns out they work at the same local playhouse as Kindaichi's would be girlfriend. It's soon found the man died an hour earlier than the woman, so off they all go to the theater to find out why. Also found is a piece of cloth from an old kimono. This came from another death/disappearance four years ago (I guess that happens a lot here). Kindaichi keeps coming up with suspects, two of them, and they keep getting off'd; which lets them off the hook permanently. To cut to the chase, Kindaichi's girlfriend is the killer. Why? Four years ago, her son killed her playwright (who was his real father) for attacking her. They disposed of the body, and he disappeared, creating the first mystery. BUT, unknown to them, that piece of kimono was found by another troop member, who, four years later, decided to blackmail mom. Mom offs him straight away. Then in quick succession, the other two guys try to cash in. Bing, two more stiff. The first guy was bangin' the second guy's wife. The second guy was beating up the third stiff... this shit is confusing! Kindaichi finally puts it all together (thank god someone did), but because he loves mom, he lets her and Jr. commit suicide together. It's the least he could do. Good thing too, she'd already off'd most of her staff and would've been out on the streets maybe even have taken up a life of crime! Now, if you've been counting, you know one death is unaccounted for, the woman. But hey, this is Japan; women don't count anyway. I give this drama five stars. ***** -John Emma

This was an interesting surprise. You

LETTERS CONTINUED

be around much longer-- but don't celebrate just yet, there are still a few more cynical issues on the way, and I'll continue to cover Godzilla and superheroes, if only to piss you off).

In other words, I've refused to sell-out to the coverage of pornography and all that Category 3 filth you seem to drool over. This is not to say I would never include such films in OC. I would be happy to include them in OC's issues, and perhaps do a special issue devoted to them-- so long as I'm not the one writing all the reviews and doing all the vomit-inducing research. One more thing, Andreas: Though your English is far superior to my German, I really think you should work on it, if you hope to correspond with Americans. Though English is not your native language, you still come off as an illiterate fool. -DF

P.S. You're right about my being old. I'm so old I've got false gums! At night I pee so much that my doctor rigged it up so I can pee directly into my waterbed. -DF

Dear Damon,

ACCKKK! It's late at night and the TV is blaring out an infomercial for videos of PEE WEE'S PLAYHOUSE! America needs magazines such as yours to help reduce this scourge. Show people that there is an alternative to this kind of trash. Although I had never thought of your magazine as being of much social importance, now I know better! Damon, you are the only hope for America.

Peter Huston
N.Y., America

Dear Damon Foster,

In your letter you said nobody offered to replace you /He's referring to my upcoming retirement from OC/. If you asked your friends August Ragone and Butch Portillo to do it they would listen to you, I think the two of them could handle the job. /Neither of them has bad enough taste to sit through Korean and Filipino movies, which, for better or worse, will always be part of OC. -DF/ What bothers me is that OC may stop entirely, and that you will suffer burn-out.

Don't ever become politically correct. Stay the way you are.

Robert Maloubier
North Carolina

Dear Robert,

It's been a fun twenty years, but all good things must come to an end some time. There will probably be at least one more half-ass, watered-down OC issue after this one, plus maybe even a fourth

& final issue of the dismal commercial failure, HEROES ON FILM. But if and when my zines disappear, all is not lost. There are now plenty of magazines which, when combined, cover nearly all the subject matter that OC has highlighted for two decades. So although the original oldtimer, OC may finally be laid to rest (alongside other late, lamented mags like MARKALITE and SENTAI), there are still younger whippersnappers out there, like ULTRA FAN (now re-titled, "Kaiju Fan"), ASIAN CULT CINEMA, MARTIAL ARTS MOVIES ASSOCIATES, HENSHIN, HONG KONG FILM CONNECTION, G-FAN, KAIJU REVIEW, HONG KONG FILM MONTHLY/MAGAZINE and ASIAN EYE. So the Asian zine scene goes on, with or without OC. -DF

I noticed in a few issues of OC there have been letters from people who live in Illinois, and I think one was even from Chicago (which is 20 minutes from where I live). Anyway, I was wondering if you could ask any of those people to write and tell me where some Chinese & Japanese videostores & theaters are. No matter how many areas of Chicago I search, I sure as hell can't find any!

OC is great, but the only place I can buy it is a fuckin' comic-book store!! They guy behind the counter looks at me like I'm one of those one-dimensional clowns who beats off to erotic manga. Why doesn't OC come out more often?

Jarmar Rodgers
1125 Tollview Ave. Apt. #7
Aurora, IL 60505

Dear Jarmar,
the reason for OC's irregular, infrequent scheduling is because we just can't afford to make it more stable! Each issue is an uphill battle, it's always miraculous when an OC makes it out at all! The time, energy, frustration, expenses, blood, sweat & tears make this publication quite costly to produce. And from my angle, anyway, it's still (unfortunately for me) a non-profit magazine. That is, I mean, some people, such as store owners and distributors, are probably making money off it, but on the average, I only break even. If OC were profitable and successful, I could quit my day-profession (I've slaved away at a dead-end, go nowhere, under-paying day-job for many years) and other odd jobs I do to scratch out a meager (on the verge of poverty at times) living and devote full time to OC. This would be the only way it could come out more frequently, and because of the unique subject matter, I can't see this happening. -DF

Dear Damon:

In conjunction with the Dracula Centennial Con to be held in Los Angeles

this coming August, to which I have been invited as a guest speaker, I am planning a lecture on the folkloric, literary and cinematic aspects of the Chinese hopping vampire. Not only will I be supplementing my lecture with video selections (MR. VAMPIRE, HELLO! DRACULAR, etc.), but I hope to make available a written monograph on the subject, one which will be the most comprehensive work yet to appear on the topic in the English language. Naturally, your prior efforts will be cited throughout the course of the article and your pioneering work in this area will be accorded special mention in the acknowledgments to the written piece.

As you already know, little relevant material on the subject has appeared on the subject in English and that which has, has largely been the product of your labors. /He's referring to earlier OCs where Hunan's hopping vampires were covered a lot, before the genre got too big and died out.-DF/ An additional inhibiting factor is that most Western film critics, perhaps due to the sophomoric nature of many of these movies, treat the genre with contempt, if not outright dismissal. Granted, these films are an acquired taste, but I find them fascinating and a refreshing response to Western vampire fare. This, however, does not blind me to the fact that the Chinese hopping vampire appears to be an artificial construct, one which combines the Western vampire motif with that of the walking dead of Hunan. Even so, the "vampiric" elements of these films, such as the consumption of blood and victims becoming vampires in turn, may be a lot older than I initially suspected. In fact, these Western aspects may have been introduced to mainland China, where they became a fixture in Chinese literature from the 18th century onward, by the Jesuits, who maintained a small religious community in Peking from the 16th through the 18th century.

Although I have still not found a factual reason behind all the prophylactic measures used to defend oneself against these creatures as depicted in the films, I have been able to uncover a rationale for most of them. The Chinese science or geomancy, or "feng shui", has proven particularly helpful in this matter, derived as it is largely from Taoist mystical beliefs. Ironically, the yellow paper spells used to immobilize these creatures is a misrepresentation of the true nature of these magical amulets. In fact, these paper banners were actually "motion" spells designed to galvanize the corpse into activity and only on their removal did the corpse cease to move. Additionally, the walking dead motif in Chinese cinema appears to be a lot older than the movie, LEGEND OF THE LIVING CORPSE; at least one, if not two, films

were produced in the 1950s with the title *THE WALKING DEAD OF HUNAN*. / *What? Obviously my statement that LEGEND OF LIVING GORPSE (as it's spelled on the video box itself), aka THE SHAOLIN BROTHERS, was the first ever gyonsi/kyonshee movie, was premature! But if it's true that "hopping vampire" flicks started out in the 1950s, I'm definately interested in this! Assuming THE WALKING DEAD OF HUNAN exists, that's a definete addition to my want list!-DF/* I hope to include in my published monograph a comprehensive listing and plot synopsis of all Chinese hopping vampire/walking dead films, even those in which they make only a token appearance, that have come to my personal attention.

There is no rush in responding to my letter of inquiry nor should you feel personally obligated to honor any of my requests. I realize you time is limited these days. Truthfully, Damon, you don't receive the credit you deserve from your publishing peers. OC was/is a seminal work of importance, as influential in its own right as *Famous Monsters* was to my generation, and I hope to stress this fact in my pending article. In closing, I appreciate any and all assistance you can provide me in the matters outlined above. Continued success /*What do you mean "continued"? -DF/* in your publishing endeavors.

Sincerely,
John Vellutini
Calif., U.S.A.

Hey, you said you were going to retire! And I thought that was the reason your latest issue took so long! Well, you haven't. Great! I hope it's a long time before you retire, since we would miss your writing style and sarcastic wit! OC won't be the same without you, Damon, so don't think about retirement! It's nice to see my first letter in a magazine!

I didn't expect to see it, since I'm a pessimist. It's also an embarrassing experience for me, since I'm zine shy.

Your recent issues are as funny as ever! I like that "Tourette's Syndrom" joke that you had in your review of John Woo's *A BETTER TOMORROW 2!* That had me laughing uncontrollably! I was sort of depressed around that time (i.e. overtime work, my annoying nephews, etc.), but the article really made me feel a lot better!

I got Vol.1 of *KAMEN RIDER* (Toei; 1971) on Christmas Day of 1996, and it has become one of my all-time favorite action superhero series! Wow, your advice about the first episode was so helpful! It was wacky, wild, weird, creepy, and best of all, action packed! They don't make 'em like this any more! I definately agree with you on Toei's old and new



superheroes. By this time, like the proverbial dog, Toei has had its day, in terms of action. They're still good shows, though. It seems that Toho and Tsuburaya get to do all the martial arts action! Incidentally, I also got *ULTRAMAN ZEARTH* for Christmas, and needless to say, it was very funny! Even the action is dazzling!

I didn't know that you didn't take Kaufman seriously (although I still see him as a whiner; you just gotta' see his letters in other mags!) /*When he first sent me that letter which appeared a couple issues ago, I was happy. You see, I corresponded with him a lot, back when he and I were kids in the 1970s. So, after all this time, when I recieved a letter from him, I was excited! I thought, "My old pal, Barrie Kaufman is back! Cool!" I was definately of the impression we were friends, until I opened the letter and saw it full of insults. I was a little hurt at first, but quickly came to realize I couldn't take him seriously; and decided to have a little fun, thanks to his attacks.-DF/* when he takes himself so seriously. That's right, I gotta' remember that OCs only purpose is to entertain, and not get meanspirited! I gotta' get a grip on myself!

Lastly, as for my attacks against *G-Fan* in my last letter, they're bye-gones, so you may disregard them. By the time you read this, the *G-Fan* staff and I have already buried the hatchet long after a fight on the internet newsgroup, so I apologize to the editors of *G-Fan* and *Ultra/Kaiju-Fan*, and the people who read them. Although I'm not reading them at this moment (and I might, one day), I still wish them the best of luck.

John Cassidy
Richmond, VA

LETTER OF THE MONTH:

From: J.R. Flaherty, Ph. D
Center for Sexual Dysfunction
Louisville, KY

To: Damon Foster, Patient I.D. # I69-U/
OK
Bay Area, Calif.

Dear Demon (uh... I mean, 'Damon'),

Your little *Oriental Cinema* magazine sucks and you swallow! The dirty words offend me and all those pictures of women without proper clothing make me litterally physically ill (figuratively

speaking). Oh yeah, I may need to re-order the 'Asian Femme Fatale Issue'—all the pages are stuck together in mine, if you know what I mean... and I think you do.

Your jokes are dum and you cain't spel fer shitt. Reading your Editorial is more painful than jacking off with sand paper (you can add one of your stupid rebuttals here)! */Can I really?! How about this: Writing those editorials is more painful than jerking off with sand paper! You never said it had to be original! -DF/* And it's ridiculous for you to review movies when character development and plot subtleties are dismissed as mere 'talkyness', and you don't realize that when most people like something, such as John Woo or JURASSIC PARK, it's sometimes because it's really good, and to agree is not always jumping on some overcrowded bandwagon with unopinionated morons. You seem to only like obscure movies with guys shooting & kicking each other, or big robots, or vampires hopping all over the place (oh yeah... enclosed is a check for the old Oriental Cinema's "Chinese Vampire Issue" and the "Hong Kong Action Issue"; hurry up, I can't wait!) You homosapien */Hey, watch it! Calling me a homosapien is hitting below the belt, and that's one dreadful insult I can't forgive! I didn't ask to be born into this self destructive race, so ease off such cruel attacks! -DF/* (Homo Erectus?).

Okay, back to my letter— where was I? You goofy pecker head, calm down! I was just practicing to be an Oriental Cinema writer. Did I piss you off? I hope it was that good. Anyway, relax... close your eyes... breathe deeply from a diaphragm (oops... I mean your diaphragm). I really like your magazine and we actually (sort of) have the same sense of humor. */That's right. You have it on weekends, and I get to have it Monday-thru-Friday. -DF/* I've wanted to write to you for a while, but now I actually have a reason. I've been collecting videos for many years and have been trading pretty heavily the past couple of years (mostly ULTRAMAN and Ultra Brothers stuff, plus Japanese & Chinese horror & TV).

Anyway, I'll get to the point. My wife is Korean, which gives me an excuse to check out videos in a few local oriental grocery stores (very few around here) and I just rented a movie called SUPER NORMAL, which is a 1992 Chinese (with subtitles) documentary on supernatural goings-on in China, including discussions, films and dramatic re-creations of exorcisms, ghosts, fairies, fung shui, reincarnation, etc. and right in the middle, surprisingly is a segment on breast implants and the two, the only Amy Yip! They even show a flat-chested woman getting implants (settle down, sissy! They don't

show any blood!). The cool thing about this segment is they quickly show two photographs of Amy with her shirt off, surrounded by guys! And unless she's wearing a false breast plate or fake paste-on nipples that look like real nipples, I think we're looking at the real article. Everything I've ever read about her says she's never had her nipples photographed but... actually, this may be from MY NEIGHBORS ARE PHANTOMS, one of those wild and funny supernatural comedies. Have you seen it? Luv it. Anyway, in one scene, she's wearing a see-through red shirt (we see nipples, stunt-double? Don't think so) and she slaps a guy silly between her tits! He does some magic that makes them grow to twice their size, then shrink to nothing. So under that shirt she had fake inflatable breasts. Also, she's wearing a scarf. The guys in the SUPER NORMAL photos aren't in that movie but maybe they are on the "breast-effects crew", and she is showing us a fake chest. I dunno'.

Well, I liked O.C.#11 as usual. How about a HK comedy issue with stuff on Stephen Chow, them thar MR. BOO films, Sammo, etc. */I would definitely consider doing just such an issue. But I doubt I could uncover the history of HK's comedies and comedians. Very little is known of the older stuff, and if I couldn't offer an informative history and filmography dating back to the early silent HK comedies, it wouldn't be worth the effort. Are there any experts out there, who could help out making just such an issue? Everybody knows about Stephen Chow, and a few have heard of the MR. BOO films, but it's the ancient, obscure productions that would make such an issue incredibly difficult. -DF/* These flicks are goofy but lots of fun, and get very little coverage. And you are the man with the mag to do such an issue correctly. Hey, you did an issue on American martial arts movies, and even a Chinese comedy that I can't understand is more fun than a U.S. ninja film that I can understand. Movies like LOVE ON DELIVERY are about the only non-Cheech and Chong films that can make me laugh out loud (I know you already reviewed LOVE ON DELIVERY; you're the reason I sought it out. Thanks!) Okay, I'm finished. I'm about to write a friggin' novel here.

Joe Flaherty
Kentucky, U.S.A.

Hey Damon!

Just finished reading your John Woo Issue of OC. Don't be so hard on yourself! It still kicks ass over most of the competition out there. I know it sucks, this whole "competition" mind set, but let's face facts. If Joe Otaku only has x amount of cash to spend on zines, do

you want him buying yours or someone else's? In a perfect world, zines would be free and those who worked on them would be paid incredibly well. Alas, the only way I know of to get free zines is to go to prison (you'll pardon me if I pass on that particular option). Of the 3 or 4 zines I can afford each month, yours is one.

Living here on the East Coast of Canada is like living in the asshole of the world. I don't know a single fuckin' person who lives live-action oriental stuff. There's a buncha' anime people but they totally look down on the live stuff. */This is the reason that, for so long, I mercilessly trashed & insulted them cartoon geeks. But in recent years, I was of the mistaken (?) impression that they've opened their minds, and therefor I quit attacking & satirizing them. But if what you say is true, I may have to think up more "fat dweeb" jokes to annoy those narrowminded yet trendy jerks. -DF/* I showed some of these geeks KAMEN RIDER ZO and DESTROY ALL MONSTERS. They thought KAMEN RIDER ZO was "like THE GUYVER for ten-year olds", and DESTROY was "a waste of time". See what I gotta' deal with? */Oh, I see! So KAMEN RIDER ZO is for ten-year olds exclusively? So that means that for it to be adult, there must be masturbation shots of animated females taking showers? Those hollier-than-the-rest-of-us nerds are in no position to judge what's "a waste of time". -DF/*

Here's some stickers of my band "Spine Driver". Check out the double 7" E.P. from The Space Shits. It's on the 'Sympathy for the Record Industry' label. Has some cool KAMEN RIDER graphics, plus they rock like mutha' fuckas'. */It never ceases to amaze me how many punk, goth, rockabilly, grunge & metal bands are into Asian superheroes! As an avid death-punk for eternity, it's starting to be commonplace for the two seemingly different genres (oriental films & alternative rock) to go hand in hand. Thank you for the stickers, but I won't buy any records from bands I've never heard, especially since I lack a record player. -DF/* Anyway, I gotta' bail. Just dropped a line to let you know your zine kicks massive booty.

Later,
Grant Forsythe
N.B., Canada

Dear Mr. Foster,

I like your magazine but I would like it more if you would include some T&A shots and limiting the length of film reviews.

Luis Perez
Hamilton, Bermuda

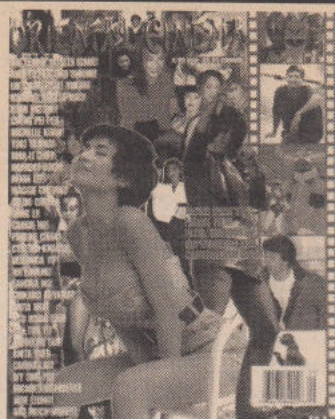
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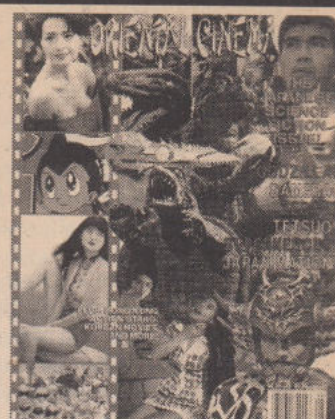
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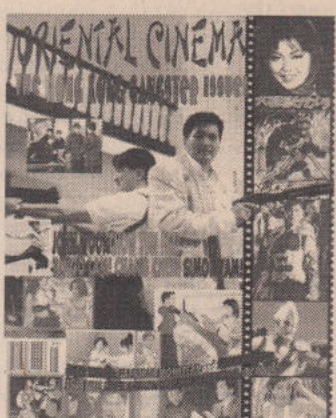
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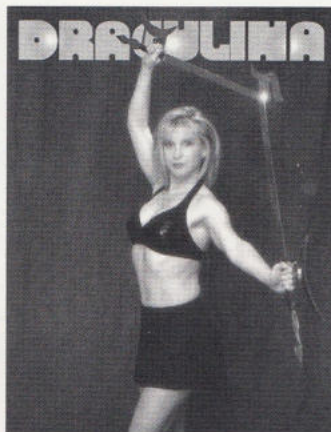
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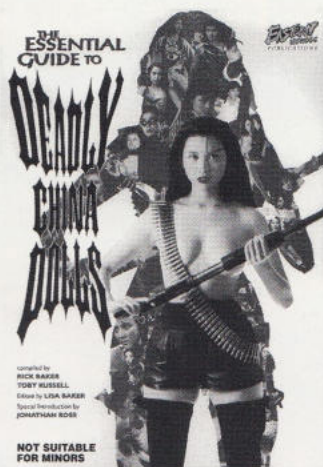
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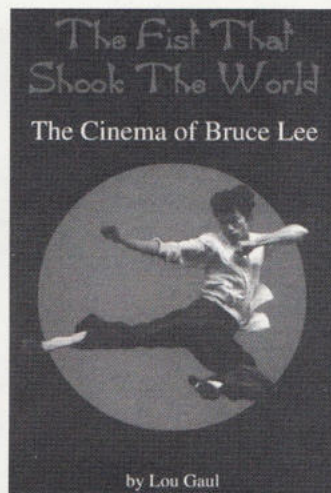
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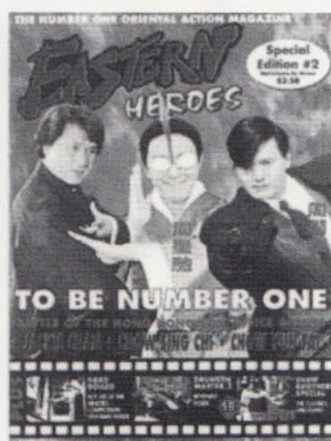
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A close-up of Link's face from The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild. He is wearing his iconic green tunic and a green headband with a red jewel. His eyes are large and blue, and he has a slight smile.

[illegible]