

ORIENTAL CINEMA



MAY #2
\$3.25

AND VIDEO

THE ROBO-HERO ISSUE!

SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN!

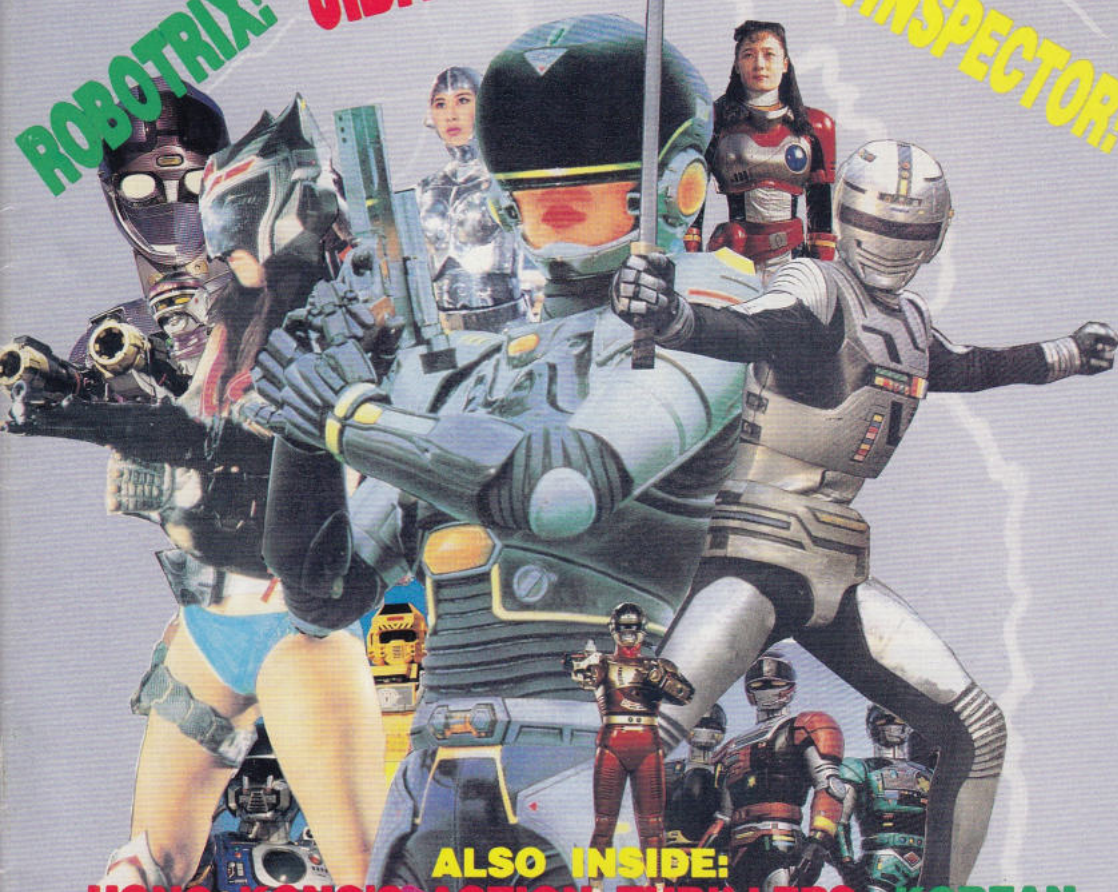
SHARIVAN!

ROBOT FORCE!

ROBOCOP RIP-OFFS!

ROBOTRIX!
JIBAN!

WINSPECTOR!



ALSO INSIDE:

HONG KONG'S ACTION THRILLERS, KOREAN
SUPERHEROES, CHOW YUN FAT, JAPAN'S
GIANT MONSTERS, KUNG FU MOVIES, JAPANESE
ANIMATION, JACKIE CHAN AND MORE!!!



ORIENTAL CINEMA

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EDITORIAL -- 2
LETTERS -- 3
ROBO HEROES PHASE 1 - 4
ROBO HEROES PHASE 2&3 - 9
KOREAN MOVIES - 14
HONG KONG HEROES - 17
AMY YIP - 25
TERROR YAKI - 26
KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE - 29

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Pictured to the left:
VERONICA YIP.

Keiji" series, its American cousins (ROBOCOP, SUPER FORCE, MANDROID, etc.) and of course, Toei's 'Rescue Mission' programs.

But naturally, Gavan and the Robo Heroes aren't all you'll see in this issue of OC. As mentioned previously, other regular columns will continue to appear as well. But OC is still experimental at this point. As I struggle to be accommodating under OC's newer, smaller, economical size, the format will keep changing from issue to issue. It'll take time to get it right. There's the return of Korean movies, absent since OC #15. Last issue's JAPANTASY has been split into two separate categories, the returning columns of the old days: TERROR YAKI and KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE. TERROR YAKI has something to do with Japan's sci-fi/horror, while KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE is all about superheroes. Another popular column, HK HEROES: NEW & OLD, has been split into four categories: 1960s films, 1970s films, 1980s films, and 1990s films.

For the longest time, OC has been a public service. For years, it cost me to print it. The only satisfaction I ever got were occasional nice letters and confidence of a job well done. So now's my chance to get something out of it. This is a good opportunity to expose my want list! These things I crave will benefit OC, as I hope to review them. I'm up for trades, and am willing to pay for this stuff if the price is fair. Here's some of the things I've always wanted to get my greedy paws on. Movies: KAMEN RIDER MEETS HANUMAN [possibly not it's real title, but it's from Thailand], BRAIN STEALERS [1960s Chinese film], OPERATION MACAO [1966], JAMES BOND CHINESE STYLE [1967], TIGER BOY [1964], GIRL WITH THE THUNDERBOLT KICK [1968], BURNING OF RED LOTUS TEMPLE [1929], and the little known Japanese film PRETTY EGZUKUTA [1987]. While I'm at it, there are other things I'm curious to locate, though not related to OC (I write for other zines, of completely different topics and genres). Original British episodes of SPITTING IMAGE (I already have all the American ones) are something I crave, as it's my favorite comedy series. Music (cassette copies okay): Anything by Slaughter & the Dogs, Hitmen, Metal Urbain, and in particular: Rezillos/Revillos: "Ballroom Blitz", and a song by Screaming Tribesmen I've heard only once. Something to do with "Going out With a Vampire Girl Tonight" [?]. I don't know, I only heard it once, when my alarm radio woke me up. All these things are impossible to find, I've tried and tried. This plea for help is my last ditch effort to locate them. But don't send anything without notifying me first, as somebody else may have already sent it before you.

No doubt some of you are justifiably annoyed that I sell each OC for a whoppin' six bucks, while the same issues are so much cheaper in stores and from Draculina Publishing. Let me explain why my price is so much higher. \$6.00 is about what it cost me to make each OC back when it was an independent fanzine. Six bucks is indeed a high price, tell me about it! Back when OC averaged 50 pages, it cost me a fortune to print, and that's not including postage. Then one day I foolishly agreed to re-release OC #1 (1977; Volume 1!!) Being a measly little newsletter, it sure as hell wasn't worth \$6.00. So I sold it for a buck. People got confused, and thought they could also buy the newer, bigger, far superior ones for a buck too! This got really hectic, so I decided that, to avoid these messes, I must sell all OCs for the same price (not including to stores, since large volume orders make the wholesale price worthwhile), \$6.00 each. I'm not forcing anyone to buy these overpriced OCs from me directly, not when it's cheaper from my publisher and in stores. My high price may be temporary, as it may take me a while to get used to this new system (smaller OCs, distribution, changing prices, etc.). There may be numerous changes and transitions coming. But for now, in all honesty, I'd rather not sell OC's

Merry Christmas! And a happy new year! Although this issue isn't scheduled for release until April or May, this paragraph is being written in late December, so I'm into the Christmas spirit! Which brings to mind an amusing 'scrooge' tale, a true story. A few years ago, there was a toy-donation program for needy kids, at the lobby of the office building I'm sentenced to work at. In this barrel of discarded toys for poor children, I noticed a Voltron doll, quite new. Regardless, I left it and other charitable gifts right there, where they belonged. That is, until my place of employment gave me my Xmas bonus: A ten dollar gift certificate from Safeway. I decided I qualified as poor & needy, and the Voltron has been displayed in my superhero collection ever since.

Allow me to introduce myself again; my name is Damon Foster, a magazine editor and non-professional movie maker. I'm frequently asked if my no budget features are in anyway related to OC. I must respond with a firm, "Hell, yeah!" As a writer and semi-critic, I'm forced to watch more films than there are guns in a high school. So it's OC's fault that I've sat through so many films. Constant exposure to such movies has influenced my tendency to imitate. The first video ripoff of mine, ever to get any publicity in independent film & video rags, was HOT DOGS ON THE RUN (1990). Though cheaper than a home movie of some brat's birthday party, it accurately satirized the kung fu & chop sockey cliches which OC has forever covered. My 1993 video, AGE OF DEMONS was not a spoof of anything, but an original, independent story. Yet it too is obviously (though not intentionally) influenced by Far Eastern films; Japanese superheroes, the lame comedy of Steve Chow & Tsui Hark, the bloodshed of sword-hero movies, and stunts of some of the HK actioners. Like HDOTR, AOD is the knee-jerk bi-product of OC, it's hard to make OC without bringing the same images to video. The point is, movies I enjoy are inspirational to me, and I hope they inspire creativity & productivity of some kind to all of you. I don't feel movies should influence us only to spend ours watching TV, though many of you seem to disagree.

Many of my long-time readers expressed concern about Hugh Gallagher's considering the 16th issue to be #1. Well, to him, it is number 1, it's the first OC he published, and the start of a Third Volume, a new beginning; OC's latest 're-birth' this week. Having edited OC most of my life, I'll always consider last issue to be #16, and this one #17. So when talking to Hugh about OC, be sure to call these two issues #'s 1 and 2, but when talking to me, call them #16 and #17. To me, the true OC #1 came out in 1977! Hugh and I speak two different languages.

Welcome to OC's 17th issue, the main topic being: "The Robo Heroes: Gavan's Legacy!" This here 'Robo-Hero' issue shouldn't be confused with my 'RoboQT Issue' many years ago. In my mental dictionary, Robo-Hero is one of the subgenres of Robotdom. Where as Mechagodzilla and Mechanikong are robots, they're not heroes. And while Ultraman, Kamen Rider and Lion Maru are heroes, they're not necessarily robots. Then there are other mechanical saviors like Kikaider, Spectreman, Robot Keiji and Astro Boy, who are BOTH robots AND superheroes. Yet they don't qualify in my personal, specific, opinionated definition of a Robo Hero. For the sake of elimination and classification, let's consider Robo Heroes a 1980s & '90s thing, related to the so-called 'cyberpunk' bullshit, which I won't hold against them. They're a specific sub-genre, a type of superhero unlike any other. I coined the phrase Robo Hero (but I'm sure others have coined it too, not influenced by me, since it's a logical label with a catchy ring to it) mainly for this issue; an excuse to examine the roots of one of science fiction's most interesting trends. This issue shall examine the evolution of the Robo Heroes; it's roots in the Japanese "Uchu

newer issues retail, you can get them from Draculina Publishing. I'm concentrating more on selling back issues, like OC #15 and earlier ones.

I appreciate the kind words I've received from many of you who've proven to have a sense of humor. As last issue's Disclaimer said, my jokes and comments throughout OC are intended to amuse, not offend. It's my way of producing a publication that's fun to read, while putting my own personal, harmless opinions on the line.

One final thing. Last issue, I stated that I won't respond to letters which don't include a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope. Yet a great many morons have sent me comments

and questions expecting a response, yet never enclosed the mandatory S.A.S.E. (but even this is no guarantee I'll write back, I'm a very busy guy). Also, others seem to think they can contact me by calling Hugh Gallagher. By now, you'd think they'd know that California is nowhere near Illinois, so it's unlikely Hugh can say, "Damon, a phone call for you" and hand me the phone. His arm (not to mention phone cord) isn't long enough to reach all the way across the country. So, for the last time, the only way to reach me is by writing to:

DAMON FOSTER, P.O. BOX 576, FREMONT, CA 94537-0576

LETTERS

It's been a while since OC has had a Letters Section, because I can never seem to find the really great letters I want to print. For example, at least a couple of you whined about my constant attacks on the geeks (i.e. anime fans) of various fandoms. One writer even went so far as to state "they're winning," because my attacks give them so much publicity. They're winning what? I don't see them getting any richer, getting new cars, getting laid. And believe me, I'm not happy I have to whine about these lame dorks. But the majority of you, who know these types of nerds, find these accounts hilarious, and my goal is to amuse! So as long as the technogeeks continue to be so pathetic, I'll continue to joke about them, and spread the word. You see, as someone involved in the fandom, I see these guys all the time, and can't help but want to share my feelings. If nothing else, a few of them have read my scathing attacks, and have seen it as advice. Some have lost weight, limited their comicbook reading to only three hours a day, and have decided to have actual social lives for once. But in the meantime, as long as I continue to encounter cartoon freaks and sci-fi geeks in Japanese videotapes, etc., I'll continue to pass the humorous word.

Other people have written to complain that I attack the other fanzines too much, for their lack of diversity. This complaint is indeed just, and I regret any negative feelings my fellow editors may have. I'll most certainly quit criticizing their tendency to all write about the exact same stuff, as my increase in topics would make them all look too much like OC! So I hope all the other Asian filmzines will continue to focus mainly on trendy HK films, so OC continues to be the only one which breaks new grounds.

A few people have written and complained about OC's frequent obscenities. You know, words like 'fuck', 'shit', 'prick', 'up your virginia', 'your fucking mother sucks the farts from dead rats in hell', etc. Sorry, all you uptight, squeamish conservatives and politically correct liberals alike, but not everything is peachy all the time. Like it or not, bad words are a part of the English language, and in their own way, represent the negative aspects of this flawed world we've created. So long as there continues to be crime, disease, and social & political problems, OC's attitude will continue to reflect what's going on around us.

Other than those three types of letters, OC rarely receives any negative comments. The majority of you seem to approve of OC's content and subject matter. This is preferred, I don't feel I need criticism, constructive or otherwise. I'm satisfied with OC's content, subject matter and diversity, and don't plan to change a damn thing.

What follows are the only recent letters I could find. The first one is from Dino Campos, and I'm trying to type it with the exact same grammar, and punctuation, as he wrote it. I still can't figure out if the letter is a joke or if he's serious.

Dear Damon

Hello Dude how's it going Hey How about those POWER RANGERS the POWER RANNERS are the Hottest thing even Hotter than Godzilla I got a job as a Janitor I'll buy DESTROY ALL MONSTERS do you also sell toys? the 49ers in Football Are the top team now my Dogs are named Shady and Sinbad this whoop there its sorry its been so long I Heard they have Godzilla toys all of them

Dino Campos -Hopkins MN

Dear Damon,

Thanks for the new OC, I received it yesterday. I've read part of it, and I see you are still able to retain most of your humor. Excellent! The layout looks good too. And it still has the feel of the old OC.

You mentioned the "ZYU" in ZYURANGER meaning zoo. It really means JU- "beast", as in KAIJU (monster; imaginary beast). The DAI in DAI RANGER means 'big'.

John Emma - Tochigi, Japan

Dear Damon,

Regarding your ninja issue, the first movie I saw with Ken Gampu, oops, I keep forgetting the name of it- had him and two tribesmen chasing Cornell Wilde across an African landscape. That was when Gampu was still trim and athletic.

There's a TV movie, I think the title is THE LAST NINJA, that I taped off TV sometime in the 80s. You know, there was an episode of BARNABY JONES, made before THE KILLER ELITE, that actually had a plot about a Japanese ninja. And the Walsdorfs did mention the appearance of a ninja character in a traditional ninja costume, in THE BARBARIAN AND THE GEISHA.

Laurine White - Sacramento, CA

Dear Laurine,

Thanks for the info on Ken Gampu. I first saw him in the South African martial arts film, KILL AND KILL AGAIN, and he just kept appearing in movies after that,

so I got curious. More recently, I too saw him in some old 1960s film, possibly NAKED PREY. Regardless, info on obscure actors like this is more rare than an intellectual Football player.

As for the ninja info, I'm as grateful as a dike at a slumber party. I've never seen the 'ninja episode', or any episode of BARNABY JONES, nor do I recall the ninja in that old John "the barbarian" Wayne movie, and haven't a clue as to what a Walsdorf is. Regardless, such trivia is useful, and it annoys the hell out of me I didn't know all this when I made the Ninja Issue! -DF

Dear Damon,

I can explain the strange prologue in THE MAD DOCTOR OF BLOOD ISLAND, reviewed in your "Filipino Films" a couple issues back. Movie goers who attended this film were given green 'blood' to drink (just like the teens in the prologue) and this blood was supposed to act as an aphrodisiac. I've seen this movie and I doubt that drinking green 'blood' during the prologue would have improved the experience any. John Ashley's other Filipino films also used gimmicks, like the plastic wedding rings given to female patrons who attended BRIDES OF BLOOD.

How do I put this tactfully? Throughout the issue, you keep using the word, acrobats when the correct word you should have used is acrobatics. An 'acrobat' is a (continued on page 33)

PHOTO'S FOR THOUGHT



DID YOU KNOW THAT:

That in 1987, shortly before she became one of America's top super-models, Cindy Crawford appeared on a Japanese TV commercial?!?!? Endorsing a soft drink called "Pokari Sweat" (another bad choice of Japanese-English, recalling "Calpis", another Japanese drink which sounds like "Cow Piss"), she was a sword wielding heroine battling monsters in a fantasy setting.



RATINGS (what the stars mean)

***** = Outstanding film! One of my favorites!
**** = Quite an excellent piece of work, almost a favorite!
*** = Above average. I recommend it.

** = Average; a mixture of good & bad. Not great, not awful.
* = Below average. Plenty of room for improvement.
= Way below average! Yuck, I hated this worthless movie.



SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN

宇宙刑事ギャバン

*[original Japanese title UCHU KEIJI GYABAN]
Produced by Toei Company in 1982, broadcast on Tokyo's TV Asahi, consisting of 44 half hour, full color episodes, lasting from 3/5/82 - 2/25/83. Created by Saburo Yatsude, Main Writer: Shozo Uehara, Director: Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Music: Chumei Watanabe, Stuntmen: Japan Action Club, Starring Kenji Ohba as Gavan/Ichijoji Retsu*

Hard to believe that an obscure Japanese TV series such as this has so drastically affected science fiction. It's true, and yet the average sci-fi fan (U.S. ones, anyway) has never heard of this important program. That's because your average local fan shouldn't consider himself a 'sci-fi fan', but a 'sci-fi fan who only watches American stuff'. After **GAVAN**, there were numerous direct and indirect imitations, and imitations of imitations, possibly even imitations of imitations of imitations. Though unintentionally, 1982's **GAVAN** founded this issue's main topic, a branch of 'cyberpunk', which I'll refer to as the 'Robo Hero' genre. Ironically, the hero (Ichijoji Retsu) in **GAVAN** is not really even a robot, despite the metallic look. The character is a human superhero attired in his space-age Combat Suit. This Combat Suit is actually more inspirational than the overall series itself, a great many 1980s heroes later wore similar 'combat suits', though often meant to represent a whole robot.

What made Gavan's Combat Suit so influential, imitated and modern was its updated look. This was no bug-eyed caricature like Ultraman or Kamen Rider. Gaban's Combat Suit, though slick and imaginative, looked realistic and suited for

serious, industrial strength work! A single black viewing visor resembles that of a welding mask, and the whole costume's various gadgets and buttons show how versatile our stream-lined hero is, a million & one uses!

But the series **GAVAN**, on the whole, is a truly outstanding program in its own right, or maybe its own left; far superior to most of its sequels, remakes and ripoffs. It is definitely one of the most thrilling, exciting, action packed programs ever made. Only an asshole wouldn't like it.

Before going into detail about the program which changed the face of sci-fi & Japanese TV, let's look at its roots; the pre-**GAVAN** phase of Japanese superheroism. Longtime OC readers will recall past issues about how Toei TV kept Japan supplied with many a superhero since 1971 at least, when **KAMEN RIDER** set new standards for superheroes as we know them. Though thrilling and entertaining, many of Toei's early to mid-1970s programs lacked the FX, budget and production values of TBS's granddaddy of superheroes, **ULTRAMAN**. It took many years for Toei to evolve their superheroes into the FX-filled extravaganzas (i.e. **DYNAMAN** & **POWER RANGERS**) they are today. So the 1970s Toei programs concentrated more on action, stunts & martial arts, thanks to stuntmen from Ono Ken Yukai (aka Ken Ono Yukai) and Sonny Chiba's infamous Japan Action Club. By the early 1980s, the JAC stunts & action had reached their peak, and the FX had become plentiful and superb. These two thrilling aspects made **GAVAN** the cult hit it is today. No newer series has ever topped it.

I'm often asked what my favorite superhero programs are, to which I reply either, "It's a cross between **GAVAN**, **KAMEN RIDER**, **IRON**

KING, and **DENJIN ZABOGA**," or sometimes "Fuck off geek! It's none of your damn business! Get a life!" **GAVAN** is always a candidate, it represents the best of two worlds, 1970s heroes and 1980s heroes. The action of the 1970s combined well with the FX of the 1980s. Series star Kenji Ohba has got to be Sonny Chiba's most talented yet underrated protege. Many episodes seem to be Kenji Ohba showcases, scripted just to show him in various action scenes, using martial arts, acrobats, and insane stunts! The guy has some major skills to be reckoned with, as this series proves. Old Toei actors like Daisuke Ban (**KIKAI**), **NINJA KYAPTOR** & **INAZUMAN** and Hiroshi Miyauchi (**KAMEN RIDER V3**, **KAI KETSU ZUBAT** & **GORANGERS**) were decent fighters too, but Kenji Ohba's far superior command of karate put his predecessors to shame. It's a wonder he never achieved a career as an action superstar in movies. His acting is also effective, like his touching scenes with Sonny Chiba toward the program's finale. Chiba plays our hero's dying father. The performances are superb, the scene tragic. Show this episode (or the one where Kenji frolics on the beach with a cute puppy), to somebody and I guarantee there won't be a dry eye in the house!

However, nothing is perfect. Perfect is a myth, much like the Loch Ness monster, Big Foot, and an intelligent episode of **BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD**. Since nothing can possibly be considered perfect, even **GAVAN** has its minor flaws. I've no major grudge against the unrealistic designs of the monsters. These costumes are far from convincing, and too caricature-like. But they're meant to be cyborgs, invented by aliens. By alien standards, these genetic creatures may look quite fearsome, though too cartoonish and Muppet-ish to us Earthlings. So these goofy-looking monsters are forgiv-

able. But the occasional twerps aren't. That's the problem with nearly all Japanese superhero programs, the kiddies are present. I've said it many times before, about how annoying these starstruck brats are. Even more irritating is how our hero, Ichijoji Retsu (Gavan) sometimes behaves around them. The guy is the victim & product of a Japanese kiddie series. He lives in a TV dimension, where he knows the names of every little boy & girl in Tokyo. His livelihood, when not protecting Tokyo (#1 priority) is playing with first graders. Between his fun & games with his young friends, and battles with monsters, he seems to have no sexual or social life. Of course, it's only a TV show, and actor Kenji Ohba lives an actual adult life and is possibly a real stud, but I can't help but feel pity for the mythical character Retsu, the permanent boy. Of course, he lives on a spaceship with a gorgeous girl called Mimi, who often wears a tight mini skirt or spandex pants. Yet being basically a kiddie show, the odds of these two doing the old 'in-out' are as likely as peace in the Middle East. My statements on the occasional children in the show, and questioning our hero's manhood apply to all the other 'Uchu Keiji' superhero programs too. It's a common plague in Japanese sci-fi programs in general, but at least the little brats aren't as dominant in **GAVAN**. Most of the episodes concentrate on our hero's pursuit of monsters, and often involve no kiddies at all.

The skillful editing, photography and cinematography help to make each episode fast-paced. For example, a scene of a hero going to the top of a flight of stairs could waste time. Rather than showing each step, we'd probably see the guy take two steps, and then there's a quick cut to the top of the stairs, in tight closeup. The camera immediately zooms out, and our hero is then revealed to be at the top. This brilliant, resourceful photography never damages continuity, yet moves the scene along immensely. It's a great way to speed things up, yet maintaining a realistic pace. Similar zooms and pans occur during fights, stunts and chases. Some stories get so fast-paced, and with this trademark 'timelaps editing', if your mind wanders off for more than 15 seconds, you'll have missed a great deal of plot progression; the characters will suddenly have appeared in a whole new setting (or new characters seem to appear out of nowhere, when in fact, they were quickly introduced), as though by magic.

Before going into the program's rather typical plot, perhaps I should clarify our hero's name, yet again. Gavan is the English spelling for what the Japanese clearly pronounce 'Gyaban.' You see, they seem to think that 'English sounding' names are more appropriate for their high-tech superheroes, as English is a universal language, getting more use all over the world, every year. It's spreading almost as fast as the AIDS virus, so Japanese superhero writers seem to consider English a rather 'futuristic' language. The only problem is that, true to Jerry Lewis's satires of Japanese accents in the 1950s and 1960s, Japanese STILL have difficulty in pronouncing our words, and completely understanding our lingo. So they come up with what they think sounds like English, inventing strange new names like 'Gavan,' 'Sharivan,' 'Shilder,' 'Juspion,' 'Solbrain,' 'Jan Person,' & 'Bill Goldy' (but more on these programs later). The final irony is that they can't pronounce these 'English' names they invent! The result is a lot of confusion; they say Gyaban and Shariban, while us Americans & Europeans are expected to spell them Gavan and Sharivan! If nothing else, these 'westernized' names help us to identify with these foreign characters & shows; can you imagine some dumb U.S. comicbook dork trying to pronounce "Space Sheriff Ryusuke Ogasawaramatsu?"

It's the tale of the Space Sheriff Academy, at some planet called Bado. They take students from any planet, and train them how to protect their home from alien invaders, should any happen to appear. Bado's academy gives its graduates a ton of weaponry, as a graduation present, I presume.

Lasers, swords, robots, rayguns, every kind of futuristic vehicle imaginable, plus a mighty Combat Suit, are all part of a package deal which includes, of course, martial arts skills and the ability to leap tall houses in a single or double bound. One such student, Japan's Ichijoji Retsu (Kenji Ohba) learned how to become Space Sheriff Gavan, in order to rescue his father (Sonny Chiba), who'd been kidnapped by sinister invaders from the alien empire Maku. In his spare time, Gavan works at some youth center or orphanage called the Avalon Club. He works the stables, cleaning up horse shit. Maku is now at war with the Earth, but don't worry! So long as Gavan has his personal armada, combat suit, and help from gorgeous space babes like Mimi & Marin, we're safe!

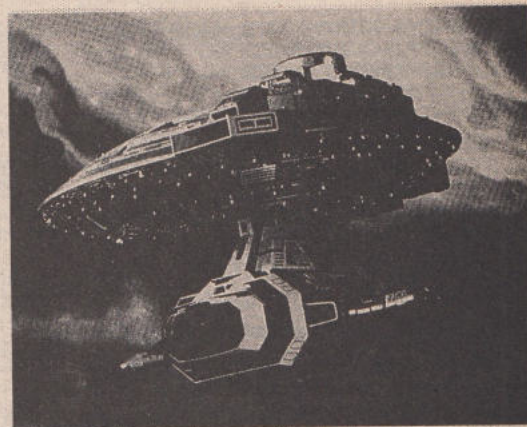
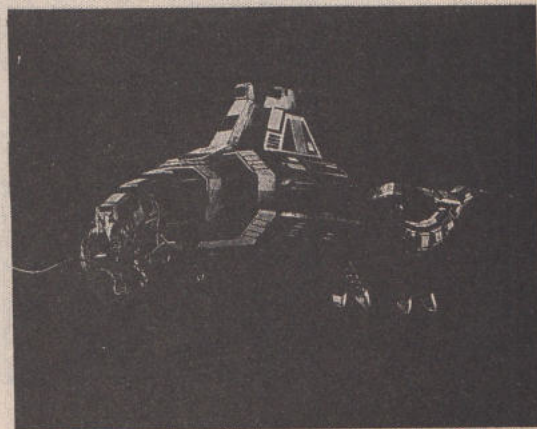
Each episode usually starts with Don Hora (Maku leader) sending Hunter Killer, Dr. Kiba, or San Doruba (three more alien villains) to attack Earth with some new scheme. This allows for talky filler as various human characters are introduced, until Gavan gets a lead. Battling an episodic monster (one per episode), there's an incredible display of special effects as the forces of good and evil clash. Gavan takes on generic henchmen using martial arts, and has his Combat Suit teleported to him from one of his spaceships, pulls out a sword & laser and has a one on one duel with that particular episode's main villain. When Gavan appears to be winning, the villains always transfer the fight to some bizarre dimension, where they have the slight edge. It's at this point that Gavan must once again use all his available weapons & vehicles, to win the battle against all these bizarre creatures. Yet despite the many explosions, spaceship dogfights, dimensional transformations, rays, lasers, and other futuristic thrills, Gavan's final blow ("Gavan Dynamic!") involves his Light Saber-like sword, the 'Laser Blade.' This chops the monster in half, the climax of each episode. During the course of the series, Gavan seems to maintain a low profile, unlike Superman or Batman. Gavan's battle with Maku rarely makes headlines, as that would throw Japan into a panic. Their duels usually take place without a lot of spectators watching, it's all subliminal. This whole format proved successful enough that the next two programs (sequels) imitated it drastically.

To close this **GAVAN** review, a complete episode guide. Whenever possible, I've included the 'First Shot', or as close as I could, to make the episodes as recognizable as possible to first-time viewers. Also included is the episode number, its title, and original broadcast date.

1. TOKYO CHITEI NO KAIYOUSAI
 ("Mystery Fortress under Tokyo") 3/5/82
[FIRST SHOT: Kids playing soccer.]

Maku shows its ugly head for the first time by destroying a space colony orbiting the Earth. Maku then sets up their own base in Japan which a group of kids accidentally discover. Just as the aliens discover the little intruders, Gavan arrives and saves the day. ***

2. NUSUMARETA NIHON RETOU
 ("Japan's Stolen Islands") 3/12/82
[FIRST SHOT: A ship at sea.]



TOP TO BOTTOM:

- 1) **GAVAN** airborne.
- 2) **GAVAN's** spaceship in Dragon form.
- 3) **GAVAN's** spaceship, "Denshi Seiju Doru".



When a 50-ton tanker mysteriously disappears at the Bermuda Triangle, a caucasian detective called Mr. Jones (of Interpol) attempts to investigate. Meanwhile, Gavan does a little investigating of his own, and ends up at Maku's secret island base. Gavan battles the episodic monster 'Gamara Monster.' ***

6. MAKU JUKU NO TENSAI TACHI ["*Evil school in the Sky for Geniuses*"] 4/16/82

[FS: Maku's hole/tunnel with their spaceship flying through it.]

With the help of an octopus known as 'Oma Dako Monster', Maku's members capture hyper-active problem children and offer them dinner. But the meal is hypnotic, and will eventually aid in turning these misguided kiddies into more of Maku's henchmen generals, called Crushers. ***

7. KAIBUTSU GA HISOMU HANABIRA NI

Naturally, Maku finds this too good to pass up, so a monster infiltrates the scientist's household, the creature is hidden in his daughter's doll! ***1/2

10. NINGEN KURASHYA BUTAI O GEKKI HA SEYO! ["*Destroy the Human Crushin Force*"] 5/28/82

[FS: Maku's domain.]

Maku's latest plan to increase their army: Start their own 'World Sports Club', and recruit athletes they can change into soldiers. ****

11. CHICHI WA IKITE IRU NO KA? NAZONO

S.O.S. SHINGOU ["*Is my Father alive? Mystery of the S.O.S. signal*"] 4/16/82

[FS: Boy (young Retsu) running in a meadow.]

Gavan's search for his father leads him to a strange, frontier-like ghost town in the

Left: GAVAN finally confronts San Doruba in the final episode. Middle: The cast of GAVAN and SHARIVAN team up! Bottom: GAVAN in action!



3. TAIHENDAI KUROBOSHI HAKASE NO BEMU KEKAKU O SHOSHISE YO ["*Stopping the Plot of Dr. Kuroboshi*"] 3/19/82

[FIRST SHOT: An old man in the woods.]

Masashi Ishibashi (AKA Milton Ishibashi of THE STREETFIGHTER) appears as an old man who likes to wander in the woods, catching kids with his magical butterfly net. 'Condor Monster' is the guest villain. **

4. SHIOYOBU MAJIN-KABUTO ["*Evil Suit of Armor, Calling Death*"] 3/26/82

[FIRST SHOT: A helmet in a chair.]

A magic helmet left on Earth by aliens in the stone-age makes its wearer a mighty warrior. A group of scientists go into a cave to locate this 'Majin Kabuto' mask, but are foiled by a malformed crustacean called 'Komori Monster.' ***

5. MIMI WA NAKUKAMA MODOKU COBRA DANGA RETSU NI MECHU ["*Mimi cries because the Cobra's Missile hit Retsu*"] 4/9/82 [FS: Airplane arriving at airport.]

Maku's monsters disguise themselves as foreign diplomats while Gavan recovers from poisoning. The finale has our boy pitted against a demon and a cobra. ***1/2

SHOJO WA KUCHIZU KE SHITA ["*The girl who Kissed the Dangerous Monster Flower*"] 4/30/82

[FS: Bug monster's shadow arising at a greenhouse, late at night.]

ULTRAMAN's Susumu Kurobe (Hayata) is Maku's new agent, in an action packed tale of Samurai Monster, a mutant insect who hides in flowers. ****

8. SEGIIKA AKUMA KA? GINMASUKU DAIHIRO ["*Is the Silver Masked Hero Righteous or Evil?*"] 5/7/82

[FS: Maku's tunnel & spaceship.]

The staff of "Space Magazine", a speculative tabloid searching for UFOs, includes more of Maku's agents, including a comical baboon called Kaenzaru Monster. They've framed Gavan and kidnapped some kids, leaving Gavan to set the record straight. ***1/2

9. UTSUKUSHI NINGO SPY ["*Beautiful Doll Spy*"] 5/14/82

[FS: A sign in an underground parking lot.]

A college professor invents 'Bashyu X-O,' a formula which can cause massive destruction.



mountains, where he tackles the Armadillo Monster. ***

12. UENCHI E KYOKOU SEYO! U.F.O. SHONEN DAI PINCHI ["*Hurry to the Amusement Park, the Boy from the UFO is in Big Trouble*"] 6/11/82

[FS: Roller coaster.]

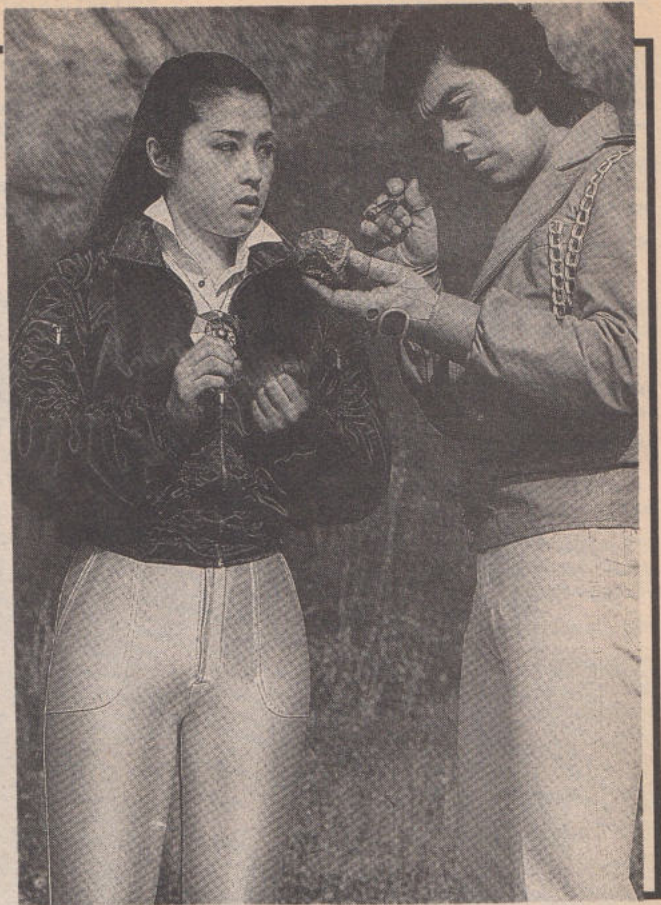
Hunter Killer sets up an underground base, beneath an amusement park. Some alien kid witnesses this, and is kidnapped & locked up. From then on, it's Gavan to the rescue. ***1/2

13. AIYAUSHI RETSU! DAI GYAKUTEN ["*A Dangerous, big setback for Retsu*"] 6/18/82



Above: Maku's villains get a kick out of **GAVAN!** Scene from **GAVAN** (Toei; 1982)

Right: Mimi and Gavan, hot on Maku's trail.



[FS: Maku's tunnel.]

Gavan must rescue a scientist and his family. The scientist is forced to invent a transmutation machine which combines two warriors into Double Monster. Weak episode. **

14. **AI TO KANASHIMI NO WAKARE. TODOME NO ICHIGEKKI!!** ["Separation of Love & Sorrow Receives a Finishing Blow!!"] 6/25/82

[FS: Flashbacks to previous episode.]

This episode is slow-paced, possibly the worst in the series. Our hero undergoes training to destroy Double Monster, who's killing the cattle. *

15. **MABOROSHI? MAKU TOSHI** ["Vision of the Evil City in the Sky"] 7/2/82

[FS: Maku's spaceships.]

This all-out adventure definitely makes up for the last two! Gavan helps a sick girl, and ends up ambushed at the hospital by Shamo Dabura. From then on, it's all chases & fights, involving swordsmen, gunslinging geishas, acrobatic clowns, and more monsters! ****

16. **HATSUKOIWA HOUSEKI NO KAGAYAKI. SAYONARA GINGA TOKYO** ["Shiny Jewelry of First Love. Goodbye to the Special Express Space Train"] 7/9/82

[FS: Title, and girls with umbrellas.]

New geek on the block Saburo is pursued not only by school bullies, but by Maku too, because he happens to be an android from space, and possesses energising prisms. ***

17. **HASHIRU JIGEN BAKUDAN! SHIROBAI NI NOTA ANSATSUSHAYA** ["Like a ticking Time Bomb, the Assassin on the White Bike Will Attack"] 7/16/82

[FS: Cars in the city.]

Hirosuke Kayama (**SPIDERMAN, METALDER**) plays Hyo Dabura, who impersonates a traffic cop. Gavan's attempt at investigating gets him in an out-of-control car with no breaks (another fiendish plot by Maku). **1/2

18. **HIMESAMA KONTESUTO HACHAME-CHA RYUGUJOU** ["The Princess Contest is out of control at the Palace of the Sea Goddess"] 7/23/82

[FS: People frolicking at the beach.]

A bizarre episode, probably based on some old legend. When a monstrous turtle kidnaps bikini-clad bathing beauties, Gavan infiltrates an underwater kingdom (where the ladies are held), by following some ancient scripture. ****

19. **GOZEN ROKUJI JOUCHAKU! Z BIMU CHIARGI KANRYUO** ["The finished Z Beam Charge arrived at 6 A.M."] 7/30/82 [FS: Sunset, mountains.]

Gavan's Combat Suit is badly damaged in a duel with the reptilian Kyouriyu Dabura. While it's being repaired by Mimi, Dr. Coma and Marine, Gavan befriends a happy family who helped him recover. Inevitably, it brings up flashbacks about Gavan's own long-lost parents. ****

20. **NAZOU? NOKYUKKYU BIYOUINI GINRYUI NO DAIMETSU BOU GA SEMARU** ["Mystery at the emergency Hospital, the Destruction of the Human Race Approaches"] 8/6/82

[FS: Train.]

Despite numerous fights and a plot about a magical jewel from outer space, Gavan finds time to befriend a little girl called Sachiko, before his battle with Kerada Dabura. ****

21. **ODOTE CHIKURI DAIPINCHI.**

HOUNI SAKUSENYO! ["The Dancing Bee Sting is Big Trouble. The Honey Plan!"] 8/20/82

[FS: Sign.]

Machiko Soba, sporting an afro and breasts, teaches aerobics at a bizarre dance studio. She's actually a disguised insect called Mitsubachi Dabura. ***

22. **OGONKAMEN TO IMOTO. TAIYO NI MUKATE HASHIRU YOTO** ["The Golden Mask of the Little Sister and the Boat going Towards the Sun"] 9/3/82

[FS: A king's crown.]

A mysterious jewel thief proves to be a major nuisance to Kurage Dabura, who leads a strange, tribelike sub-faction of Maku. Gavan's rescuing the thief involves his disquising himself in drag and other wacky costumes. ***

23. **YAMIOSAKU BIJO NO HIMEI! KIRI NO NAKA NO UREIBASHYA** ["Beautiful Girl's Scream rips through the Darkness! Ghost Carriage in the Fog"] 9/10/82

[FS: Traffic at night.]

A spider-vampire called Kumo Dabura kidnaps gals to be his sacrificial brides, so Gavan rescues them. ***

24. **MIMI NO AKUMA KA!? HOERU KIRISAKI MAJU** ["Mimi's Nightmare of the Devil"] 9/17/82

[FS: Gavan's jeep dodging boulders.]

Mimi has fainting spells, and reoccurring nightmares that Gavan will be defeated by Saber Dabura.

25. **AYASHIKU YURAMEKU SUICHUKA. WAKABE GA ABUNAI** ["Strange Swinging Underwater Flower. Wakaba in Danger"] 10/1/82

[FS: Girl's ass, riding a bike.]

A rather surreal episode, about how Goki Dabura (female villain) hypnotizes girls, via monstrous flowers and an addictive drug. Gavan himself hallucinates, believing he's attacked by ninja-demons! ***

#26. NINGYOU WA MITAI! DOKUGASU SATSUJIN BUTAI NO SHOTAI ("The Doll saw the Poison Gas Homicide Force") 10/8/82

[FS: Helicopter, then an army attacks a village.]

In pursuit of a cruel college professor, Gavan dodges ninjas, hallucinations and a private army of mercenaries. ***1/2

#27. SENSEI TACHI GA HENDAI GAKKOU WA KAIKI GA IPPAI ("The strange Teachers! A very Mysterious School") 10/15/82

[FS: Rabbit.]

A kid's pet rabbit is taken by a psychotic witch doctor, and used in a macabre ritual. *

#28. ANKOKU NO UCHU NO UMI SAMAYOU MAJO MONICA ("The Witch Monica Wanders Through Space") 10/22/82

[FS: Cave interior.]

A complex, if not confusing episode. Mimi is injured by a dart fired by Monica, a sexy space amazon. ***1/2

29. DENGKEI MAGIC GASSEN! ANSATSU NO PROGURAMU ("A Shocking magic Battle! The Assassin Program") 10/29/82

[FS: Fire, sexy lady with a red hat.]

Sirohisa Nakada guest stars as Maku's new agent Magic Dabura, who infiltrates the Japan Magician Association. Using superb acrobats, Gavan auditions for the job of assistant to a beautiful female magician, to locate the villains. ***

30. DONHORA NO MUSUKO GA MAKU JOUNI KAETTEKITA ("Don Hora's Son Returns to Maku") 11/5/82

[FS: Planets, flashing lights.]

Hunter Killer's job is threatened by the arrival of replacement villain San Doruba. Also arriving briefly is Aran (Hiroshi Miyauchi, Toei's Clint Eastwood), an Uchu Keiji who steals the episode. ***1/2

31. TENSHI NO UTA GA KIKOERU NINGYO NI SARETA OUJO ("You can Hear from the Angel's Song that the Princess will Become a Doll") 11/12/82

[FS: Girl running.]

Aran & Gavan rescue a kidnapped girl from a haunted amusement park. ***

32. NAZO NO CHITEIMEIRO TAGETTO WA WX1 ("The Mystery of the Underground Maze, Target is WX1") 11/19/82

[FS: Gavan riding his motorcycle among explosions.]

Maku's spaceships destroy a space station. For an encore, San Doruba & Giba set up a trap in an abandoned subway. ***1/2

33. SHINKAIBUTSU TANJOU. EIRIAN O HIROTTA SHONEN ("A New Monster was Born. The Boy who found an Alien") 11/26/82

[FS: Close-up of a large egg.]

Maku plants a monster egg in Tokyo. After the larva (Kaibutsu Dabura) hatches, pets begin to disappear. ****

34. OMOIDE WA HOSHI NO NAMIDA CHI-

CHI NO NAI KO ("Memories are the Star's Tears of the Orphan") 12/3/82

[FS: Buildings at night.]

A young brother & sister and their dog are traumatised because their father was driven insane by Maku's Dr. Dabura. ***

35. SANDORUBA NO HANKO ("San Doruba's Resistance") 12/10/82

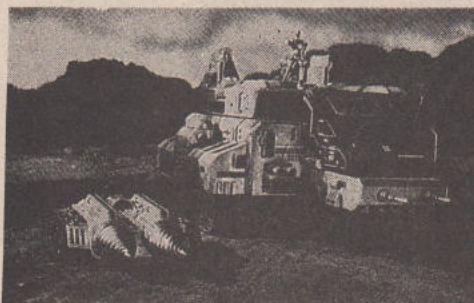
[FS: Landscape; then a quick battle.]

San Doruba devises a plan on how to get their hands on Gavan's Laser Blade. They use Marin & another girl as a hostage, sending Gavan on a wild goose chase to rescue them! He rescues the two babes from being crucified, and retains his sword. A fast paced, action packed episode! ****

36. URAMI NO RODOSHOW. SATSUIJO WA MAKU KUKAN ("A bitter feeling of the Road Show. A studio has become Maku's Space") 12/17/82

[FS: Gavan's spaceship, 'Dorugiran', flying.]

Gavan goes to Tohto Movie Studios, to investigate a movie they're supposedly making about



Gavan's private armada!

him, only to discover Maku has infiltrated the studios! A 'voodoo photo' is taken of Gavan, so that when Urami Dabura hammers a stake into it, Gavan feels the pain! Not only that, but on possessed movie sets, he battles samurais, henchmen, and two Godzilla monsters (before the battle, a crew is making a Toho-like monster movie). Ironically, these two dinosaurs are from the series FIREMAN. *****

37. OTENBA HYOUKIN HIME NO CHIKYU BOUKEN RYOKOU ("A tomboy princess took an Adventurous Trip to Earth") 12/24/82

[FS: Gavan helping a girl up off the ground.]

Isei Amamoto (Dr. Who in KING KONG ESCAPES) appears as a villain in a complex yet goofy episode dealing with the forest, a church, the monster Anahori Dabura, and one or two little alien fairies who are obviously cheap toys. **

38. HOUISARETA YUSOUBUTAI SEIGI NO TAIYOKEN ("A Transport Force was Surrounded, Justice of the Sun Sword") 1/14/83

[FS: Feet walking on the floor at Maku's base.]

San Doruba steals a valuable sword and then Gyanga Dabura attacks a school bus. **

39. GAKKOU KARA KAETTARA BOKU NO UCHI WA MAKU ICHI 1/21/83 ("When I got Home from School, My House was Maku's Base")

[FS: Quick shots of hands, a girl's face, and a lady & her clothes line.]

Notori Dabura, San Doruba and some hench-

men invade a suburban household because it's a strategic location, and a good spot for a sniper to shoot Gavan. The spot has a perfect viewpoint of a schoolyard where Gavan frequently helps handicapped children. **

40. MAKU NO TANI DAIKESSEN BOKU MO UCHUKEIJI DA ("Big battle in the Valley, I'm a Space Sheriff Too") 1/28/83

[FS: Scenery.]

Maku's new monster Youkai Dabura sets up a hotdog stand out in the middle of the wilderness, which attracts not only Gavan, but some fat kid called Shiro. This little boutique is actually a trap to capture people and force them into slave labor at an underground mineral mine. **

41. SHIN-MAKU TOSHI AKAI SEIMEI NO SUNADOKEI ("New Maku City, Red Soul of the Hour Glass") 2/4/83

[FS: Gavan driving his jeep.]

Gavan falls for Maku's latest trap; he tries to save a little puppy from drowning and ends up fighting vikings, pirates, bikers, a musclemans, kung fu experts, a haunted pagoda room, indians, his own double, female Robinhoods, jets & missiles, army tanks, ninjas, spaceships, and the episodic monster Jigoku Dabura. It's nonstop action from start to finish in one of the greatest 30 minutes ever! *****

42. RETSU YO ISOGE! CHICHI YO ("Hurry up! Oh, father") 2/11/83

[FS: Gavan's spaceship.]

The old villain Hunter Killer dies at Bado, but before his death, he says where Gavan's father's Space Cannon is (Maku forced him to make it under hazardous conditions). So Gavan goes to the cave where his father is still locked up, but meets newcomer Iga Den (Hiroshi Watari), a forest ranger. Despite his superb fighting skill, he's nearly killed in a duel with the monster Buffalo Dabura. Iga Den must be sent to Bado (Space Sheriff Academy) to be nursed back to health, while Gavan battles the monster. ***

43. SAIKAI ("Meet Again") 2/18/83

[FS: Dr. Kiba.]

Gavan finally finds his imprisoned father Boisa (Sonny Chiba), in a cage. But he's in bad shape, and dies tragically soon after. **

44. DONHORA NO KUBI ("Head of Don Hora") 2/25/83

[FS: Mt. Fuji]

Gavan battles and destroys Maku's empire. But during his climactic duel with San Doruba, he gets a little help. At the right moment, Iga Den (Hiroshi Watari), the karate forest ranger, returns from Bado. He now is a space sheriff too! In his red chrome Combat Suit, he's called Space Sheriff Sharivan, introducing the next season of Space Sheriffs! Gavan destroys San Doruba. ***1/2

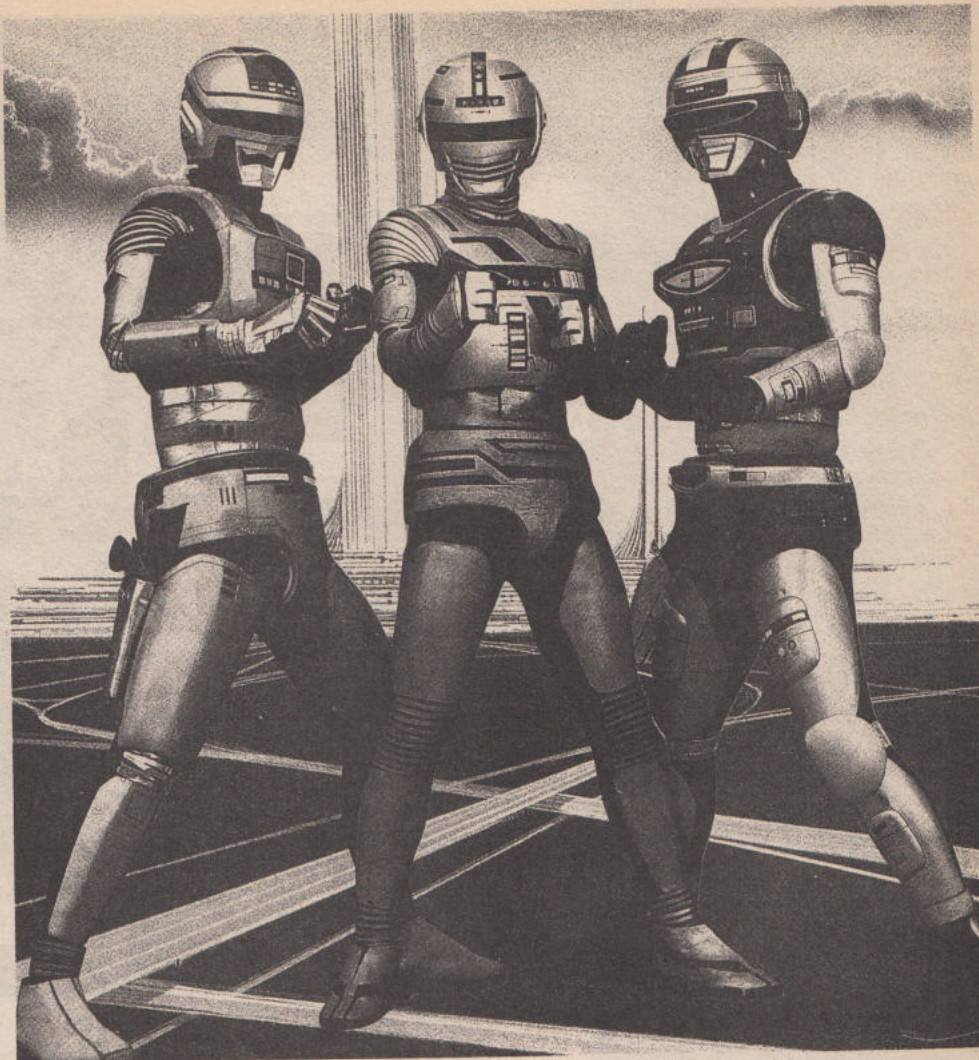


ROBO HEROES PHASE 2: UCHU KEIJI'S AND OTHER CLONES

As mumbled at the end of my **GAVAN** review, the first sequel series was **SPACE SHERIFF SHARIVAN** ("Uchu Keiji Shariban" in Japanese), which lasted for 51 episodes. It too had a follow-up, **SPACE SHERIFF SHIDER** ("Uchu Keiji Shaida"). Both programs offered the same kinds of adventure, FX, monsters, action and stories as **GAVAN**. They were not only spin-offs, but remakes; repeating the traditional formula right down to the last detail (including the alien dimensions). Each series had its own individual cast members, heroes, villains, names and spaceships, yet the differences were minor. Neither program is necessarily inferior to **GAVAN** the originator, but **GAVAN** had a certain something lacking in these two **GAVAN** wannabies. That something was action. **SHARIVAN** star Hiroshi Watari (like Kenji Ohba, an accomplished JAC martial artist & gymnast) tried his best, but in an age of fancy editing and deceitful camera angles, his fights & stunts weren't exploited to their full extent. **SHIDER**'s battles were even worse, since the series star, Hiroshi Tsuburaya (Eiji's grandson!) had no major athletic capability to speak of. So although the FX continued to improve, the over all programs, like their stuntwork, declined.

So in 1985, when **SHIDER** had bitten the dust like its two superior predecessors, the forth installment, **MONSTER HUNTER JUSPION** ("Kajiu Dokueu Jyaspion") was broadcast. Main JAC hero Hikaru Kurosaki insured a step back in the right direction, as far as action quality. The FX were even better, as this one involved giant monsters to battle Juspion's equally giant robot. But, like 1986's **DIMENSIONAL WARRIOR SPIELVAN** ("Jikuu Senshi Spiruban"), this was not considered an Uchu Keiji and/or Space Sheriff. Yet the designs were virtually identical, only the names were changed. **JASPION** and **SPIELVAN** are not sequels, but clones. They can't be considered ripoffs, since every one of them was made by the same people: Toei Co., and broadcast on TV Asahi! **SPIELVAN** featured the return of Hiroshi Watari, yet by this time, the genre had evolved to an all-time low, so his superb karate stunts were neglected drastically, in favor of excessive special effects and predictable, repititious, preposterous melodrama.

SPIELVAN marked the end of Phase Two in the Robo Hero legacy. But from **GAVAN**, all the way to its poor excuse for a remake **SPIELVAN**, the Uchu Keijis offered incredible thrills and state-of-the-art special effects, some of the most intense excitement ever seen on TV, Japanese or otherwise.



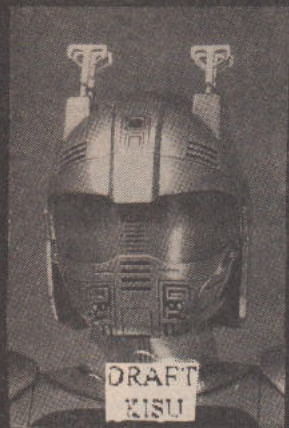
The three Space Sheriffs: SHARIVAN, GAVAN and SHIDER.

PHASE 3: INTERNATIONAL CAUSE

There's a strong disagreement as to whether America's own **ROBOCOP** movies were inspired by **GAVAN** and Japan's other Uchu Keijis. While an unnamed spokesman for Toei Co. apparently believes **ROBOCOP** owes plenty to the Uchu Keijis, there are conflicting reports out of Hollywood, stating **ROBOCOP**'s makers had never heard of Japan's trendsetting genre. Yet through the grapevine, I've heard that some of **ROBOCOP**'s FX technicians indeed studied Toei's early 1980s heroes, before completing the Robocop costume. All I know is, when I went to a sci-fi con many years ago, attired as Gavan, everyone pointed at me and yelled "It's Robocop," and I'd never seen the movie! In my mind, the similarities aren't coincidental. Regardless, I enjoyed all three **ROBOCOP** movies, even though I feel Toei's superhero designers are unsung heroes. Robocop's metallic look is all that reminds me of the Uchu Keijis. Otherwise, **ROBOCOP** looks more like a remake of **SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN**, as it lacks even 10% the imagination of Toei's predecessors. **ROBOCOP** lacks the outlandish

monsters, vehicles and other creative gimmicks of **GAVAN** and **SHARIVAN**, in favor of typical American cyberpunk cliches. Robocop, being stiff-limbed, slow, and in a cumbersome getup, would be in serious trouble if he went up against one of the Uchu Keijis. They're fast, acrobatic, swift, limber, and have all the powers Robocop has, plus more (swords, death rays, tanks, spaceships, giant robots, etc).

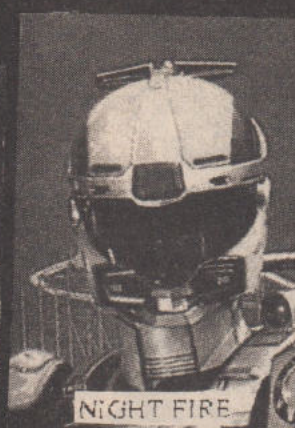
But **ROBOCOP**'s being an imitation didn't stop it from having its own imitations and ripoffs! One was the 1990 TV series **SUPER FORCE**. This American TV show borrowed most heavily from **ROBOCOP**, but also managed to swipe a few ideas from the Japanese granddaddies. Like the Uchu Keijis, Super Force road around in a high-tech motorcycle and could occasionally perform martial arts. While over in Hong Kong, Tsui Hark combined gimmicks from **ROBOCOP** with **METROPOLIS**, and casted Sally (**THE KILLER**) Yeh in **ROBO FORCE (AKA I LOVE MARIA)**. By throwing in some fantasy, cops and action,



DRAFT
KISU



BAIKUL



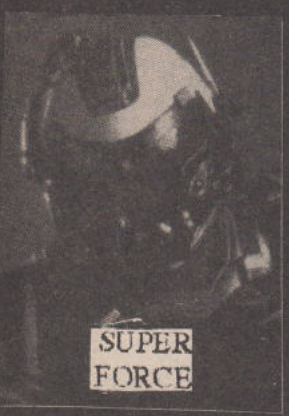
NIGHT FIRE



JAN PERSON



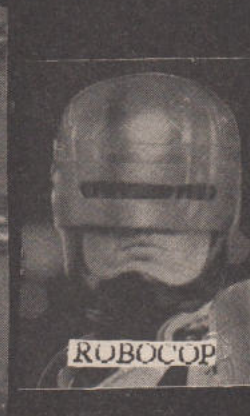
HELVIRA



SUPER
FORCE



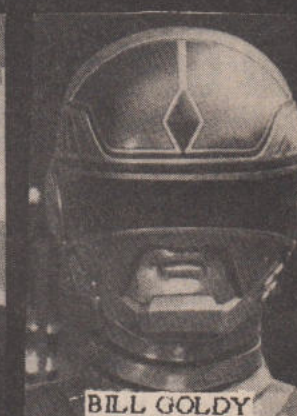
MARIA



ROBOCOP



MAD
GALLAN



BILL GOLDY

Hark created another schlocky farce. But by this time, Robo Heroes were everywhere.

Ironically, the most blatant **ROBOCOP** imitations were from the country where it all began: Japan! Toei must have been fed up by all the publicity **ROBOCOP** was getting, and decided it was time to rip off the ripoff! The results were amusing though shameless **ROBOCOP** wannabes like **JIBAN**, **LADY BATTLECOP**, **WINSPECTOR**, **JAN PERSON** and **SOLBRAIN**. These heroes are far removed from the energetic heroes of **GAVAN**'s heyday. They lack the limberness and agility of the original Uchu Keijis, these 3rd generation Robo Heroes follow in **ROBOCOP**'s slow-paced footsteps. They're automated, and prefer typical gunplay over acrobatic stunts.

Because another Robo Hero is discovered every day, it's impossible for me to critique each and every one of them in this paragraph, and include them in chronological order. Instead, what follows is an alphabetical listing to every Robo Hero I can get my slimey paws on. Some may not apply to the genre, but may be mildly related in some way. A number of the American/European films I'll include actually owe more to **TERMINATOR** than **ROBOCOP**, but it's impossible to know for sure until I've watched the film & completed the review. So the alphabetical listings which follow are the results of my spending long hours in videotores; Chinese ones, American ones, and Japanese ones, renting anything which looks even remotely like part of the genre. Many of the following movies, especially the American ones, relate to the genre in title only, and are only included to show how bad most of them are. This way, they can be labeled as shit, and avoided. If nothing else, this compilation is sort of a loose over-view of the cyberpunk films of the 1980s, in films & TV shows

from Japan, the U.S., and China. But in short, the Robo Hero genre can be divided into two basic categories, though some may slightly cross over into both:

1. Classic Japanese superhero action, almost exclusively the product of Toei Co., in Tokyo. Anything goes in these wild thrillers, as streamlined, metallic heroes command all types of weapons & vehicles, have mastered several forms of combat (new & old), and have unlimited powers,



ROBOHUNTER, aka **ROBO VAMPIRE** - easily the 'PLAN 9' of Robo Heroes!

due to the equally unlimited imagination of the writers. Villains often include an outlandish array of monsters, cyborgs, mutants, warriors and gorgeous femme fatales. Other Japanese programs are part of the comparatively bland 'Rescue Mission' genre.

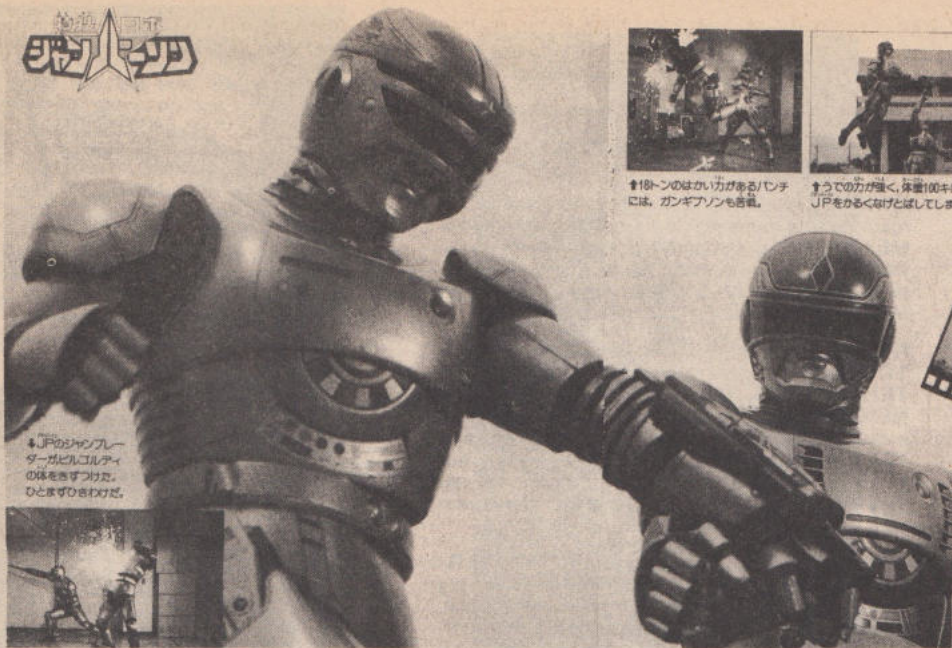
2. American cyberpunk dramas. Generally serious, gloomy, slow paced, comparatively realistic. Always set in barren futures, with heroes remotely similar to those in the other category, but more resourceful. The **ROBOCOP** films are the best of the bunch, as the others can get bleak, if not downright dull. The remainders are imitations of not only **ROBOCOP**, but often **TERMINATOR**, **BLADERUNNER**, **ROAD WARRIOR**, and anything else which made money in the last ten years.

ASSASSIN- This is not the one with Wang Yu, not the one with Sonny Chiba, or any other film with the same name. This one is, unfortunately, American. Robert Conrad appears in this 1990 fiasco which bills itself as a cross between **ROBOCOP** and **TERMINATOR**, when, in reality, it's just another dull spy drama.

BYCLOSSER- A wacky little Japanese TV show from 1985. Toei's semi-entertaining, 34-part program is about two robot brothers: Ken & Gin and their war against Dr. Q, the Black Men, Gorazonga and other sinister members of Desuta. **

CAPTAIN POWER AND THE SOLDIERS OF THE FUTURE- This early 1980s American series definitely owes something to Japan's Toei. But the action was poor, despite some lasers, explosions and gunplay. This was one of the first programs to make heavy use of computer & video FX. Plot had something to do with high-tech warriors in a nuclear devastated future. Hiroshi (**SHARIVAN**) Watari described it best when he saw some epi-

特撮
ロボ
戦士



18トンのはい力があつたバチには、ガンギアソンも苦戦。



うでの力が強く、体重100キロJPをかきくねげとばしてしま

4JPのジャンプレー
ダーガビルコルタイ
の体をきすつた。
ひとまひきれた。



sodes and said, in broken English: "Oh, aaah, Good computer FX, ehh, uhh, but story not so- uh, interesting."

CYBERCOP- Unconventionally fun series (34 episodes; 1988) from Toho Planning. It's an abnormal variation on Japan's many robo-hero programs. Excitement galore as a team of cybernetic law enforcers kick ass! Our streamlined heroes are Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Mercury, and later in the series, there's an additional hero, Lucifer. See OC#6 & #14. ***

CYBORG- You've heard of bottom-of-the-barrel, right?! Well this ripoff of **ROAD WARRIOR** is even lower; under the barrel. Like main star Claude Van Dumb, the movie is super dull, slow, unintelligible, and one of the worst movies I've ever had the displeasure of sitting through. Don't be fooled by the title, the 'cyborg's part is minimal, as is Claude's talent.

ELIMINATORS- Another American film, but this is one of the more imaginative ones from 1986. Denise Crosby (**STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION**) and Andrew Prine track bad guys with the help of a cyborg (Patrick Reynolds)

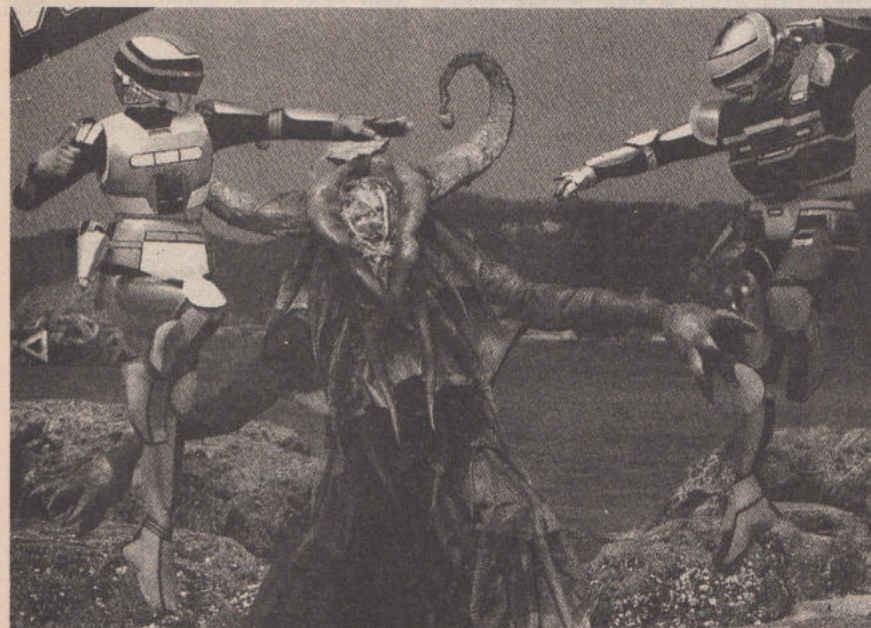
and a ninja (Conaan Lee). Unfortunately, very little is shown of Conaan Lee's skills! His fighting ability was not really used. Not a great film, though I've seen worse. *

FUTURE KICK- Roger Corman's turn to make yet another post-holocaust tale of battling cyborgs. Don 'Dragon' Wilson's kicks aren't bad, unlike the film.

FUTURE ZONE- David Carradine's dominance in this one insures there's plenty of lame action, with Carradine again 'fighting' too carefully and daintily. He plays a bounty hunter, and Tedd Prior plays his gunslinging son from the future. Campy, tacky, cheesie, badly acted- and its plot has more holes than Swiss cheese. Just a typical crime drama with lots of shoot 'em ups, despite Carradine's infrequent use of a bionic glove.

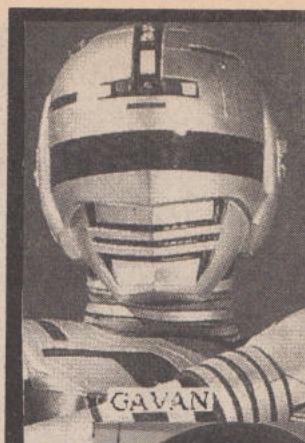
GAVAN- Yes! Toei's 1982 masterpiece which made this issue possible. A spectacular series; no ifs, ands or buts. *****

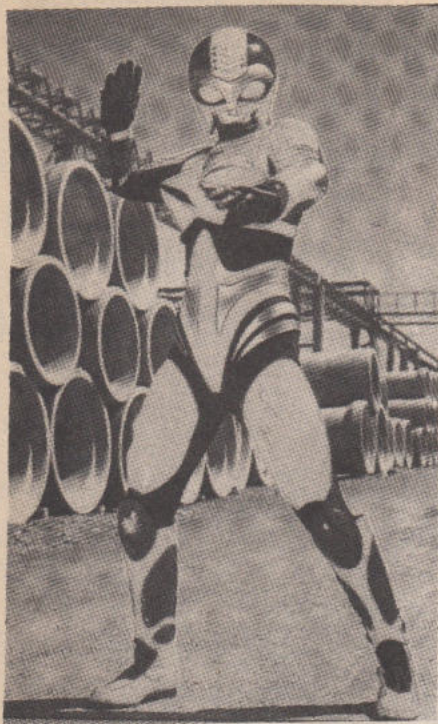
JAN PERSON- Definately the most bizarre, wild, violent, confusing and unpredictable of Toei's post-ROBOCOP programs. It's also one of the better



Top left: Jan Person vs. Bill Goldy in **JAN PERSON** (Toei; 1993).

Bottom left: Evil monsters fights Diana (left) and Spielvan (right) in **SPIELVAN** (Toei; 1986)





Left: Helvina in **SPIELVAN** (Toei; 1986)

Middle top: Mad Galian lunges toward Jaspion (Toei; 1985)

Middle bottom: Spielvan (middle) and his female helpers.

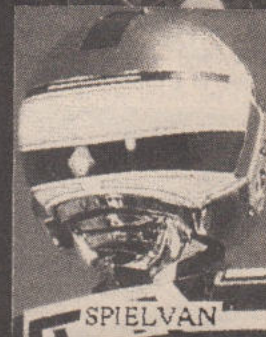
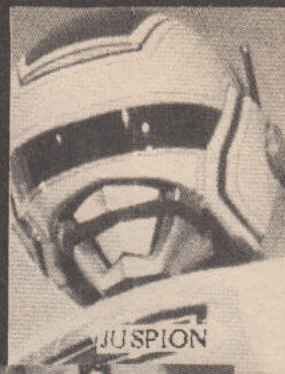
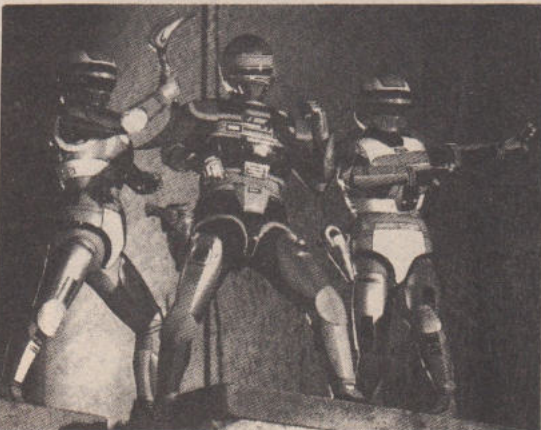
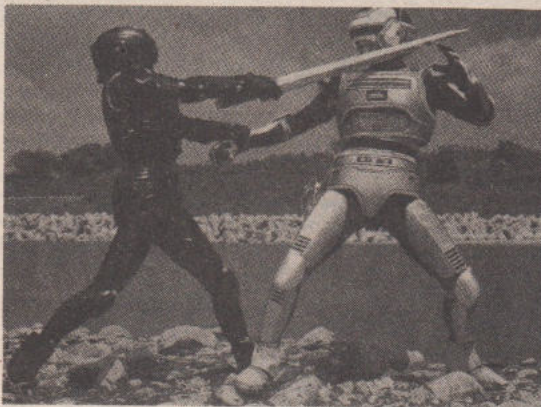
JINKI METALDER. A unique program about a robot battling monsters. It may sound familiar, but **METALDER** is far different than Toei's 'Uchu Keiji', & 'rescue mission' genres and may not necessarily qualify as a Robo Hero. For more on **METALDER**, see OC#12. **1/2

NEMESIS- 1993, Olivier Gruner (**ANGEL TOWN**) in a violent yet redundant variation on **TERMINATOR**, **ROBOCOP** and **BLADERUNNER**, though fueled by John Woo-esque (Gruner even dresses like Chow Yun Fat) shootouts and T&A. Gruner never gets a moment's peace, but amid the action, FX, gore, cyborgs and explosions, they forgot how to make continuity and a coherent plot! 1/2

PROTOTYPE X29A- A rip off of **ROAD WARRIOR**, **ROBOCOP** and **TERMINATOR**. It's also everything I hate in a film: Artsy fartsy bullshit, boredom, endless talking, nonsensical plot (correction: No plot! Just random images), complete lack of any entertainment value, it's mundane, and worst of all- it's American! Something to do with another futuristic wasteland and cyborgs. The robot Prototype has a decent costume, but it's few martial arts fights are dead slow.

ROBO C.H.I.C.- A god awful hunk of crap from Triangle Films. Kathy Showers and Burt Ward star in this stupid, low budget comedy about a blond bombshell android. I hoped it would be a spoof of **ROBOCOP**, but it's not. Nor is it worth watching.

ROBOCOP- America's successful addition to the genre, more popular than **GAVAN** itself. This is



ones, and definitely the best Japanese series of 1993. **

JUSPION- Toei's 46 episode (3/15/85-3/24/86) tale of a disco dancing space traveler Juspion (Hikaru Kurosaki), his female android helper Anli, and their arch rival, the huge monster Satan Gos. This villain unleashes creatures of all shapes & sizes, who must deal with Juspion's many weapons (Gabi Jet, Gabi Tank, robot Dai Leon and much more). JAC guest stars like Hiroshi Watari & Junichi Haruta highlight the program, as do FX genius Nobuo Yajima's incredible special effects! ***

KOSEIDON- The full Japanese title of this 1978 series is **KYORYU SENTAI KOSEIDON**, which means "Dinosaur Fighting Team Koseidon". From the looks of available photos of this illusive, hard-to-find, 52 episode program, our main hero looks like a pre-lude to **GAVAN** and **SHARIVAN!** Is Tsuburaya's rarely seen TV show the long forgotten inspiration for all Robo Heroes? Coincidence? Available photos indicate Koseidon too carries a sword, raygun, has futuristic vehicles and fights monsters, dinosaurs & mutants! Yet it came out four whole years before **GAVAN!** Related or not, I'm dying to see this series! Anybody got tapes?

LADY BATTLE COP- Toei's most blatant, seemingly vengeful ripoff of **ROBOCOP** to date! This made-for-video movie, about a female cyborg cleaning up the streets of Tokyo is valued as an unintentional comedy only! Features Masashi Ishibashi.

MANDROID- If this is what American sci-fi has to offer, I'll never be domesticated! **MANDROID**, a 1993 film had potential, but ultimately, it sucks. Borrowing ideas from **ROBOCOP** and **REANIMATOR**, it's a slow-paced tale of scientists and agents fighting over a cyborg in Germany. It almost had its moments, what a shame they chose to make it so dull & lame.

MANTIS- Dull TV movie with an all-black cast. This tale of a vigilante cyborg was produced when Steve James (who played the villain) passed away. His death is unfortunate, as was his appearance in this 1993 movie.

METALDER- Toei's 1987 series, full title **CHYO-**

actually one of my favorite American film trilogies; the FX are great, there's action & gore, and there's a ninja in the 3rd film. Hell, there's even a new **ROBOCOP** TV show, comics, and I think I saw tapes of a cartoon somewhere. **

ROBOT FORCE- A 1988 movie with Sally Yeh, John Sham, Tsui Hark, and Lam Ching Ying, though better known as **I LOVE MARIA**. However, I know it as a piece of shit. Darkly lit, bad continuity and a nonsensical plot confuse what could have been somewhat entertaining. Sally Yeh plays a female Robocop-type character, and tackles robots & villains. A worthwhile effort, with amusing moments, and plenty of room for improvement. *

ROBOMAN- Hemisphere Productions made this badly edited fiasco some time in the 1970s, starring Elliott Gould. Super low budget, slow, dull. Remotely interesting at best, no action. CIA agents interrogate a silver-skinned roboman in search of his past. Only included here because of it's 'newer' title, it's only relation to the genre.

ROBOT NINJA- Obviously, this one was just made to cash-in on a catchy title! Its ultra low budget is forgivable, but the darkness and utter boredom is not! This American cheapie is virtually impossible to sit through. The supposed hero is neither a robot or a ninja, but a comicbook artist who becomes a vigilante at night. I still consider this the worst movie ever made.

ROBOTRIX- An entertaining sci-fi/trash thriller from 1991, a co-production between Japan's Schochiko Films and H.K.'s own Golden Harvest! Curvaceous cuties like Amy Yip and Chikako Aoyama as gorgeous robots helping detective David Wu go after a brutal, vicious cyborg. Not perfect, but with enough action and T&A to make it a lot of fun. **

ROBO VAMPIRE - Also known as **ROBO HUNTER**, but little is known about this cheap HK movie from 1988. Who made it? And why? A low budget Robocop, in a costume made from aluminum foil and garbage, goes shooting after terrorists and Chinese vampires! There's even a 'Chinese Ghost,' but played by a caucasian woman in a see-through blouse! There are many white actors in it, like John Livingston, an unfamiliar name destined to stay that way. No English subtitles, this unintended comedy is full of continuity flaws and other moronity! The hopping vamps wear store bought masks, and the flick appears to be two different movies hastily edited together. It boggles the mind that this movie exists. *

SHARIVAN [aka **UCHU KEIJI SHARIBAN** Toei; 1983]- The second groundbreaking 'Space Sheriff' series, and a damn good one. Sharivan



(Hiroshi Watari) uses swordplay, laser beams, spaceships, a robot, his assistant Lilly (Yuriko Furuya), explosions, his combat suit, motorcycle and good, honest fists to protect Japan from an empire of wierd creatures and mutants. ****

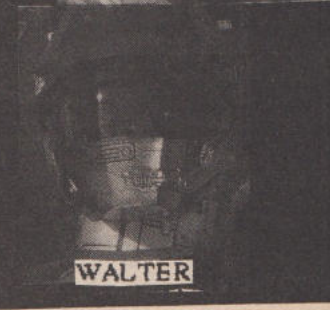
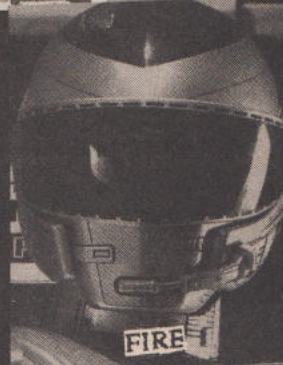
SHIDER- Whether you know it as "Space Sheriff Shider" or "Uchu Keiji Shaida", you'll just love space heroine Annie (JACtress Naomi Morinaga), she steals the entire 48-part series. Using his combat suit, robot, spaceships, swords and humongous pistol, Shider (and Annie!) are routinely kicking the asses of Fuma, composed of bizarre monsters and transvestites. ***

SOLBRAIN- Toei's 1991 "Super Rescue" TV series, about two people in Combat (post **ROBOCOP**) Suits, aided by a solid robot: Walking tractor/Transformer Soldozer. Rarely do they fire at monsters, the villains are usually humans: Kidnappers, mad scientists, thieves, terrorists or thugs. But Solbraver, Soljeanne (female Robo Hero) and Soldozer don't kill, they rescue. Most climactic struggles are the results of battle, like rescuing people from burning warehouses. Later in the series, a new & improved Robo Hero, Night Fire returns, who had his own series, **WINSPECTOR** (Toei; 1990). FX, explosions, rayguns, miniatures, and air vehicles add more excitement, but not



Top: Hiroshi Watari and his helper in **SPIELVANI**!

Left: Dai-Leon, Juspion's giant robot protects Japan!



KOREAN

새로운 폭죽!!

MOVIES

SUPER HONG-GIL TONG

The amazing thing about Korea is that there are so damn many Koreans over there, even more than in California!! When martial law was finally lifted in the late 1980s (I think), the country, for once, was open to all sorts of foreign influence. Nobody benefitted better from this new, virgin territory of art & cinema than did comedian Shim Hyung Rei. He was one of the first to jump on the theatrical bandwagon. Now that Korea was allowed to acknowledge the presence of non-Korean films, such as productions from China & Japan, they were also allowed to imitate them, though cheaply and badly.

Shim Hyung Rei, who previously hosted children's TV not unlike our own Xuxa (but Shim doesn't look as good in hot pants), made his theatrical debut in the **UREME** films as reviewed in OC a few issues ago. But this sci-fi series was only the beginning of Shim's career in Korean sci-fi films. Following the **UREME** farces came additional Shim flicks. Like the **UREME** legacy, these later films borrowed heavily (or at least tried to) from Japanese superheroes. Korea has some of the technology to make them, but not the experience or inherent know-how. So while there may be occasional fights at the beginning, middle and end, 90% of each production is dialogue and excessive clowning around. If Shim's brand of infantile humor flourishes in all of Korea's fantasies and superhero flicks, Korea will never join Japan & Hong Kong in the international spotlight. But if nothing else, Shim Hyung Rei is proof that the mentally retarded can serve a useful purpose in our society.

영웅기동대
슈퍼홍길동

SUPER HONG GIL TONG

[aka "Ho Hang Kil Dong"] Directed by Chung Gi

Kun, Presented by Peng Nok ("White Green") Video Productions in 1989, Starring Shim Hyung Rei, Kyung Gu Li, Chung Wan Hu, Kyu Ri Li

I could tell from the start that this was a period film, as most of the women wear those ugly Korean dresses which make them look pregnant. But as a costume fantasy set in the old days, it's a wonder why they didn't just go all out, and make a wild fantasy-adventure. I hate to say this, but they could have learned something from Chinese epics like Tsui Hark's **ZU, WARRIORS OF MAGIC MOUNTAIN**, etc. But nope, something that exciting in Korea is as likely as finding a vegetarian in a meat shop. So like most of Shim Hyung Rei's other cheapies, this one generally plays it safe; concentrating on lots of dialogue and lame foolery. It's because of movies like this that we have remote controls with Scan buttons.

The first half of the film is only entertaining if you're a 3-year old Korean, which I'm not, and neither are you. So that's grounds for a no-star rating. But then damn Koreans had a change of heart toward the climax, throwing in some nice battles which amount to 2, possibly 3 stars worth of fun. Reviewing & grading uneven flicks like this is harder than frozen chocolate.

Though low budget, there are a few basic FX, like super-imposed lasers, lightning & smoke, plus some animated birds. There are plenty of suspension wires, enabling the stuntmen to spin, flip and fly through the air with the adequetest of ease. These acrobatic stunts are performed only by stuntmen, who also do all the fighting. The over all production values aren't great, with continuity errors & odd edits. Most of it takes place in a generic forest, eliminating any need for sets. The village looks like a monastery they borrowed.

The script may be based on some ancient Korean legend, but looks to me like a variation of

Wu Cheng En's *Journey to the West* (a story not unfamiliar to OC's longtime readers). Only this time, the hero isn't an ape, though he's got the mentality & attractiveness of one. He's Hong Gil Tong (Shim Hyung Rei), who goes off to learn from an old wizard; sort of an elf. The little guy teaches Hong many tricks, like Cloud-Flying, invisibility, spells, acrobatics, quick-change disguises, and even some swordplay. Hong later befriends a fat guy (with more chins than a Chinese phone book), not unlike Pa Chieh of the classic novel. Another helper is some female character. I'm not sure what our three heroes represent politically, historically, or professionally, as Korean uniforms & social classes are as alien to me as Saturn, Armenian folk dances and the concept of enjoying the music of Phil Collins. But all three heroes are determined to rid Korea of bandits! Yet during the course of Hong's training & battles with baddies, time warps occasionally occur. So in the middle of a spell gone wrong, Hong gets teleported to modernday Seoul, getting chased by cops and confused by modern appliances. Regardless, when he arrives back at his own medieval time period, he resumes his duels with the bad guys. It's this latter half which finally brings the film to life.

Korean Tae Kwon Do offers beautiful spinning-back kicks, and mix well with the acrobatics, wire leaps and 1970s-inspired chop sockey. The battles even involve a couple gyonsies (hopping vampires) of Chinese mythology. Their attire still looks Manchurian, so I assume Korea lacks its own legends of hopping cadavers. Their hats are the same as in Chinese films, yet their robes are purple. Later, Shim Hyung Rei actually shows an ounce of genius when he changes into a Drunken Master and does a humorous imitation of Simon Yuen! He uses drunken technique to battle forest demons who wear what's obviously latex Halloween masks: Cat, snake, monkey, and crane. Each villain does a different fighting style, based on



the animal. This is a low key satire of old Jackie Chan films, and is the highlight of **SUPER HONG GIL TONG**. **

영구와 황금박쥐

YOUNG GU AND THE GOLDEN BAT

(Original Korean title: "Young Gu Wa Han kum Bachi") A Hana Home Video Production, 1992, Dir.: Nam Gi Nam, in Association with Chong Dok Kyun, Action Dir.: Kim Ahn Hong, Lighting: Cheh Wi Chung, Stills: Shong Min Song & Noh Ki Her, Martial Arts Dir.: Chong Dong In, Sound Effects: Jong To Ahn, Costumes: I Wan Ooh, Starring: Shim Hyung Rei

Toei's original **THE GOLDEN BAT** ("Ogon Bato" in Japanese) was a Japanese movie from 1966, which, in turn, was based on Takeo Nagamatsu's influential comic from 1930. So it's a wonder it took them Koreans so damn long to make this sequel! At the time of this writing, I haven't seen the B&W **THE GOLDEN BAT** from Japan, but would like to, since Sonny Chiba stars. So I can't compare this Korean follow-up with Toei's obscure predecessor. There was also an animated TV show about the character, which, ironically, was broadcast in my area, dubbed in Spanish!

As long as Shim Hyung Rei exists, Korea need never worry about their films getting international success. His presence alone nearly ruined this one too! This man must be stopped! He alone is grounds for nuking Korea. Shim enjoys endless mugging & hamming for the camera. This theory behind these films, apparently, is, why spend money on FX, actors, fight choreographers, costumes, & stuntmen, when you can get Shim Hyung Rei to make an ass of himself for free! Hell, Shim doesn't deserve to be paid, he should pay to let people watch him hog the camera. But to be fair & contradictory, his endless antics do offer a couple chuckles this time, like when he outsmarts several alien henchmen, tricking them into shooting themselves and

each other.

But no matter how much of an annoying time-filler Shim is, the scenes of Golden Bat shine through. He's definitely an abnormal hero, his skull face and sinister laugh make him look like a villain, specifically like the Crimson Ghost of old 1930s serials. But the sinister look doesn't make him a villain, or even an anti-hero, he's entirely good. In **YOUNG GU AND THE GOLDEN BAT**, his costume is made of spandex, a vampire cape and a store bought Halloween mask. This is forgivable, skull masks are easily accessible, and there are only so many ways you can make and design a skull! However, some of the villains, also wearing latex masks from K Mart's discount aisle, look ridiculous. One monster is called a 'Gremlin,' so naturally, his mask

is one of the Gremlin masks which came out shortly after the release of the American blockbuster. Sometimes, it's painfully obvious when the masks aren't big enough to cover the actors' necks, and the mouths don't move when they talk (and talking is one thing this movie has in abundance).

Which brings us to the special effects, or rather, special defects. When Golden Bat flies, virtually every time, them wires are visible. It's as though them Koreans want us to look at the wires. But for every plastic, second-hand mask, and every flaw in continuity & FX, there's a decent shot which makes it all worth while. The super impositions are put to good use, and there are some nice interior sets of caves and the villains' laboratory. Combining these colorful FX with the superb fight scenes is why I'm giving it a 3-star (***) rating. But this rating is only a guide for superhero fans. If you enjoy Golden Bat and other Japanese heroes, then you're cool, and may agree that this Korean film deserves three whole stars. Those unfamiliar with Japanese heroes should avoid it at all costs,

because you're a bunch of dicks and won't see the fun in this. But even hero fans, accustomed to this type of film & TV, should take my praise lightly; **YOUNG GU AND GOLDEN BAT** only barely deserves three stars. Shim insures it won't get four stars.

The story appears to be about aliens from Andromeda. Since the aliens all speak Korean, they decide Korea would be a good place to go to. So they attack, and capture people to use as guinea pigs for their ghoulish experiments. Some of these aliens look like original characters from the 1966 Toei movie, while others are new creations. Village idiot Young Gu (Shim Hyung Rei) see's the aliens capturing people, and witnesses a brief battle between a monster who wears a mask called 'Unleashed Wickedness' (I used to work in a shop which sold these masks) and Earth savior Golden Bat. Later, Young Gu has difficulty in convincing the police that there are villains from Andromeda on the loose. They lock him up in an insane asylum, which I sometimes wonder if Shim based on a real-life experience. The head psychiatrist is also convinced Young Gu is a looney, when he talks of his encounter with Golden Bat. Fortunately, Golden Bat comes crashing through the window to rescue our heroic retard. So the doctor tells the security guards that Golden Bat came by, so it's he that gets locked up! Meanwhile, Young Gu and Golden Bat infiltrate the enemy cave. Unfortunately, less than half of this confrontation is Golden Bat. As always, Shim hogs the spotlight, outsmarting the villains via childish facial expressions and predictable bathroom humor. But on those rarest of occasions, when we see Golden Bat in action, it's excellent! The swordplay, jumps, explosions and martial arts save what would have been a really pathetic movie. ***

스파크맨

Production Manager: Chung Ok, Dir.: Kim Kyung Shik, Special Photography Dir.: Jun Jo Myung, Martial Arts Coach: Kim Chun-Shik, Stuntmen: Jung Bong-Yun, Kim Han Sung, Jo Tae-Bong, Kim Tae-Hong, In Charge of Production: Ahn Hun-Shik, In Charge of Publicity: Kim Gwan-Duk, Spe-



Above: **SUPER HONG GIL TONG**.

Right: **YOUNG GU & THE GOLDEN BAT**.

cial Effects: Pak Gwang-Nam, Special Effects Assistant: O Hee-Yun, I Wun-Gu, Lighting: I Min-Bu, Lighting Assistant: I Joo-Saeng, Yu Gung-Sun, Chae Sung-Wun, Art Dir.: Kim Ge-Jun, Makeup: Chae Yun, Editing: Kim Hee-Soo, Recorder: Jung Mi, Planning: Huh Kang-Shik, Animation Planning: Ahn Hun-Dong, Production: Baek Seung-Gyun, Fine Arts: Im Jong-Woo, Storyboard: Shim Sang-Il, Music: Kim In-Gu, Singer: Eliza Kang, Recording: Kim Gyung Il, Sound Effects: Yang Dae-Ho, Developing/Recording: HanGuk YangHak, Jin Heung Gong Sa, In Co-operation with: Yong In Ja Yeon Non Won (Nature Approval Farm), Heu Im Mi Seul Gwan, Sam Sung Kyo Jae Wun Gu Sa, Producer: Dae Wun Hwa Joo Shik Hee Sa, Release date: May 15, 1990, Starring: Shim Hyung Rei, I Hung-Bin, Kim Young-In, Song Jun-Ho, Kim Jin-Kyung, Pak Yun-Hee, Kim Don-Sam, Pak Jong-Sul, Jung Suk-Hyun, Hong Jin-Ong, Ahn Yun-Hong, Kim So-Young

Here's Korea's addition to this issue's 'Robo Hero' genre. **SPARKMAN** blatantly borrows ideas from some of Toei's originals, the title hero's design looks mighty similar to the likes of **JUSPION** and **SPIELVAN**! Someone unfamiliar with the genre would easily be fooled into thinking Sparkman is **JUSPION**, **SPIELVAN**, or other Japanese predecessors, or at least, a twin. Personally, I think Sparkman looks better, more gadgets, more colors, etc. Design-wise, Sparkman may be the successor.

By Korean standards, **SPARKMAN** is a major blockbuster. Continuity and general production is better than average for a Korean film. It's definitely an ambitious effort, and worthy of release outside Korea, though not likely to offer much of a threat to Japan's Toei, etc. There are still some crude edges you'd never see in a major Japanese production, but on the whole, everything is pulled off effectively. The miniature spaceships are particularly excellent, which isn't correct English, I know. But this is a movie review, not a fuckin' arithmetic test.

But despite its abundant special effects, praiseworthy battles, and magnificent costumes, we must not forget the downside: Shim Hyung Rei. I'll never know who told this fat geek he could pass himself off as an action star. Fortunately, the story is more serious than average, which prohibited him from his usual mugging, hamming and stupid antics. About half the time, he plays it serious, which, fortunately, eliminated the need for his lame facial expressions. Regardless, my Scanning Heads will need to be replaced after playing this movie.

The story would appear to be a new & improved remake of Shim Hyung Rei's sci-fi debut, **UREME #1** (see OC#15). Again, rival space aliens come to Earth. In the 'good' spaceship, are, of course, a space lady and an old wizard. The only major change is that there's

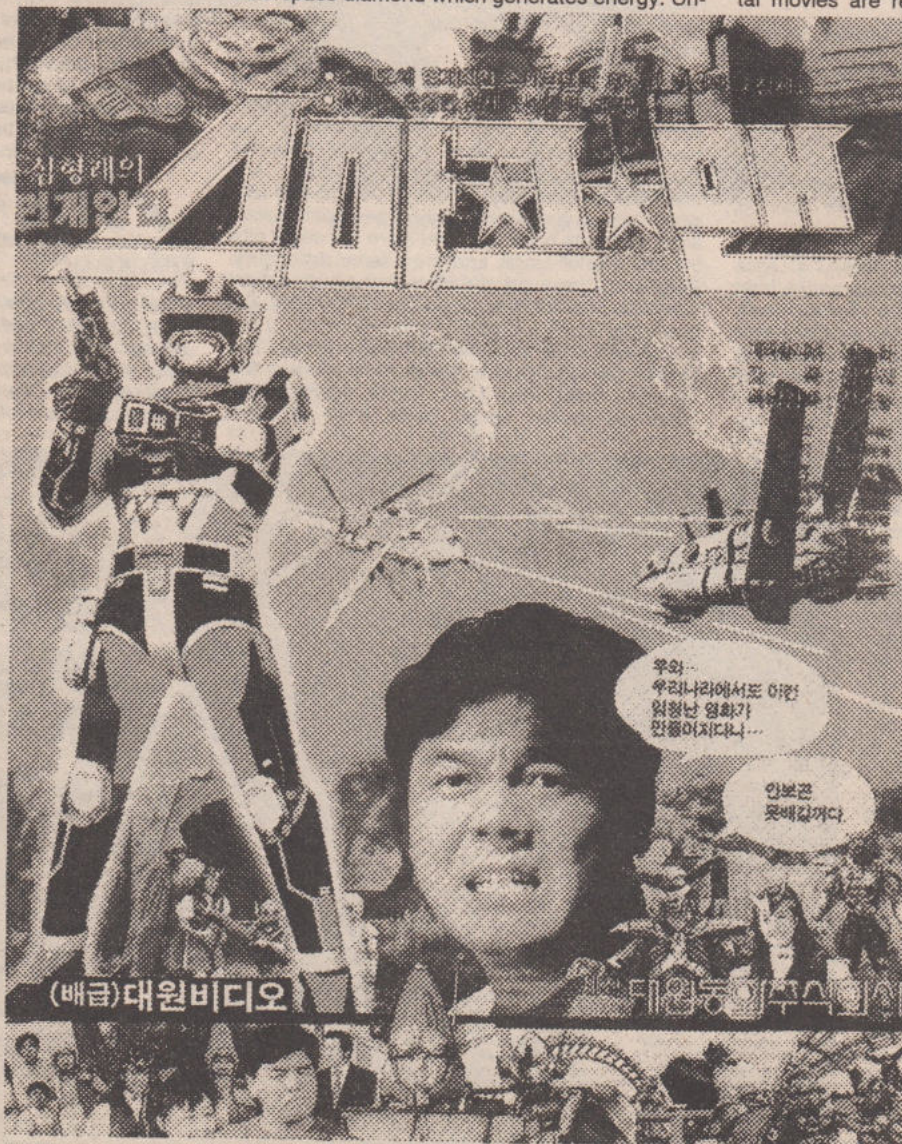


an additional hero, a silver female robot. They crashland in Korea, where earthling idiot Shim Hyung Rei again stumbles upon their battle with the invading aliens. He again some how accidentally conjures their magic, transforming into Sparkman (in **UREME #1**, he was called **Esperman**). Only this time, the transformation involves some type of outerspace diamond which generates energy. Un-

fortunately, by the time all this happens, we're nearly in the middle of the film! It takes forever for us to see Sparkman's sensational Combat Suit, the first half of the story is paced slower than a snail on ludes. There's an over abundance of Korean kiddies running around not only during the beginning, but through out the movie. Man, these oriental movies are really starting to make me hate children! I'm one person who'll never buy a NAMBLA membership card.

But once Sparkman gets his powers, the movie becomes entertaining. There are the usual superhero highlights we've all come to know and love: exploding lasers galore, acrobatic stunts, and martial arts. But goddamn it, there's too much comedy in the fights. Like when Sparkman & the pig monster attempt 'drunken style,' and later hop around like Chinese vampires. The only problem is Sparkman gets these headaches during the fights, and must change back to his human form, and take five minute breaks.

SPARKMAN breaks new grounds for its use of 'computer chart FX'. Basically, they look like animated X-rays, for when the giant robots do battle. Yes, this has the same type of mechanical giants we all called 'Shogun Warriors' in the 1970s, and 'Transformers' in the 1980s. The costumes are decent, but awkward, it's obvious the actors are having trouble just standing & walking, let alone sword-fighting! While the villainous robot is based on cartoon characters like Dunbine or Macross, Sparkman's giant counterpart is that of a mechanical samurai, and most definitely resembles Raideen, Jiraishin (from **JIRAIYA**) and Goggle Robo (**GOGGLE V**). Sparkman controls his robot, destroying the villains. Then our heroes fly back into outerspace. ***



Top right: **YONG GU & THE GOLDEN BAT**. Above: **SPARKMAN**

HONG KONG HEROES

Since 2500 B.C., China has had more mythology, folklore and myths than there are fascists at a Rush Limbaugh rally. So not only has the Chinese imagination always been imaginative, but their spirit and honor have become well developed, due to wars between factions, religions, dynasties and clans, plus invasions from Mongolia, Manchuria, Japan, and the West. So over the centuries, they perfected their literary adventures, combining imaginative fantasy, with of course, martial arts.

The martial artist was invented during one of China's many feudal periods. Novels like "Outlaws of the Marshes", "The Invincible Eight," "The Water Margin," and of course, "Journey to the West" are classic, exciting adventures. These ancient heroes and villains were further preserved in the Peking Opera, which actually involved more acrobats, dances, colorful costumes, bizarre singing and fancy swordplay than actual martial arts. With this rich cultural heritage of chivalry & adventure behind them, it's only natural that the movies of China, Taiwan, & Hong Kong would continue that inherent tradition of epic battles, the likes of which have never been matched in the films of any other country.

I've broken this column, H.K. HEROES, into four separate categories, each representing a separate decade in Chinese action films: 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. After all four decades are reviewed, I'm throwing in another Amy Yip article, plus an update (called BEAUTIES AND THE EAST) from HK, supplied by foreign correspondent Mike Leeder.

1960s:

As far as I can see, the 1960s were the actual birth of the martial arts film. The biggest hits of the 1950s would appear to have been musicals, little more than filmed operas full of singing, dancing and cheap-looking stage sets. The ever cool Ric Myers' groundbreaking book, **MARTIAL ARTS MOVIES: FROM BRUCE LEE TO THE NINJAS** (Citadel Press; 1985) mentions early 'martial arts movies' like 1920's **THIEF IN THE CAR**, 1926's **MONKEY FIGHTS GOLDEN LEOPARD**, and 1929's **BURNING OF RED LOTUS TEMPLE**. Wow! There were really kung fu films back then? Yeah, right; that's as likely as finding a Fred Rogers porno movie. Regardless, until somebody comes up with some concrete evidence (i.e. a videotape of **BURNING OF RED LOTUS TEMPLE**?), I'll assume that the first true martial arts films came out in the 1960s, like the illusive **TIGER BOY** and **TRAVEL WITH A SWORD**. Hell, it wasn't until 1962 that they started making full color musicals like **LAST WOMAN OF SHANG**, **THE KINGDOM AND THE BEAUTY**, **MAGNIFICENT CONCUBINE**, **ETERNAL LOVE**, **TEA TIME CHATTER**, **PASSION**, and 1963's **MAD ABOUT MUSIC** and **AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER**. Musicals were all the rave in HK because of the success of American movies like **THE SOUND OF MUSIC**, and ironically, it was more western influence, plus a few ideas taken from the Japanese, which hastened the long overdue arrival of the martial arts film.

James Bond movies spawned numerous Chinese imitations and spoofs, like **OPERATION MACAO** (1966), **JAMES BOND CHINESE STYLE** (1967), and **THE BRAIN STEALERS**, all three of which I'm dying to get my slimy paws on. By 1966 a favorite fan magazine ploy was a spread of the latest new spy star in a series of judo



Above: Li Li Hua of **RAPE OF THE SWORD**.

poses! It was also at this time that the influence of Japanese samurai films told HK filmmakers that historicals need as much swordplay & blood as they had songs & ballads the previous decade. The roots of the genre had grown.

Jimmy Wang Yu joined the Shaw Brothers studio in 1963, and he was the first Shaw star to have much athletic capability, other than dancing. So he and another new star, Lo Lieh got their big breaks in 1964's **TIGER BOY**. Possibly the first sword-action film, it apparently broke new grounds and set the pace for the remainder of the 1960s. Musical stars, like Yue Hua and Li Li Hua began appearing in sword/action films too.

While the Chinese spy capers are all but forgotten, the sword-heroes of the 1960s, like **THE ONEARMED SWORDSMAN**, are still remembered as classics.

江湖奇俠

TEMPLE OF RED LOTUS

Produced by Run Run Shaw in 1965., Directed by Sun Jang Hung, Starring: Wang Yu, Lo Lieh, Ivy Ling Po, Chung Ping, Fung Bo Bo, Tien Feng, Ku Feng, Pan Pan, Ng Ma

This movie is what I call a "Just fuck the bitch" movie. By that I mean our hero (Jimmy Wang Yu) continually courts his future bride. Both characters are somewhat bashful toward each other, in order to make this movie as long as possible. So it's basically yet another romantic tale of chivalry & swordplay. As such, it's pretty typical for a Shaw 1960s film. Since I happen to enjoy the Shaws' sword flicks, this movie suffices. It's an early film, made before non-Chinese knew much about kung fu, or 'gung fu' as most Chinese pronounce it. But despite frequent swordfights, this one, like most 1960s historicals, lacks the abundant action of 1970s successors like **FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH** or **TO KILL WITH INTRIGUE**, etc.

It's amazing to see how young Wang Yu looks in this one. Then there's Tien Feng, the only person ever to be born with wrinkles and a mustache! He's old even in this one, was he ever young? It's amazing, he's survived so many decades and genres; he'd later work with Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan, and made a memorable appearance in **A BETTER TOMORROW**.

My particular tape of **TEMPLE OF RED LOTUS** seems to have either an accidental, audio overdub, or a subliminal message from the dead. It only happens once or twice, and these eerie voices (not part of the film; nothing to do with it) are short and unintelligible. Does anybody else have this film? And do these mysterious voices haunt your tape too?

Kwei Wu (Wang Yu) stumbles across a robbery at Pan Lung Valley, ninja/bandits have attacked a group of swordsmen. He helps battle the masked villains, actually part of the Red Lotus Clan. Kwei Wu has been on a mission, not only to avenge his parents' murder (I guess parents have a short lifespan in the Far East), but to meet his imminent bride of the White Lotus Clan, Chien Chu (Chiang Miao). As the two of them attempt to elope (with resistance from her family's female leads), the Scarlet Maid (Ivy Ling Po) rescues good guys from bad guys!

There are a number of swordfights and throwing darts, until Kwei Wu and his bride to be (Lien Chu) finally fall in love and talk a lot. Meanwhile, the Red Lotus Clan is disguising themselves as monks, to trap females they'll take hostage. By this time, Kwei Wu & Lien Chu, against the wishes of their family, have decided to get married. But sometime before their honeymoon, they stumble across the corrupt bandits (now monks) of the Red Lotus clan. With swords a swingin' and darts a

flyin,' the two of them singlehandedly use their 'twin sword' technique to waste the villains. It ends, to the accompaniment of an old fashioned Chinese ballad, with the future husband & wife walking off into the sunset. But there was a direct sequel, **THE TWIN SWORDS**, reviewed in OC#10. In it, they eventually defeat our hero's enemies, with help from the Scarlet Maid and others. **

琴劍恩仇

SWORD AND THE LUTE

Produced by Run Run Shaw in 1966, Screenplay: Wang Wing Loong, Sound Recording: Wang Yung Hua, Song by Shen Kiang, Lyrics: Chang Chieh, Film Editing: Chiang-Hsing Loong, Asst. Dir.: Shen Kuang, Art Dir.: Chen Chi-Puey, Makeup: Fang Yuen, Directed by Siu Jang Hung, Starring: Wang Yu, Yuen Hua, Lo Lih, Ivy Ling Po, Chin Ping, Hsing Hui, Lily Ho, Wu Ma, Bobo Fung

Another sequel about the 'Twin Sword Couple,' possibly made right after **THE TWIN SWORDS**. Jimmy Wang Yu is back, as are Chin Ping, Lily Ho, Lo Lih, Wu Ma, and of course, Ivy Ling Po reprises her role as that mysterious heroine, the Scarlet Maid. Yueh Hua (aka Yuen Hua, Yuen Hwa, etc.) also appears, as do way too many others.

But lots of heroes doesn't mean lots of action; quite the opposite. It means lots of subplots, pointless conversations and eye-straining subtitles. This movie was rather a pain to watch, and is so far my least favorite film in the 'Twin Sword' series. Chang Cheh's involvement was minimal, and this is one sequel too many. Aside from its considerable boredom, its antiquity makes it seem repetitious, derivative, predictable and typical, when in fact, these definitions hit the scene the following decade. So these early (1960s) films set the pace, for better or worse.

As mumbled earlier, the sword fights are of average 1960s quality. There's rarely a shortage of a single (or double) hero hacking away at dozens of swordsmen. One can see the gradual arrival of the kung fu genre, in the quality of this swordplay. This is not '3 Musketeer' swordplay, it's definitely beginning to resemble the HK actioners of the 1970s. There are occasional high jumps & acrobats, and a couple lame karate chops (but minus the "hi-ya") reminiscent of Don Knotts' antics in **THREE'S COMPANY** and **THE GHOST & MR. CHICKEN**. The occasional kicks don't look like the work of a skilled martial artist; they're clumsy, formless and look more like the type of kick you'd see on a soccer field.

As always, the flick starts out good, with the obligatory duel; the Twin Sword Couple (Wang Yu, and Lily Ho, I think) slaughtering dozens of bad guys. The swordplay is standard, though Wang Yu again stands out as the most talented. But from there, they hopelessly confuse things by adding yet another character every minute. By the time we reach the film's middle, there are more supporting characters than there are pictures of Christ in a Catholic household.

The story is about quests for weapons: Lo Lih is after the 'Curved Sword,' the Flying Tiger Gang (villains) is after the Lute (an instrument which fires lethal darts), and Yueh Hua, injured by a Lute dart, needs some magic rock as a cure. So that's what takes up most of the story, at least I think so, but much of it takes place in the dark, and it's hard to see what the hell is going on. Needless to say, action returns, eventually, when Lo Lih, Wang Yu, Yueh Hua, and Ivy Ling Po (and several others) finally get pissed off enough to tackle the villains of Flying Tiger Castle. But villainous Ku Feng escapes, unfortunately. Worse yet, they probably made another sequel. *

盜劍

RAPE OF THE SWORD

Producer: Run Me Shaw, Lyrics & Script Boy: Wang Po-I, Film Editing: Chang Hsing Lo, Photography: Ping Hsieh Li, Starring: Li Li Hua, Li Ching, Chiao Chuang, Chen Hung Lien, Tien Feng

I wonder if Enico Moricone knows his music is all over this film's soundtrack! Were it not for the frequent stock-tunes from **A FIST FULL OF DOLLARS** and other westerns, I'd have assumed this tame melodrama to have been from the early 1960s, like around 1962. But most of **RAPE OF THE SWORD**'s stars look like the types you'd see in musicals & love stories, as their martial arts skills just don't cut it (another reason this movie seems so old fashioned). The lead actress, who I think is Li Li Hua, was in a similar 'classic', 1962's **LAST WOMAN OF SHANG**. There's no Wang Yu, no Lo Lih, so it fails as an actioner. The swordplay is crude, even for a mid-to-late 1960s film. There's one fist fight, proving that in the old days, even the Chinese didn't know how to accurately portray kung fu on the screen! The brief confrontation has a main heroine challenging four mountain bandits; it's an acrobatic combination of judo & wushu.

But its slow pace certainly does not make it a bad film! At least this one has an interesting, watchable, coherent script! I never needed to scan past its ballads either, maybe ancient Chinese folk music is starting to grow on me. The characters are well defined, and, amazingly, I found this romantic tale of chivalry to be abnormally entertaining. This is no schlocky trash film, despite the title. It may be old fashioned and traditional, full of ancient Chinese influence, but is logical and coherent enough to make sense (not too much Peking opera bullshit). If you have some interest in history & culture, check it out.

Let me get back to the music. I've always liked the songs in those old spaghetti westerns. When I was a little twerp in the 1960s and early 1970s, I was too young to venture into Chinatown theaters. So to quench my thirst for heroic, man vs. man action, I'd watch all those early Clint Eastwood movies. The music was always a high point, so naturally, it was nice to hear the same pieces in **RAPE OF THE SWORD**. Perhaps this is the main reason I like **RAPE**, it's the score! Hell, music like that can make any movie good. But other music in **RAPE** is recognizably Chinese, like a charismatic song used in **ONE ARMED SWORDSMAN** (this time used in the opening credits for **RAPE**) and plenty more films.

This classy, well written soap opera deals with the Green Frost Sword, a mighty weapon that every swordsman wants to get his paws on. Liu Niang (1960s starlet Li Li Hua) is out to retrieve the sword, stolen from her husband by traitor Han Chiu. Han Chiu now works for corrupt government officials (one is left wondering if China has ever had a non-corrupt government) like Lu Tien Hsia. Speaking of this villain, does anybody know who plays this bad guy? If you've seen this film, please let me know the actor's name! He's in most of the 1960s films I've seen, and fought Jackie on the dock in **SNAKEFIST FIGHTER**.

Regardless, Prince Lu Tien Hsia wants to marry Chiang Lung, an army general's (Tien Feng) daughter. Chiang Lung has no interest in marrying this evil man, so she rebels and learns wacky martial arts from her nanny, rebel Liu Niang (Li Hua). Again, these martial arts are a far cry from the kung fu & swordplay of Wang Yu & Bruce Lee, since this is basically a 'romantic chivalry'-type film, not a martial arts film. But the occasional impossible feats (Lu Tien Hsia stands on weak, tiny tree branches which, in reality, couldn't hold the weight of his shoes alone), high-flying leaps, flips, and

throwing coins (ninja-like precision) add to the fun.

Anyway, our two heroines get by with a little help from their friends, like a righteous Mountain Bandit called Lo Li Hu. They all clash one fateful evening, and the sword falls back into the hands of the good guys. The main villain (Lu Tien Hsia) escapes, implying there just may be a sequel. I'll keep my eyes open. That is, unless I sneeze or something. ***

1970s:

After a decade of righteous swordsmen from ancient & medieval times, the 1970s audience was ready for something new (er). The influence of Bruce Lee in **GREEN HORNET**, combined with ideas from the sword hero films and spy movies, and possibly even old Sonny Chiba TV shows & movies from Japan (Chiba was wellknown in Hong Kong long before the Americans caught on) all seemed to influence the kung fu movies of the 1970s. Each genre inspired it only a little, allowing the early kung fu movies to be an original, new idea. Swords were out, fists were in, as talented, athletic martial artists gave it their all. Many of the 1960s oldtimers were efficient at theatrical swordplay, but the 1970s showcased actors with serious skills at the martial arts, whether it be in the movies, or in the ring! 1960s oldtimers like Lo Lih, Jimmy Wang Yu, and Tien Feng continued to flourish in this new genre which introduced a whole new generation of chop sockey masters: Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Ti Lung, David Chiang, Angela Mao, Samo Hung, Fu Sheng, Yasuaki Kurata, Bruce Li, Chen Hui Min, and far too many to list, unless you're a mathematician, but if you were a mathematician, assuming such a thing exists, you probably don't have the imagination to read OC, so forget I mentioned it. The 1970s kung fu genre had several subgenres:

A. Typical low budget chopsokey schlock, usually set in the 1920s or 1930s, often featuring Japanese villains. **FIST OF FURY** and **FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH** are classic examples.

B. Continuing period films and costume dramas. No more ballads, and the sword fights and acrobats had improved considerably since the 1960s. **FIVE MASTERS OF THE DEATH** and **SEVEN BLOWS OF THE DRAGON** are examples of 1970s additions to a 1960s genre.

C. Modern 1970s setting films. These crime dramas, often featuring people like Bruce Li, are among the worst of the 1970s. The lame shirts and disco duds are forgivable, but the stories were badly written, sleazy and offer no redeeming social value whatsoever. They make great unintentional comedies though. While **AMSTERDAM CONNECTION** is the worst ever, some, like **CHINA-TOWN KID** and **AN ANGRY GUEST**, have their moments.

Regardless, as longtime OC readers already knew, the first chop sockey film was Wang Yu's **THE CHINESE BOXER** (Shaw Bros.; 1969), but it was **FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH** (Shaw Bros.; 1971) which broke grounds internationally.

天龍八將

THE INVINCIBLE EIGHT

Produced by Raymond Chow & Golden Harvest in 1970, released in 1971, released on video in 1987, Executive Producer: Leonard Ho, Based on the novel by Yi Kuang, Screenplay: Lo Ta Wei, Asst. Dir.: Yen Jung Chu, Music: Ang Fu Ling, Action Scene Directors: Han Ying Chieh & Chu Yuan Lung, Directed by Lo Wei, Starring: Chen Tien Sha, Chang Chung, Tang Ching, Tien Chun, Han Ying Chien, Hsieh Hsieh, Pai Ying, Li Kun, Mao

Ying, Miao Ker Hsiu, Samo Hung, Lam Ching Ying

A pre-Bruce Lee adventure from Golden Harvest, **THE INVINCIBLE EIGHT** became old once the 1970s became the chop sockey decade. Hell, the flick is even older now! Old fashioned dramas like this just keep getting older, with every passing second. With no kung fu movies to imitate, Raymond Chow borrows heavily from rival Run Run Shaw, just as Lo Wei unsuccessfully attempts to imitate sword-hero director Chang Cheh. In the 1960s & early 1970s, only them Shaws could make majestic period films, as this inferior ripoff proves.

The swordfights are few and far between, and some must have been choreographed by Stevie Wonder, Hellen Keller, or a cyclops with an eyepatch. Hell-damn, some of the henchmen (young Samo Hung & Lam Ching Ying in background roles) use whips, not swords! A whip is a clumsy weapon to use against a sword or a spear. Yet the 'fist fights' (and I use the term foolishly) are worse. We all know Pai Ying, Angela Mao and James Tien would later prove they can fight, but such techniques were unfashionable in these early historical dramas. So what little kung fu is shown, is basic kicks, lame blocks & karate chops, and high flying acrobats; all of which would be done far better once the chop sockey movement would go into effect about a year later.

But to be fair, my main gripe is that my tape of the movie has no English translation at all, so the whole story made as much sense to me as the correct pronunciation of quiche (which should be pronounced 'Kwih-chee!'). After all, it's not necessarily a bad film; its production values, sets, continuity, and cinematography are totally awesome, with aspects of being cool & groovy, dude. And, to be fair, the best is saved for last, the final duel is the best one in the film.

Here's the deal; the setting is ancient or medieval times- I'm not sure which, but it was a very early time, possible 7am. An evil militia lead by Pai Ying is being mean & uncool to everyone, so pretty soon, even the mystical princess (Nora Miao) rebels in favor of a group of righteous revolutionaries. Angela Mao (disguised unconvincingly

as a man, but the idiots in the film are fooled, until later when her hat is removed) is one of these 'invincible eight', as is James Tien (who fought better in **THE CHASE**). Additional familiar faces appear through out. Regardless, the villains have whipped & tortured one too many people, so the heroes finally decide to attack. The final series of battles are quite good, featuring more splattered blood than in a leper disco, and all the good guys survive.*

空手キラー

ANGELA MAO

茅瑛

アンジェラ・マオイン

(AKA Mao Ying)

D.O.B.: Sept. 20, 1950

PLACE BORN: Taipei, Taiwan

Born the third of seven in the Mao family, she enrolled at age five in Taiwan's Fu Shing Academy of ancient, traditional Chinese arts, where she lived and learned acting, singing, martial arts and other aspects of Peking's classical opera. At 12, she went on a world tour with her troupe, which included performances in Japan and America. The following year she joined the prestigious Hoi Kwan theatrical troupe.

Her movie career began in 1969 when she was discovered by director Huang Feng, of the then new Golden Harvest. She was nineteen when she signed her five year contract. Her first movie was **ANGRY RIVER** (Golden Harvest; 1970), followed by Lo Wei's **THE INVINCIBLE EIGHT** (Golden Harvest; 1970). After these and other period films, usually directed by Huang Feng, she got her first starring role in **LADY WHIRLWIND**, and the rest is history.

Her sudden mastery of Hapkido (not part of her childhood) first began during production of **ANGRY RIVER**. In the early 1970s, during the peak of her kung fu movie career, she so impressed Hapkido master Chi Han Tsai that she was awarded a her second degree black belt after only a few months of studying!

Last I heard, she retired from kung fu movies in the late 1970s and started a family or a singing career; maybe both.

Partial film list:

ANGRY RIVER (1970)
THE INVINCIBLE EIGHT (1970)
THE THUNDERBOLT (1970)
LADY KUNG FU [aka **HAPKIDO**] (1970)
LADY WHIRLWIND [aka **DEEP THRUST**] (1971)
STING OF THE DRAGON MASTERS [aka **WHEN TAE KWON DO STRIKES**] ('73)
ENTER THE DRAGON (1973)

DEADLY CHINA DOLL (197?)
THE HIMALAYANS (1974)
BACK ALLEY PRINCESS (197?)
THE FATE OF LEE KHAN (1970-73; took three years to make)
STONER (1974)
NAUGHTY NAUGHTY (1974)
RETURN OF THE TIGER (1976)

THE KARATE KILLER

Released & copyrighted by United International Pictures in 1974, Presented by Teo Bah Ahn, Producer: Yeo Ban Ahn, Photography: Albert Young, Starring: Jason Pai Pao

KARATE KILLER is the most predictable thing since the law of gravity. Another ponytail movie, with Manchus from Canton, stalking anti-Ching rebels in Hong Kong, in around 1896-1900. Hong Kong is under British rule, and our hero (Jason Pai Pao) has just returned (in a spiffy

western suit) from America, so for once, our heroes aren't against caucasians!

The movie isn't dull, and the fights suffice, so I suppose it's an average movie. But because it's TOO average (no surprises, no plot-twists), I'll give it a low rating. There are three 'but still's, deadly ponytail lacerations, and cruelty to animals. So it's a standard chop sockeyer with the traditionally poor production values; photography (using an 'Unsteady Cam'), and soundtrack suck like a black hole! My favorite scene was at the beginning, when somebody scratched the film intentionally! Some

prankster scratched out the villain's eyes, possibly in the editing room or in the theater. Again, its low score doesn't imply it's worse than average, but I'm getting selective, picky and hard-to-impress in my old age, and I've seen one two many of these kung fu/revenge farces.

Story:

Jason Pai Pao doesn't get along with Master Wong (who refused his challenge) until they inevitably unite against Manchu soldiers, desperate to rebuild their collapsing empire. Throw in a Japanese villain, and an end fight which never seems to end and you've got this movie, and thousands of others.*

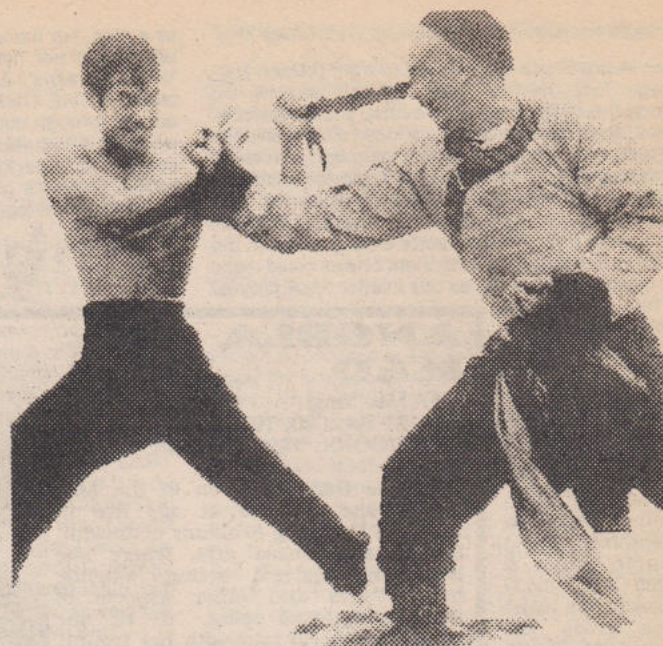
クレージーモンキー大拳闘

FEARLESS HYENA

Produced by Hsu Li Hua in 1978, Executive Director: Richard Lo, Directed by Jackie Chan, Cinematography: Chen Yung shu, Continuity:

Willie Chan, Japanese title: CRAZY MONKEY, Starring: Jackie Chan, Shih Tien, Li Kuen, Yen Si Yuan

I imagine this one was quite funny to 1970s Chinese audiences. But considering they still enjoy the naive, inept comedy of Steven Chow, I bet this movie still has them rolling on their backs. Even today, **FEARLESS HYENA** is full of amusing moments, one of Jackie's better kung fu comedies. It's also a transitional film for young Chan, as he not only starred, but directed and choreographed all the fights. The rising superstar is rising like unemployment.



Left: Nora Miao, Angela Mao, and others in *INVINCIBLE EIGHT*.

Above: Jason Pai Pao (left), takes on the *KARATE KILLER*.

Below: Jackie Chan in costume, in *FEARLESS HYENA*.

To me, looking back on it, **FEARLESS HYENA** is terribly naive; the humor gets downright stupid at times, and those ridiculous voices! The sounds are too cartoon-like, as are the thick British accents. And yet, it's one of my favorite Jackie '70s films. It's plagued by the usual curse: Excessive training scenes! Like other old Chan films and their ripoffs, he's always being taught by some old man; usually Simon Yuen, but it's James Tien this time, as the old fart. Fortunately, other scenes make up for this cliché-ridden boredom; Jackie's misadventures at a bogus kung fu school are silly and amusing-almost funny, at times!

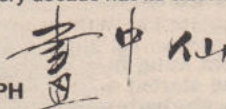
But best of all are its fights. Despite the frequent comedic tone, Jackie's superb acrobatic skills shine through. He also demonstrates nice use of a staff, and other objects at hand. His inventiveness in the use of a small bench never ceases to amaze me. These creative stunts and acrobats, often utilizing household objects are very intriguing.

You know what I really hate? Manchus! Forget gang members, comic geeks, nazis, serial killers & pro lifers. Seems the most corrupt people are them Manchus, of the Ching Dynasty, if these films are any indication. This movie shows the darkside of The Last Emperor's empire! Plenty of Chinese movies tell of corrupt Chings mercilessly killing rebels & patriots. In this case, Jackie's grandfather Chen is wanted by the Chings. Meanwhile, Jackie, against his grandfather's (we never hear what happened to Jackie's father) wishes, has become a figurehead for a martial arts school full of losers. He gets into all these goofy disguises, representing different supposed students. He takes on all the school's challengers, with silly results. Meanwhile, Jackie's grandfather is finally killed by Ching general Yen Tien Wong. So he ends his job as mascot of the false school, to upgrade his training. Another elderly patriot teaches him kung fu so he can avenge his grandfather's death. And that's exactly what he does. **

1980s:

The chop sockey kung fu movies still existed at first, but when musician/comedian Samuel Hui & producer/factor Carl Mak combined modern action and humor to make **ACES GO PLACES**, high-

tech, urban crime capers became more popular than flies in Somalia. Pretty soon, even Jackie Chan gave up his kung fu comedies, in favor of modern crime dramas. Some were basically kung fu movies in an updated setting, while others concentrated more on gunplay or gambling. But the 1980s offered its share of wild horror films too, combining decent FX, comedy, fantasy, martial arts, T&A, and ancient Chinese traditions & legends. Because of the emotional intensity of the gangster films, the action & stunts of the action films, and the sleaze & brutality of the horror fantasies, the whole world finally began to accept HK films. These epic films of the 1980s were far different than the low budget 1970s kung fu cheapies, which also had a limited wave of popularity in their time. The 1980s marked significant growth in the Chinese film industry. This is not to say that the 1980s movies are necessarily better than the oldies, since every decade has its classics and stinkers.



PICTURE OF A NYMPH

A Golden Harvest Production from 1987, in association with Boho Films Co. Ltd., Distributed by Paragon Films, Released on Video by rainbow Audio & Video Incorporation, Starring: Yuen Biao (AKA Yuen Piao), Wu Ma (AKA Ng Ma), Joey Wang (AKA Wang Tsu Hsien), Yuen Wa (Yoon Wah)

And the award for the most blatant ripoff of Tsui Hark's **A CHINESE GHOST STORY** (Cinema City; 1986) goes to this hasty, unapologetic drama from Golden Harvest. It's hard to review a film I know you've all seen, since each of you has to have seen at least one **CHINESE GHOST STORY** fantasy. This one could very well be re-titled **CHINESE GHOST STORY PART 4**. To be inspired by the trilogy is one thing, but to be an exact copy is another. I don't necessarily mean this in a bad way, since I enjoyed that trilogy. So I liked this illegitimate sequel just as much. I liked its photography, music, cinematography, characters and FX fairly well. My tape of this one has no subtitles whatsoever. However, **A CHINESE GHOST STORY** does. So all I had to do was have two TVs playing simultaneously, and read



CHINESE GHOST STORY's subtitles while watching **PICTURE OF A NYMPH**.

Since I don't know what else to write, let me write an intro to the genre, for all you dumbfucks-I mean new comers. Erotic tales of lonely female ghosts are older than the film industry itself. So escapist romantic tales like this are common novels and movies. One of the more wellknown ones was a subplot in **MR. VAMPIRE** (Golden Harvest; 1985), but it was Cinema City and Tsui Hark who carried it a step further with **A CHINESE GHOST STORY**. The vampires weren't present, but otherwise, the tale again concentrates on a foolish human's crush on a lady ghost, and its consequences. Once more, the ghost is shown as a beautiful magic woman who flies through the woods, and uses long drapes of cloth resembling a role of Charmin toilet paper.



Above: Yuen Biao in **PICTURE OF A NYMPH**.

After the success of **CHINESE GHOST STORY**, there were numerous sequels, spin-offs, spoofs, rip offs, etc. **PICTURE OF A NYMPH** is one of the many in the "romantic ghost & her Charmin, in old China" genre.

Plot-wise, we got the same basic characters as in Tsui's original groundbreaker of mystical toilet paper. Joey Wang & her Charmin return to play the same ghost as always, while Wu Ma reprises his part as an elderly wizard who practices magic in the woods, while singing and dealing with an odd family of spirits. The lone traveler is played by Yuen Biao this minute, not Leslie Cheung. Biao plays a warrior, raised by Wu Ma, who taught him the usual Taoist magic, acrobatics & swordplay. One cute gimmick is Wu Ma's tendency to bring paper birds (origami) to life. Another character, a poor scholar falls in love with that ghost, Joey Wang. With a name like Wang, who wouldn't? However, her fellow ghosts, as always, disapprove, and decide not to let the scholar squeeze the Charmin. There's another long tongue, and Yuen Wah comes as a ghost with killer (literally, not as in 'awesome, dude') pig tails, echoing the living eyebrows in Hark's **ZU, WARRIORS OF MAGIC MOUNTAIN**. Anyway, the climax, as always, is quite lively, with Wu Ma & Yuen Biao rescuing the love-struck scholar from the mystical ghosts. Magic umbrellas, strange concepts, wacky FX, explosions, flying people and other weird gimmicks abound. But the scholar seems to disappear, with the ghosts. With no subtitles, I'll assume he, Joey & Charmin escaped to some dimension where they can be together and forever wipe their asses through out eternity. **

プロテクター

威報猛探

THE PROTECTOR

Produced by Golden Harvest in 1985, Production Manager: Peter Chow, 1st Asst. Dir.: J. Boyce

Harman, Key 2nd Asst. Dir.: Andrew Yeung, Director: James Glickenhouse, Starring: Jackie Chan, Danny Aiello, Sally Yeh, Sandy Alexander, Victor Arnold, Kim Bass, Irene Brito, Jesse Cameron Glickenhouse, Al Cerullo, Roy Chiao, Richard Clarke, Moon Lee

This is Jackie Chan's worst HK film of the 1980s, no ifs, ands or buts! Speaking of butts, why does the English version have four naked women spliced in, for no logical reason? Sure, one of the four has killer hooters, but these scenes are completely out of place. You see, what we have here is a disastrous co-production between America and HK, with Americans wanting a somewhat sleazy 'adult' film, and Jackie not wanting to traumatize his young HK audience with scenes of T&A and foul language. While I normally prefer my right to look at breasts whenever I damn well please (i.e. at home, work, school, the store, church, at retirement homes, family get-togethers, etc.), in this case, the slimy English cut is far inferior to HK's more logical, entertaining print. Gratuitous nudity aside, you know the flick is in trouble at the very beginning, when a group of road warriors & midgets rob a truck! Why road warriors and midgets? What idiot's idea was this? It too is completely out of place, as this is no futuristic thriller, the remainder takes place in the 1980s. So it's a moronic, terrible film. But it is funny to hear Jackie try to speak English.

The English version and Chinese version start and end exactly the same, but there are major differences in the middle. While the basic story is still there, Sally Yeh co-stars in the Chinese dubb! She's seen working out; dancing in a gym. Why would scenes of Sally Yeh in a tight, sexy leotard be cut from the U.S. print? This makes no sense, since they went out of there way to hastily splice gratuitous T&A later on, thereby eliminating any continuity and coherency. Bill 'Super Foot' Wallace seems to have a bigger part in the Chinese version, in one scene he fights Li Hai Sheng (for HK audiences only). The fights are quite good for an American movie, but most of the best kicks and stunts are only in the HK dubb. The fights for the American version also have weak sound FX, reducing the excitement.

Jackie Chan plays Billy Wong, a New York cop sent to HK with his partner- some fat, ugly white geek with that most dreaded of speech problems: a New York accent. Even Jackie's dialogue is more intelligible. It's all entirely typical of American cop flicks, despite the HK setting. Though I wasn't paying that much attention, I gather they're going to rescue some girl from a Chinese drug smuggler called Ko (Roy Chiao). They discover a karate villain, Bennie Garuchi (Bill Wallace) is working for Ko, and encounter ridiculous antics at some massage parlor. By this time, I realized Jackie just isn't suited for U.S. crime drama roles, he's definitely not in his own element. This is a job for the lesser talents of Robert Urich, Charles Bronson or whoever.

Regardless, during the course of their search

for Ms. Shapiro (the kindapped girl), there are a few chases and shootouts, but not enough kung fu fights. How they get their info on her whereabouts all depends on which version you watch. In the English version, he gets it from some ex-mobster he meets on a ship. In the Chinese one, the info comes from Sally Yeh, which involves a brief fight in a gym. Jackie fights two of Sally's over-protective friends, and it's one of the better fights in the film. But eventually, one way or another, Jackie, Danny Aiello and Moon Lee locate Ko's drug lab in a shipping yard. The lady is rescued, and Jackie fights Bill Wallace. The battle is pretty lame in the English version, it's much better in Chinese, with better stunts and choreography. Then Jackie takes on a gang of henchmen. Though the fight is basically the same in both versions, both are photographed and edited completely differently. Different takes, different shots, different angles. He battles one henchman on a hanging platform, dangling hundreds of feet above a freight yard! But in the end, it's guns and modern technology which destroys Ko & his other villains. *

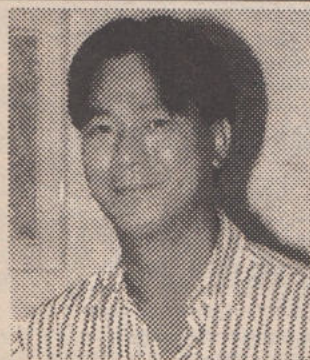
CITY ON FIRE 龍虎風雲

Produced by Cinema City in 1987, Written & Directed by Ringo Lam, Exec. Prod.: Karl Maka, Music: Teddy Robin Kwan, Action Coordinator: Joe Chi, Editor: Wong Ming Lam, Asst. Dir.: Lo Shun Chuen, Art Director: Luk Tze Fung, Costume Designer: Bruce Yu, Cinematographer: Andrew Lau, Gaffer: Wong Chi Ming, Production Manager: Catherine Lau, Starring: Chow Yun Fat, Sun Yeh, Lee Sau Yin Danny, Carrie Ng, Roy Cheung

Which of you recommended this slowpaced stinker to me? Whoever you are, your mother uses her yeast infection to bake bread, and I'll chop off your cock and use it as a straw. To think I wasted two hours of my life watching this mega boring soap opera! Not only is it dull, long & pointless, but its few short action scenes aren't worth the price of a gumball. This stars Chow Yun Fat, as directed by Ringo Lam, who'd later collaborate for an actual action film, the far superior **FULL CONTACT**. **CITY ON FIRE** was made while Chow Yun Fat was still earning his image as the suave, sharp-shooting gunslinger of John Woo's films, so its few shootouts are nothing compared to the gangster thrillers about to explode in theaters. So in this one, an under experienced Chow plays an insecure, neurotic individual. If you're expecting another Chow Yun Fat gun epic, as I was, you'll be disappointed by this talky, timid drama. There are a couple of scenes of blood though.

Plenty of other fanzines have praised this film, so **CITY ON FIRE** fans, don't cry. Again, my opinion is in the minority.

This motionless picture is a more effective sleep aid than Actifed, and has Chow as undercover cop Ko Chow, infiltrating a gang of jewel thieves led by some old 1970s villain from chop socky films. Danny Lee (**THE KILLER**, **BRUCE LEE-HIS LAST DAYS & NIGHTS**, **GOLIATHON**, **INFRAMAN**, **RED SHIELD**,



ダニー・リー

DANNY LEE 李修賢 (リー・シャウイン)

[aka Li Hsu Hsten, Le Shao In]

Born: Canton, China

Education: Graduated from HK University

Joined Shaw Brothers in 1970, made his movie debut in 1972, in **SUI KO DAN** [aka **THE WATER MARGIN & 7 BLOWS OF THE DRAGON**]

1st Starring Roll: **RIVER OF FURY** (1973)

By 1982, when his contract expired at Shaw

Bros., he'd been in nearly 50 kung fu/action films. He was one of HK's top action stars of the 1970s. After the Shaws, he mainly appeared in detective films at his own production company, Magnum Films. He won best actor award for Golden Horse in 1984's **THE LAW WITH TWO FACES**. Additional films:

THE SAVAGE FIVE (1975) - **INFRAMAN** (1976) - **BRUCE LEE, HIS LAST DAYS** (1976) - **GOLIATHON** (1977) - **MARK OF THE WOLF** (1986) - **A BETTER TOMORROW** (1986) - **JUST HEROES** (1987) - **ELEGY OF LOVE AND REVENGE** (1987) - **THE KILLER** (1989) - **THANK YOU SIR** (1990) - **RED SHIELD** (1991)

Chow
Yuen
Fat
in
**CITY
ON
FIRE.**



etc.) is a member of this group of criminals too. In between dull conversations with the thieves, Chow has stupid antics with his bitchy, impatient girlfriend who demands they get married. But Chow is affiliated with his uncle, Sgt. Lau Kwong (Sun Yueh of **PEDICAB DRIVER**), who lost his job to the zombie from **ESCAPE FROM CORAL COVE**. This new police chief is sending his C.I.D. agents after Ko Chow, thinking he really is a thief, resulting in the anti-climactic shootout. The cops shoot Chow dead, along with most of the real thieves. Danny Lee survives, but gets arrested. 1/2

1990s:

Being so early in the decade, I don't know exactly what will be the 'big thing' in the 1990s. As mentioned in previous issues, the current 1990s cinematic trend in HK would appear to be a return to period films, especially anything involving legendary folk hero Huang Fei Hung (AKA Wong Fei Hung, and other spellings). For example, a recent double-bill I saw was **ROYAL SCOUNDREL II** (1992) and **IRON MONKEY** (1993). **ROYAL SCOUNDREL II** (*) is only a little better than the first, with Steven Chow doing less lame comedy and more drama this time. There are a couple decent laughs, like men vomiting every time they see an ugly woman (a man in disguise). There are numerous confrontations, but no actual fights. Just endless acrobats, FX, suspension wires and other impossible feats. With all these outlandish antics, they might as well make it an all-out fantasy; throw in some dragons, hopping vampires or cloud-flying monkeys. There's none of this, so the endless feats come off as phoney in this ultra-typical melodrama.

This costume drama has Steven Chow as Wilson Bond (odd for a Chinese name, but it's in the subtitles), a Royal Scoundrel who fools around with the princess (Yau Suk Ching from **RAPED BY AN ANGEL**) and later a magical rebel (Lin Ching Hsia). Basically a romantic adventure, it deals with various government officials, rival sects of revolutionaries, a cameo by Sandra Ng, magical kung fu, potions & poisons, and how to lose one's virginity, which may be of interest to many of you who still read comics and go to conventions, proving there's still hope.

Far superior was its co-feature, **IRON MONKEY** (**1/2). This is at least the 2nd movie about this Chinese folk hero, the other being Chen Kuan Tai's mid-70s movie of the same name (see OC#10, page 18). Both **IRON MONKEYS** tell of our heroic ex-ShaoLin monk's crusade against government oppression. In this new 1993 remake and/or sequel, Iron Monkey is portrayed as a ninja-like, mysterious, masked folk hero, sort of a Chinese Robin Hood. Predictably, a young Huang Fei Hung (played by a little kid) appears too, as does his father, one of the legendary Ten Tigers of Kwan Tung.

So **IRON MONKEY** 1993 is a fictional team

up of three of China's factual folk heroes! Donnie Yuen stars, so the fights are abnormally good for a 1990s 'ponytail film.' Sure, there are plenty of typical wire feats and stupid stunts, but these dudes actually fight for once! A joint production between Raymond Chow's Golden Harvest, plus Tsui Hark's Film Workshop, it combines old & new genres; reaching a good balance. Amazingly, it bombed in HK, unlike inferior competition, like the many **ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA** films. Were more period films like **IRON MONKEY**, I wouldn't consider the kung fu movie dead, killed by **ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA**.

But moving right along, a more recent trip to Chinatown offered a significant change of pace. The double-bill in question, both featuring Jackie Chan, made me feel like I was in the 1980s again! Both are modern, urban crime thrillers of 1993; **CRIME STORY** (*) and **PROJECT S** (**). **CRIME STORY** is yet another Jackie starrer with him as a lone cop out for justice. Partially based on a true story, it's a long, confusing, dull, badly written piece of shit, in my, and only my opinion. I just couldn't figure it out, except that Chan is after kidnapers, and suspicious of a cop (Kent Cheng) gone bad. Its few fights are short, few and far between, yet there are interesting stunts and acrobats. Old man Chan is taking it easy, compared to those Earth shattering stunts he did in 1980s films. I think he's still good at regular kung fu/action fights, and I'd rather see him do that (like something out of **PROJECT S**, **OUTLAW BROTHERS**, **DRAGON FROM RUSSIA**, **ROBOTRIX**, etc.), than talk his way through a horribly written, boring script, as in **CRIME STORY**. Regular kicks and punches still pack 'em in at the box office, so I hope he'll maintain relatively safe fights, since none of us should expect him to attempt the same dangerous acts as in his 1980s films. Regardless, **CRIME STORY** has its moments, but its continuity sucks (i.e. Near the end: one minute, a guy is apparently drowned, and in the next scene, he's okay!).

PROJECT S, however, offers its share of fights, shootouts, and chases! Basically a sequel to Jackie's **POLICE STORY 3: THE SUPER COP**, it highlights Michelle Kahn/Yeoh, again playing that same Mainland Chinese soldier. Jackie only makes a cameo; and in drag (going under cover). It's fairly funny, but out of place, hastily spliced into this film for some reason known only to acid heads.

Ti Wei is the villain, and there are guest appearances by Eric Tsang, Tung Pui, Yukari Oshima, and the guy from **STORY OF RICKY** (anybody know his name?) and **STONEAGE WARRIORS**. But never mind, enough of my vague ramblings about recent films I saw in Chinatown. Now for some actual movie reviews.

城市獵人 CITY HUNTER

Produced by Golden Harvest in 1992, Executive Producer: Raymond Chow, Starring Jackie Chan, Joey Wang, Richard Norton, Yau Suk Ching (AKA Cingny Yau)

Anybody unfortunate enough to know me knows of my distaste for comic books; and that I feel most comic book geeks are so fat & ugly they couldn't lay a Thai mail-order bride with a hairlip. Yet my scoffing at comics has never damaged my love of HK movies based on Japanese manga! That combination of Japanese adventure, and Chinese cinema has created such thrillers as **SEVEN DRAGON PEARLS**, **STORY OF RICKY**, **DRAGON FROM RUSSIA**, and now, Jackie Chan's most wild & crazy comedy since **HALF A LOAF OF KUNG FU**!

Some feel this flick is stupid, but many of these guys have never seen a film by Steven Chow or Shim Hyung Rei, so they're in no position to judge stupidity. Yet **CITY HUNTER**, being Hong Kongese, has it's quota of naive gags to meet; stupidity is as big a part of HK cinema as is kung fu. But on the whole, I don't consider the entire movie to be 100% stupid, just 50% stupid. The rest is pretty funny, but it's the fast-pace, liveliness and lightheartedness which makes it so gosh-darn-heck-fuck entertaining! There are no dull moments, my mind rarely wandered off.

So **CITY HUNTER** is my favorite Jackie movie since the old days of **DRAGONS FOREVER** & **POLICE STORY 2**. Those days are gone, forcing Jackie to experiment with new ways to keep audiences coming back to the theater. Unlike **CRIME STORY**, I think this movie has the right idea. It's goofy, silly, fun and it helps to have so many gorgeous babes in it! Joey Wang and last issue's 'cover girl' Yau Suk Ching (Chingny Lau) are indeed appetizing to look & drool at, but anybody know the name of the goddess in the pink spandex pants?! I would like to make a comment on how sexy she is, but that would be considered sexist. That's why I won't say something crude like, "She's got legs so gorgeous I wish mine were inbetween hers," "I'd like to visit her stabbin' cabin," or "I bet if she has a baby, the kid will have stretch marks on his mouth", since I know the importance of being politically correct.

Set in Japan, like the comic, detective Ryu Saeba (Jackie Chan) is searching for runaway teenager Kiyoko. The skateboard chase which follows is hilariously far-fetched! Anyway, Ryu pursues her onto a huge cruise-ship and floating casino. Also on board are evil non-Asians (of course) lead by Richard Norton, and Joey Wang's character; a girl he raised who now has a crush on him. Yau Suk Ching and another curvaceous agent are hoping to nab the terrorist/thieves (Norton & his boys), while sto-away Jackie gets into plenty of trouble. With the help of a card-throwing gambler, all our heroes unite to battle the bad guys. During the final series of confrontations, there's plenty of explosions, acrobats and gunplay. Two of the more witty struggles involve Jackie mimicking Bruce Lee in **GAME OF DEATH**, and one where he hallucinates and imagines the kung fu characters in some video game ("Streetfighter 2", I think it's called, according to rival fanzines who've reviewed the film. My love of videogames rivals my love of comix & crab lice) are coming to life, and that he and his opponent are characters from it too. Regardless, after much camp and clowning around, Jackie confronts Richard Norton! The result is more camp and clowning around! But there are decent kicks and stunts, and a high speed battle of tonfas, though again emphasizing the humor. Norton suffers defeat when he steps on his own time-bomb. ***

東方三俠 THE HEROIC TRIO

Presented by Paka Hill Film Production Co. in 1992, Dir.: Johnny To, Released on Video by Tai Seng Video Marketing, Art Dir.: Bruce Yu, Setting Designer: Raymond Chan, Cinematographer: Poon Hang Sang, Tom Lau, Music: William Hu, Screenplay: Sandy Shaw, Edited by Kam Wah Prod. Co., Asst. Dir.: Lo Kim Wah, Raymond Chang, Prod. Superv.: Isa Chang, Exec. Prod.: Brian Yip, Cora Cheng, Prod. Designed by Catherine Hun, Chan Pui Wah, Produced & Martial arts Dir.: Chin Siu Tung, Starring: Anita Mui, Michelle Yeoh, Maggie Cheung, Damian Lau, Anthony Wong, James Pak

Like **SAVIOR OF THE SOUL**, this is one of the many modern fantasies of the 1990s. These

post-Tsui Hark farces are one of the many new trends in HK film. Simply make a plot as painfully simple as possible, so as to make room for lots of bizarre gimmicks, far-fetched acts, wild & crazy special effects and any other over-the-top whims which may come to mind. **THE HEROIC TRIO**, like many others, is a fast-paced combination of fantasy, action, adventure, horror and gorgeous babes. While not comparable to 1987's **THE SEVENTH CURSE** (a classic, inspirational film), it manages to be consistently amusing.

Three highlights are its stars: Anita Mui, Maggie Cheung, and Michelle Yeoh. All three are top HK superstars in their own right, & quite talented. Of the three, Cheung probably has the most acting experience, though her role is that of a dingy bimbo with an I.Q. of Dan Quayle (she has it weekends, he has it Monday through Friday). Michelle Yeoh, who has more aliases than a spy, is more of an action star, while Anita Mui is best known for her golden voice. It must have cost the producers a bundle to get these three egos all to share space in this film!

Here's a story of super heroines in urban HK. How these three ladies got their magic powers is anyone's guess; that's just the way things are, in HK! If we're to question this, we should question why animals like Bugs Bunny, Mickey Mouse, Ronald Reagan, and Ren & Stimpy can speak English.

This Heroic Trio is helping police to battle a cult of subterranean warriors, apparently descended from some ancient empire of wizards. At least, that's what I think is going on! But there's bad continuity & a messy story; it's hard to tell just who's side Maggie Cheung & Michelle Kahn/Yeoh are on. Michelle's character makes no sense at all. She seems to love her computer wiz boyfriend, yet is easily provoked to pulling a knife on him. Fortunately, Anita Mui's character is more well-defined, a masked superhero, HK's Wonder Woman.

As our three heroines battle each other and thwart kidnappings, it occurs to me that things must weigh less in China. Nobody respects the law of gravity! I hope this lack of respect doesn't hurt gravity's feelings! Anyway, rival factions & betrayals don't stop the cave dwelling villains from kidnapping plenty of babies. The villains (as are the heroes, I think) are after some 'invisible robe.' Why? What's the point of an invisible robe? Would you go out to pick up the newspaper, wearing only an invisible robe? Regardless, the Heroic Trio attacks the enemy cave, giving us fights, flips, guns, motorcycles, explosions, swordplay, and numerous flying projectiles, including: Needles,

Michelle KHAN 楊紫瓊

[aka Yeoh Chu Kheng, To Shi Kai, Michelle Yeoh, Michelle Kheng, Michelle King, Michelle Young & many others]

Born: Malaysia, 1964

A Few of Her Films:

MAGNIFICENT WARRIORS (1986)
POLICE STORY 3: THE SUPER COP (1992)
PROJECT S (1993)
HEROIC TRIO (1993)
THE WONDER 7 (1993)

darts, flying guillotines, and boomerangs galore. At one point, it's revealed that two heroines have the same boomerang tattoo, for whatever reason (long lost sisters, I assume). Once they kill hench-villain Kau (Anthony Wong), they battle the clown-like emperor. The climax involves a Terminator-like skele-zombie, allowing even more thrills! ***

天龍之子

YOUNG WISELY 1

Presented by Tai Sheng Video in 1993, Starring: David Wu, Pai Pao

My knowledge of fictional adventurer Wisely is as limited as my abilities to understand Chinese and breathe underwater. I gather the 'Wisely' genre to be a series of novels in China, about which a number of movies have been made. Can anyone confirm or add to my suspicions? Golden Harvest cast Chen Hsu Ho (aka Chin Suit Ho) in 1987's **THE SEVENTH CURSE** (****), and Sam Hui got to play the title hero in **LEGEND OF WISELY** (Cinema City; 1986). While those two

are possibly two of my favorite films, this third one is not.

I have no problem with the shot-on-video format of this TV movie, possibly chapter #1 to some TV show or miniseries. My regret is there are no goddamn subtitles! What a shame, this could have proven interesting. There are plenty of conversations, so I used my scan button at least three times. I'm afraid I can only recommend this bizarre farce to fans of **THE SEVENTH CURSE**, **LEGEND OF WISELY**, and other Wisely films (if there are any). Also, diehard fans of '90s FX/actioners (more post-Tsui Hark stuff) will get a kick out of its FX, feats and gimmicks. Now that I think about it, you superhero freaks may like it too, because of its costumes, action and wild script. Just don't try to understand any of it!

But on the whole, the language barrier is my only complaint against **YOUNG WISELY**. It is enjoyable, but in a story like this, understanding is a must. If translated, it could be 2, possibly 3 star material. There are a few decent fights, and FX galore! Though taped on video, these special effects are especially effective. There are explosions, visuals, and computer animation & morphing.

David Wu, no stranger to movies (**ROBOTRIX**) and TV (he played young Bruce Lee in some soap opera about the legendary jeet kune do guy), plays young Wisely in this strange tale. He spends lots of time in school, church, and on the Baseball field. These scenes are apparently satirical, spoofing something I know nothing about. The scenes are entirely comedic, like baseball games which routinely involve explosions, acrobats, magic, and other weird stuff. Is this a satire of **A CHINESE GHOST STORY**? Or maybe a salute to them old, surreal Japanese cartoons about sports (i.e. **AKA KICHI NO 11**, aka **SOCCER BOY**, which stretched Soccer into a near-serious, life & death struggle, bordering near the supernatural). I don't know what the hell this is all about, nor do I understand why the story recklessly cuts back & forth from clowning around on campus, to his father, Wisely Sr., going on adventures in a desert, painfully ripping off "Indiana Jones," etc.

David Wu's young friend gains electric, magical powers, it seems he's possessed by a gang of futuristic warriors. Fortunately, our heroes are rescued by some old wizard who wears a store-bought Ninja Turtle shell. *1/2

HK UPDATE: BEAUTIES & THE EAST

by Mike Leeder

Sorry to have to break this to you, Damon, but our dearly beloved Amy Yip, alias "Borbar, Queen of boobs" is, sniffe sniffe, engaged to be married to a very wealthy HK doctor and it seems like she may be about to retire from the entertainment industry! Some people say that it could be because audiences got tired of Ms. Yip teasing us by never showing so much as a nipple, when there are now large amounts of HK actresses more than willing to

grin and bear it on the road to reach superstardom.

These actresses include former child star, the lovely Loletta Li from **DRAGON FROM RUSSIA**, who has bared all in two Category 3 films (including **CRAZY LOVE**) and two full color glossy books on herself before launching her singing career. And the equally lovely Ellen Chan, Sami Hui's secretary in **ACES GO PLACES 5** who bared all in the Cat. 3 thriller **FATAL LOVE** and a glossy book of erotic photographs about herself, shot in Spain before,

yes, launching her singing career! The lovely Ewong Yung Hong whose film career had not been too outstanding until she bared all in **MY PALE LOVER** and the thriller **DON'T STOP MY CRAZY LOVE FOR YOU**, which has her redoing the ending of **STRAW DOGS** on crazed assailant Simon Yam, before moving on to more wholesome roles in films like **GUNS OF THE DRAGON** and **DRUNKEN MASTER 2**. What's kind of ironic is that Ms. Yung was less than kind

with her comments to several other actresses who bared all before her!

Meanwhile, cute Chingny Yau (who was on the cover of the previous OC) looks incredibly gorgeous on the poster for **NAKED KILLERS**, where she appears naked in the arms of equally delectable Carrie Ng while covering herself with a machine gun! She's in its follow up **RAPED BY AN ANGEL** (reviewed last issue), but looked sexier to me in **CITY HUNTER**, **ROYAL TRAMP**, and **TRICKY BRAINS**.

Twin lovelies from Beijing, Pauline Chan (**EROTIC GHOST STORY 3**, **ESCAPE FROM BROTHEL**, **DEVIL OF RAPE**) and Isabella Chow (**SEX AND ZEN**) turn up together in the sex spoof **GIRLS FROM CHINA**, before moving into mainstream roles such as in **LOVER OF THE SWINDLER** for Isabella and **FLYING DAGGER**

for Pauline.

But the woman who started the trend is the one and only, buxom and beautiful Yip Yuk Ching, AKA Veronica Yip (no relation to Amy). After a less than impressive TV career, she shed her clothes for **TAKE ME**, **HIDDEN DESIRE** and **PRETTY WOMAN** (not the American movie with Julia Roberts) for a share of profits and rapidly followed them up with semi-nude roles in **GIGOLLO & WHORE 2**, with the only woman for whom I would sell my soul, Rosamund Kwan (**ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA**, **CASH ON DELIVERY**), who keeps her clothes on but is incredibly delectable. Veronica Yip, like others, would later release her sexy album, featuring songs with lyrics like: "Your lips must talk to me of love", "Your heart must give me warmth," "But your legs can do all the naughty stuff!" She became an almost instant mainstream star but has kept up her sexy image by appearing

unclothed again in the thriller **RETRIBUTION SIGHT UNSEEN**, but has certainly proved that in addition to being a babe and a half, she is a very good actress in films like **THREE SUMMERS**, **EAGLE SHOOTING HEROES**, and **ROOF WITH A VIEW**.

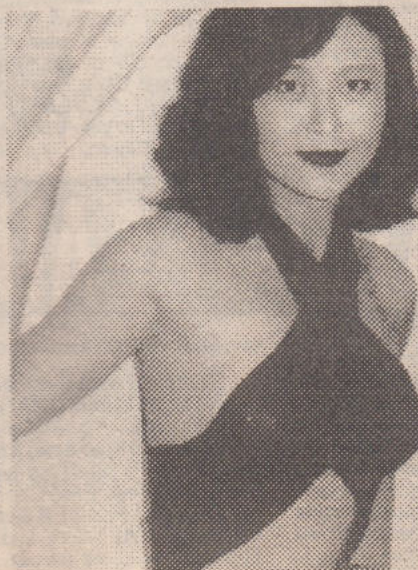
So wipe away those tears, Damon and the rest of you! Amy Yip may be leaving her overly sexy image behind, but there are more than enough beautiful actresses ready to take her place!

[DF here. It's rare to have material in OC written by somebody other than glorious me, but OC will include more articles by Mike Leeder and other people, in future issues. To close this edition of HK HEROES, OC's final article on the now retired (?) Amy Yip! The following article was translated from KALEIDOSCOPE #305 (1993), a Chinese newsmagazine.]



Right:
**GIGOLLO
AND THE
WHORE II.**
Veronica
Yip, Simon
Yam,
Rosamund
Kwan.

Left &
below:
Veronica
Yip.



SKIN FLICK QUEEN TAKING OVER THE PRECIOUS ISLAND

HONG KONG'S SEXY STAR YIP CHI MEI STARTS HER DEBUT SHOW IN TAIWAN

Written by Chiang Yue-e

UNLIMITED SPENDING ON CLOTHES MAKING

HK's sexy star Amy Yip came to Taiwan for a 50-day tour of a hot show. Although it's halfway through now, the show is still welcomed with full participation, and of course the boss of the show is very happy.

This is the first time Amy Yip came to Taiwan. Her managers are film producer Wu Dun and his wife. They spent 3 million dollars alone just on making sets of sexy clothes for the show. Unfortunately, those clothes were destroyed by fire in Taizhong Lianmei Singing Hall in May, which upset Amy because she suddenly had nothing to wear. Luckily, Taipei is a city full of gold, one can achieve any goal with money. Wu Dun spent another several million dollars urging a designer to make new clothes with a strict time limit, and the new clothes were made just in time for her show at Sun City in Taipei. Some of the newly made clothes are even more sexy than those burned ones, said by people who've seen them, they were stunning.

Yip is the queen of sexy films in Hong Kong. Her breasts are so big that people are astonished at them. That's the main reason she came to Taiwan. Although her singing isn't bad, it's nothing when compared to her boobs, and of course she has to show her body to satisfy the viewer's curiosity. When she was performing in Taizhong singing hall, the place was full of people. All tickets were sold out. This indicates how fascinating she is, even Taiwan's own King of Show can't compare to her.

Rumor says that this time Amy Yip came to Taiwan, her net income is about 8 digits. Other expenses like transportation, meal, and clothing are taken care of by her managers. In other words, Wu Dun takes full responsibility of her show. Aside from her pay, other expenses cost several tens of millions. The price is so high that only people like Wu Dun can afford her.

Having been in Taiwan for more than a month now, this is the first time Amy Yip has a show in Taiwan. However, she has been to Las Vegas and Atlanta in the United States, Canada, and big cities in Mainland China, so she is quite an expert at shows.

When asked why she never went to Taiwan before, she said she heard Taiwan 'brothers' are very hard, especially to artists. They're known to extort money from people until they're broke. She was afraid so she never came to Taiwan.

This time Wu Dun is her manager, so she has strong backing; so she came fearlessly. As expected, nothing happened this past month, whether those Taiwan 'brothers' are being especially nice to her, or if it's because Wu Dun is very powerful, she doesn't know.

QUICK-WITTED ON QUESTION ANSWER-

ING

Aside from her supercilious tits, Amy Yip also has plenty of brains. Not only is she good with money, like other HK artists, she can also respond to tough questions quickly. No matter if it's on or off stage, no matter how embarrassing the questions are, her responses are just perfect, no trace of any flaw. For instance, when she was taping for "Turning Happily" at a Taiwan TV station, some viewer asked her: "You have such big knockers, did you ever try to sleep prone?" She rolled her eyes and said, "I never did." Another viewer asked her: "Have you ever lost your balance when you exercise?" She answered: "I always wear tight clothes to decrease obstruction."

Because of her well built body, Yip became the queen of third level HK movies, nobody can top her. When a viewer asked whether it's real when she's filming love-making scenes, she answered in a seductive tone: "Of course it's fake." She immediately turned to the program hostess Fang fang fang, and said: "You should know this." Fang hurriedly shook her hands and said: "No no, I never film third level movies." Everyone laughed, that's the dramatic effect.

UNMATCHABLE HUGE B'S QUEEN

Rumor has it that Taiwan actor Chen Song Yong loves to watch third level movies. Fang asked her especially about how she feels about Chen Song Yong. She said when she first saw Chen, she thought he's a man with strong character. His head is round, gives people a secure feeling. She hoped she has a chance to film a movie with him. Later when Chen heard that Yip wanted to do a film with him, he joked: "She said my head was round. We can name our movie THREE CIRCLES."

Amy Yip's daily life in Taiwan, taken care of by Wu Dun and his wife, is very prosaic. Aside from rehearsing and singing on stage, she has no spare time to do other activities. Others had invited her to Taiwan in the past, but she refused. This time she agreed to come, saved by Wu Dun's face. However, Wu Dun said that Yip was nice to him because he always pays fees without a moment's hesitation, does what he says, and delivers what he promises. That's why artists trust him, nothing special.

People often wonder how Yip got those huge hooters. They have their own suspicions because most Chinese believe food is the only source of nourishment for the body. However, Yip says that she likes to eat vegetables and fish, never meat. If so, she's definitely endowed by nature.

Amy Yip





Since I was an infertile egg, I've taken to Japanese sci-fi the way Michael Jackson takes to eight-year old boys' rectums. Oops! I used the term 'sci-fi' instead of its serious, proper term, science fiction. A while back, some sci-fi geek (and there are lots of 'em) was irritated at my usage of this convenient abbreviation. He pointed out that the term is used only by those who don't take science fiction seriously. Damn right I don't take it seriously! I've got a life; reviewing these films is just my hobby, not an obsession! But SCI-FI fans are a very vocal group (unfortunately), and have frequently asked me why there's no more Markalite magazine. Markalite, for those of you fortunate enough not to know, was the definitive magazine on Japanese sci-fi. Due to problems with their publisher (or rather, former publisher), the odds of there ever being another Markalite are as likely as finding a cup of Capuccino in a biker bar. However, they claim to be getting a new publisher, so a new magazine is on the way. For info on this illusive publication, contact its editor, Bob Johnson. Write to him: Bob Johnson, P.O. Box 6846, Oakland, CA 94603. I've nothing against Markalite or those involved in it, but am tired of receiving hate mail intended for them. I only wrote one measly article for them, so I hope everyone will realize I'm not in any way involved in their chaotic distribution problems.

You diehard Godzilla freaks should also write to: Dan Reed, c/o The Kaiju Review, 301 East 64th St., Suite 5F, New York, NY 10021. Send Dan Reed ten bucks for a subscription to his informative little newsletter. It's ultra-technical, nearly fanatical

in its coverage of Godzilla, and tends to concentrate more on dolls than the movies themselves. But it should satisfy the most obsessed Godzillians, narrow-minded people who constantly hound me for not including enough Japanese monsters in OC. The Kaiju Review is data mad, and should satisfy the most addicted, shut-in Godzilla lovers, not to mention people who still have enough time & money to buy lots of toys. So write to Bob Johnson and Dan Reed now, as I won't repeat this again. I won't give out any address more than once.

There! Now that I've got that off my chest, I can freely continue the diversity that OC is known for. So welcome to "Terror Yaki," OC's continuing column on Japan's science fiction, monsters, and horror. Though Godzilla movies have always been part of OC, I think it's important to remember that there's more to Japantasy than the Big G. There are other Toho classics (i.e. **WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS**, reviewed in this issue), Gamera movies, cartoons, and even a small fandom for some of Japan's trendy newer sci-fi films, like **TETSUO THE IRON MAN**, **ZIPANG**, **ZEIRAM**, **AKIRA**, and the 'new age' in Godzilla films. This edition of OC includes not only **WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS**, & **GODZILLA VS. MEGALON**, but a gross cartoon called **UROTUKIDOJI**; **LEGEND OF THE OVERFIEND #3: FINAL INFERNO**.

Back to Godzilla. As a Godzilla fan my whole life, it's hard not to talk about the old guy. Though this issue is reviewing 1973's **GODZILLA VS. MEGALON**, keep in mind I am indeed up to date

on Godzilla's newer films, but haven't the time nor will to review them. So here are some capsule commentaries on the more recent ones . . . **GODZILLA 1985** (1984; *): Dull, a waste of time. My least favorite in the whole series. **GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE** (1989; **): Somewhat interesting. **GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDRAH** (1991; ***): Definitely my favorite of the newer films. A fascinating story, interesting characters and awesome looking monsters. **GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA** (1992; **1/2): It maintained my interest, even though parts of it were pretty stupid. **GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA** (1993): Available photos make it look good, although the new Rodan looks like a doll from the **JURASSIC PARK** hype. Mechagodzilla looks more like Barney than the original Mechagodzilla. Godzilla's new son looks like a malformed Minya. But I'm typing this up in October, 1993, and the film isn't out yet. By the time you've read this, you'll all have seen the flick.

フランケンシュタインの怪獣 サンダ対ガイラ

WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS

Produced by Toho in 1966, Released to America in 1970 by Benedict Pictures, Story: Reuben Bercovitch, Photography: Hajime Koizumi, Art Dir.: Takeo Kita, Lighting: Toshio Takashima, Music: Akira Ifukube, Special Effects: Eiji Tsuburaya, Editor: Fred Knudtson, Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Dir.: Inoshiro Honda, Production Supervisor: S. Richard Krown, Exec. Prod.: Henry G. Saperstien & Reuben Bercovitch, Starring: Russ Tamblyn, Kumi Mizuno, Kenji Sahara, Jun Tazaki, Hisaya Ito, Nadao Kirino, Nobuo Nakamura, Haruo Nakajima, Ren Yamamoto, Kipp Hamilton

Honestly, is there anyone among you who didn't grow up on the likes of this movie? **WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS** was one of the first Japanese sci-fi films which converted me, as a child. These old Toho classics were the thing in my childhood, we'd all have all night slumber parties to watch late night showings of these films, we'd study the TV GUIDE like a bible to find this stuff. Yet today, I assume nobody under 16 has heard of these movies. If they're still shown on TV, it's kept well hidden. To me, the newer monsters, like Freddy Krueger, Predator, etc., just don't cut it. They lack the imaginativity & personality of the Gargantuas, Godzilla, etc.

To do this article, I watched the original Japanese version (on laser disk) back-to-back with the American TV release version. Both versions are a lot of fun, with Eiji Tsuburaya's outstanding special effects, Inoshiro Honda's flawless directing, and Akira Ifukube's stunning score. There are differences between the two versions though. For example, American actor Russ Tamblyn is not as prominent in the movie's beginning, in the Japanese version. The first ten minutes are edited completely different in both versions. The music, though all Ifukube, is different in both versions. I think the English version actually has a wiser selection, as the tunes fit the scene. The Japanese version selected too much uppity, 'military march' stuff.

The differences are more major than editing & music; storywise, they're two different movies. The Japanese dub is obviously a sequel to **FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD** (Toho; 1965), reviewed in OC a couple years ago. 'Frankenstein' is clearly muttered in the Japanese version, through out the film. Hell, both versions start off with one of the Gargantuas battling the same octopus who appeared at the end of certain rare prints of **FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE**

WORLD. I gather that the two gargantuas, called Thunder and Gaira in Japanese, are radio-active hybrids of Frankenstein, perhaps clones. In the English adaptation, it's never explained what the fuck a 'gargantua' is, it's never defined, leading me to assume they're an extinct species of ape; like Big Foot, Yeti, John Travolta, etc. One slip up, left in the American version, mentions a hand in a laboratory, actually the same hand as in **FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD**. Ironically, this scene of Tamblin mentioning the hand doesn't appear in the Japanese version, which is supposedly the sequel! So much for continuity. Other flaws include a matte in the airport scene; the gargantua is behind real buildings. So we don't see his lower half, it's covered by an airport structure. It has holes & windows, showing the sky! The accidental illusion implies the gargantua has no lower half. This airport scene is better in the English version, as we see the dress (?) he spits out after having eaten a lady.

Before going into the plot, I thought I should praise Eiji Tsuburaya's superb special effects for the millionth time. The costumes of these two ape-like giants are very realistic, as are all the miniatures. The sets are so convincing that were it not for the appearance of these two frightening humanoids, they could pass for an actual street in Tokyo. The military's classic assault on the Green Gargantua is great enough that it would later be spliced into at least a couple other movies, meant to be other monsters dodging the lasers. **WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS** is proof that old Japanese sci-fi films aren't the cheap B movies that so many lame critics & assholes make them out to be. The American TV print isn't in widescreen, so much of the detail is shamefully missing. Check out the Japanese laser disk if possible, it even features rare previews in Japanese & English, and a couple outtakes.

The opening scene of an octopus attacking a crew of smugglers is magnificent, thanks to a beautifully designed prop, a huge red-eyed octopus. After the Green Gargantua scares off the octopus, there's an effective attack on the crew. Later, Kumi Mizuno reprises her role as assistant to an American professor, only this time, it's Russ Tamblin, not Nick Adams (who was elsewhere, busy thinking of a way to off himself). Kumi & Russ can't figure out why the gargantua, who they once knew (it escaped from the lab), is suddenly swimming under water, and munching on the local fishermen. It also attacks singer Kipp Hamilton. Who, just who told this bitch she could sing? Not a bad looker, but she should have taken the stage as a stripper and not try to exercise that terrifying screech, "The woooooooooooooooooooo, get stuck in my throat." Hey, chick, I got somethin' for your throat, that is, if you swallow.

Anyway, it's later revealed that the hungry green one is not the same as the friendly brown one they raised. After a failed military attempt to kill the evil green one, there's some interesting dialogue. Russ Tamblin tries to explain the relation-

ship of the two gargantuas and says, "He might have tore off some flesh on a rock and that flesh made it to the sea." When I was a kid, that line made no sense to me. I pictured it like this: There's some flesh, it's on a rock. How it got there, I know not. But the Brown Gargantua saw this flesh, grabbed it, tore it off the rock and threw it in the ocean. But later I realized what Tamblin meant, just as I came to realize what another of his hilarious lines meant: "Brother against brother, huh? Sounds like some countries I know. Maybe



WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS
Bottom left: Eiji Tsuburaya (far right)
directs FX in a behind the scenes shot.



this time the nonviolent one will win. Heh-heh."

Regardless, the military claims they want to destroy both gargantuas, yet during the climactic battle, no lasers or guns are hitting the brown one, so I guess they had a change of heart. The two brothers are battling each other now, smashing cities in the process. The brown one, who saved the green one's life earlier, hit his brother with a tree, because of his eating habits. The struggle leads them to the sea, where bombs are dropped around them, activating an underwater volcano which eliminates both. ****

ウロツキドジ

**UROTOTSUKIDOJI ("Super Spider Kids")-
LEGEND OF THE OVERFIEND #3: FINAL
INFERNO**

Original Story: Toshio Maeda, Planning: Hideki Takayama, Hiromi Chiba, Yasuto Yamaki, Screenplay: Noboru Aikawa, Music: Masamichi Amano, Character Design: Akihiko Yamashita, Dan Kongoji, Monster Design: Masami Kosone, Animation: Dan Kongoji, Shiro Kasami, Art Dir.: Shigeru Ikeda, Dir. of Photography: Nobuyuki Sugaya, Photography: Shigeo Kohyama, Susumu Yamakawa, Producer: Yasuto Yamaki, Dir.: Hideki Takayama, Copyright 1989 Toshio Maeda/West Cape Corporation, English Version's Executive Producer: John O'donnell, A release of 'Anime 18', of Central Park Media Corporation, Distributed by Penthouse Video

So this is what the cartoon geeks are beating off to? This movie is the first example of Japanese 'erotic' animation I ever sat through. You all know my attitude against the lame shut-ins who have a steady diet of this junk, but after watching this bizarre tale, I realized the whole production, for whatever reason, was consistently interesting. I was rarely bored, which I sure as hell can't say about **AKIRA**. The sex scenes are just as explicit as any real XXX porn film, proving they did their homework. It's all quite convincing, it's easy to forget that the characters on the screen are mere drawings, as the art and animation is quite magnificent. However, the sex scenes go on a little too long (showing every conceivable position, in graphic detail), which gets in the way of an otherwise interesting (kind of) story. I'm relieved to say these scenes didn't turn me on, I still prefer three-dimensional females.

There's also quite a lot of bloodshed and explicit gore. This is rather surprising, as I picked up this tape at a big chain store not unlike Blockbuster. If it's true that there's a censorship craze against horror films, once them fanatical censors discover cartoons like this, they'll have a field day. Believe me, **UROTOTSUKIDOJI** makes

NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET look like **MR. ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD**. While my interest in Japanimation died when **STAR BLAZERS** forever corrupted the genre in the 1970s, I do admire films with blood & guts, as it takes guts to make these perverted films. Speaking of perverts, creator Toshio Maeda (who founded the original comic) ought to join **NAMBLA** and have his membership card shoved up his ass, but he'd probably like it.

My main complaint isn't the fact that it's animated, nor is it because it's disgusting & distasteful. It's that the whole damn thing is so confusing. I couldn't find chapters 1 or 2 (not that I looked real hard; you see, I've got a life), so I just grabbed #3 at random. Needless to say, I couldn't figure out what the hell was going on, as the following synopsis proves.

Once every 3000 years, a huge evil called the Overfiend appears; why I don't know. There are three separate dimensions: The Human Realm

(ours, I assume), The Demon Realm, and the ManBeast Realm. The Humans get on well enough with the ManBeasts so that a ManBeast called Amano Jyuko (who's part cat) can wander freely in the Human Realm, and nobody notices his whiskers and funny eyes. He also has super-powers. But as for them damn Demons, they're nasty; anytime they come to the Human Realm, all hell breaks loose, they rape & pillage. But what all three worlds have in common is a fear and hatred for the immortal god of evil, the Overfiend.

Amano (the 'Cat Beast') meets two college students: Tatsuto and his girlfriend Akemi. Unknown to them, they inherently possess the imminent Overfiend. So the two of them do the old tuna twist, and Akemi's unborn child is the up and coming Overfiend! The goal of the Overfiend is to unite all three realms together, knowing the Demons, Manbeasts and Humans will battle among themselves. If that's not enough, the embryo within Akemi takes possession of its parents, turning daddy Tatsuto into a huge, destructive monster, who eventually slaughters all the humans, demons and manbeasts, except for our hero Amano. He's not much of a hero though, he's nearly killed and fails to rescue any of his friends.

The story ends with the villain winning, and the whole world being destroyed, to make way for the birth of the Overfiend. There are additional chapters, so this scatterbrained story continues, unfortunately.*

ゴジラ対メガロ

GODZILLA VS. MEGALON

Produced by Toho Motion Picture Co. in 1973, in Association with Toho Eizo, Executive Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Dr.: Jun Fukuda, Screenplay: Shinichi Sekizawa & Jun Fukuda, Photography: Yuzuru Aizawa, Music: Richira Minabe, Special Effects: Noboru Tsuburaya, Original Japanese title: GOJIRA TAI MEGALON, German title: KING KONG DAMONEN AUS DEM WELTALL, French title: GODZILLA 1990, Starring: Katsuhiko Sasaki, Hiroyuki Kawase, Yutaka Hayashi, Robert Dunham, Kotaro Tomita, Haruo Nakajima

After 20 years of defending this underrated fantasy, **GODZILLA VS. MEGALON** is finally showing signs of wear & tear. By that I mean I finally watched it and was disappointed. **GODZILLA VS. MEGALON** is indeed a kiddie film, but when I first saw it during its successful American theatrical release, I was most definitely a kiddie. Naturally, I took to it like Joan Collins takes to sperm, and grew up loving **GODZILLA VS. MEGALON**. But in the 1970s, there was a predictable plague of assembly-line fanzines about Toho movies, the fandom was similar to the current plague of fanzines on John Woo & Tsui Hark. The 1970s fanzines like *Japanese Giants* and *Japanese Fantasy Film Journal* all seemed to agree that **GODZILLA VS. MEGALON** was the worst of the Godzilla movies, despite the utter childishness of **GODZILLA'S REVENGE**, and the fucked up American editing on **GODZILLA**

KING OF THE MONSTERS and KING KONG VS. GODZILLA. Man, it irritated the hell out of me to read all the unjust attacks on **GODZILLA VS. MEGALON**, seeing as me and my friends loved this action packed addition to the Godzilla series.

By the late 1970s, I realized who it was that hated **MEGALON**. It was the most narrow-minded group of oldtimers, though a very vocal group. They wanted repetition, endless imitations of **GODZILLA VS. THE THING**. A major factor is that they're not superhero fans. Those of us heavily into Ultraman, Kamen Rider, Kikaider and other earlier Japanese TV heroes could relate to the excitement of **MEGALON**. **MEGALON** was inspired by **RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE**, an exciting Toho TV series reviewed in OC many moons ago. So **MEGALON** annoyed the monster fans, but

irritating, but a couple of his lines are unintelligible. What does he say when he wakes up in the box? "Where's Jaykavin?" That's what it sounds like to me. He yells out "May and "You-ah" when he grabs the bad guy's leg, just before getting a knee in the nards.

There are noticeable continuity problems too, caused largely by lame-ass editing. The scene where Yutaka Hayashi shakes Jet Jaguar's hand is missing something, and I still can't get over the ending where the guys are obviously standing there, waiting for the director to yell 'action.'

This is one film I'd definitely like to see uncut, possibly in Japanese. The 1970s theatrical prints had a lot of footage missing from the versions you can buy from Walgreen's & K Mart for two, sometimes three bucks. Where's the blood? The brutal fist fights? The T&A pin-ups hung up behind the truckers? I haven't seen any of this footage since 1976, and only barely remember it.

As much as I hate to admit it, the monster battles, though entertaining, are pretty stupid. For once I agree with the other old farts, that the antics get too comical. Godzilla bounces around like a 20 year prelude to **BARNEY**, while Gigan and Megalon look like they're attempting square-dancing. Even Jet Jaguar, who moves a little more serious, could have learned something from the Ultra Brothers, or Zone Fighter. He lacks the classic superhero poses, martial arts and powers of his TV counterparts. His costume is good, but not with those lame sneakers.

One hilarious fact, according to August Ragone, is that some European version of this movie is actually called **BEYOND THE BORDERS OF REALITY!**

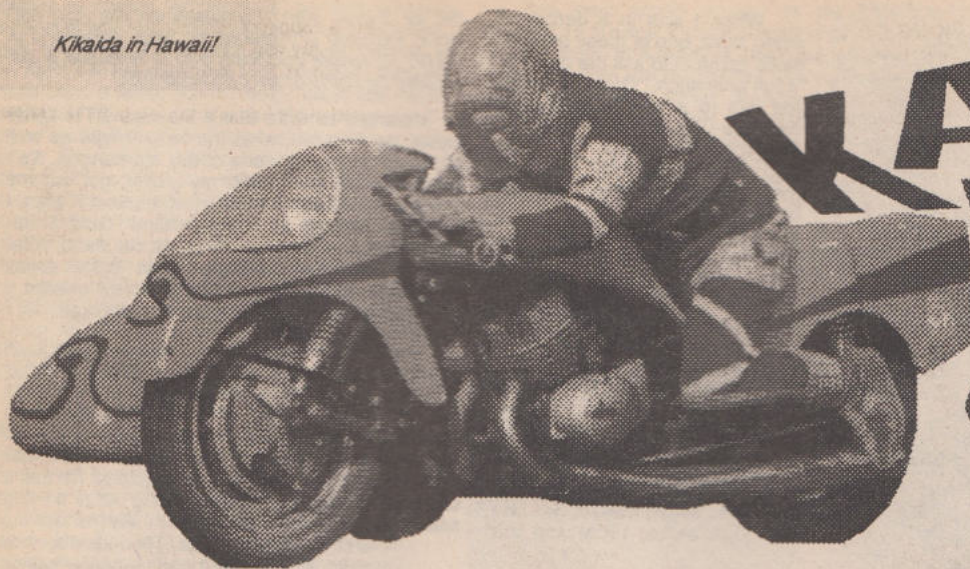
A badly dubbed Robert Dunham plays the leader of Seatopia, a subterranean nation, related to the original inhabitants of Easter Island. The set isn't bad for a low budget film, featuring a silver statue not unlike those really on Easter Island. Seatopia's maskot, an overgrown insect called Megalon, is sent to harass mankind, because of nuclear tests which have annoyed the Seatopians. Strangely, nothing is said of Megalon's origin, except that it protects Seatopia. So a couple of Seatopian agents kidnap, I mean robot-robot the robot Jet Jaguar, invented by Goro Ibuki (Katsuhiko Sasaki), who is Japanese, as you can tell by his name. Jet Jaguar is re-programmed to guide Megalon to all these different places he can destroy. Meanwhile, another Seatopian agent tries to take Goro & his younger brother (Hiroyuki Kawase) to Seatopia, but is rescued by their friend (Yutaka Hayashi), a race car driver. The two Seatopian agents are eventually killed by accident, and Jet Jaguar takes control of his own life- I mean, his own existence. He reprograms his size, to get really, really big! 50 meters to be exact! He and Megalon battle it out, until outerspace villain Gigan shows his ugly beak. Just in the nick of time, Godzilla arrives (Jet Jaguar asked for his help earlier in the flick) and saves the day. The battle is amusing, but at one point, there's a banjo song, sounding like reject music from **HEE HAW**.***1/2

The soundtrack is still a problem, no ifs, ands, butts, or buttheads. Richira Minabe's music is too comical, but fits in with the film, itself a comedy. The Jet Jaguar theme, like when the heroic robot walks down the stairs, is cool. But what bitch dubbed in that kid's voice? Not only does it sound



GODZILLA VS. MEGALON

Kikaida in Hawaii!



Back! By unpopular demand! **KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE** has returned to OC! Yet again I remind you 'Kaizo Ningen' means 'mysterious human' in Japanese, and that the phrase is common on Japanese TV shows about superheroes. Speaking of superheroes, it looks like the 1990s Kamen Riders are stuck in made-for-video, feature length movies, unlike the more complete TV shows of the 1970s and '80s. 1993's Kamen Rider movie was the rarely seen **KAMEN RIDER ZETO**, a major improvement over the previous **SHIN KAMEN RIDER PROLOGUE**, reviewed in this issue. 1994's edition to the Kamen Rider legacy is the movie **KAMEN RIDER J**.

But 1993 also offered the long overdue team up of two of the world's greatest, most famous superheroes: Kamen Rider and Ultraman!!! The special edition videotape, **ULTRAMAN VS. KAMEN RIDER** turned out to be a documentary; clips of both heroes in action, and interviews with the staffs & actors who brought these two famous characters to life. Regrettably, the team up only lasted about ten minutes, and as a dream sequence. Superhero creators Noboru Tsuburaya and Shotaro Ishimori are interviewed, and then somebody asks, in Japanese of course: "What would it be like if Kamen Rider met Ultraman?" Then we see the fictional meeting; Kamen Rider grows giant (for once and I hope only once), and helps Ultraman battle a marauding monster. Too bad it weren't a genuine, feature length sci-fi story, it could have been the tag team match for all eternity! But since both legendary heroes are from rival companies, nothing that ingenious is likely.

Yet, as mentioned last issue, Ultraman is back in action! Fortunately, Ultraman Great, of the Australian fiasco **ULTRAMAN: TOWARD THE FUTURE**, won't show his face again (unless maybe as part of a team up with the other Ultra Brothers). Better yet, the new Ultraman, called Ultraman Powered, is making his debut in the new American series, **ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO**. By the time you read this, the series may well be airing in your area. I must say, from the looks of available photos, the hero & monsters look better than ever! The monsters are back, from TBS's original 1966 series, but new and improved. Kane Kosugi (Sho Kosugi's son) is the new Ultraman, and Harrison Page (from **SLEDGE HAMMER!**) stars as the army leader! In other Ultra news, **ULTRASEVEN** (TBS; 1967) is finally airing in America, dubbed in English. All I can say is, it's about fucking time. Why them assholes waited so long to release it is anyone's guess, my guess is complete and utter stupidity on the parts of the American releasers. But the scheduling & publicity

*Ultraman Powered, the hero in
ULTRAMAN - THE ULTIMATE HERO.*



is chaotic, the dubbing is wacky, and the episodes are unjustly edited. More on Ultraseven's adventures next issue. For more info on Ultraman fandom, write to: Ultracom, Inc., c/o QuestClub, 12440 Moorpark St. Suite 150, Studio City, CA 91604.

Japanese TV in 1993 offered three live action superhero programs: **DAI RANGER**, **GRIDMAN**, and **JAN PERSON**. **DAI RANGER** (**) was the latest Sentai (superhero team), airing the same time in Japan, as its 'prequel' (**ZYU RANGERS**; 1992) aired in America as **MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS**. **DAI RANGER** continues the stagnant tradition of five heroes, their weapons and robots battling alien invaders. There are only a few minor changes, like

large subtitles covering individual episodes, in the middle of a fight; officially announcing a major duel between two rivals. This gets annoying, they're stating the bloody obvious, and graphics should stay at the beginning, during opening credits. Each episode now has a slightly different opening credits, as they've individualized them; showing specific clips of that particular episode. **DAI RANGER** also appears to explore new grounds for once, by adding social statements on society's ills. One episode dealt with the problem of child abuse. The plots tend to be more complex and hard to follow (unless you speak fluent Japanese), but otherwise, it's no different than **FIVEMAN**, **MASKMAN**, **DYNAMAN**, **POWER RANGERS**, **CHANGEMAN**, **BIOMAN**, **ZYU RANGERS**, **DENZIMAN**, and all these other generic, cliché-ridden Sentais.

Slightly more interesting is **JAN PERSON** (**1/2), which actually falls into my definition of a Robo Hero, so it's reviewed elsewhere. Both programs aired on TV-Asahi. But worst of all, as attacked a couple issues ago, was **GRIDMAN** (Tsuburaya; 1992). Shot on video (not film), the main flaw is the excessive use of annoying kiddies. Brats are as common in Japanese superhero TV shows as guns in a high school, but **GRIDMAN** really over did it; not only are these irritating twerps the main characters, but have MUCH more screen time than Gridman himself! Gridman appears to be part of some video game, he's computer generated, battling monsters on what looks like a high-tech Nintendo TV screen. Although the destructive monsters also remain on the screen, their destruction somehow leaks out, by means of a modem, sending signals through telephone lines. This way, the digital monsters can contaminate Tokyo's water supplies, unleash criminals, and cause all sorts of real life havoc, without leaving their electronic domain! Gridman, also confined to a TV set, must destroy the monster, with his post-Ultraman fighting tactics, lasers, robotic accessories, and futuristic weapons & vehicles. Gridman & the monsters are well designed (what do you expect from a Tsuburaya series?), and the battles are very good. Yet they're ruined by constant shots of the children pressing buttons and giving commands! These ungodly cuts and interruptions tarnish what could be a decent battle. So I think **GRIDMAN** is as fun as a hooker with a chipped tooth, rivaling **KYODINE** as Japan's worst live action superhero series.

While here in America, the success of **POWER RANGERS** has finally made all these dumbshits aware that Japanese superheroes can be fun and profitable. Aside from **ULTRASE-**



When I was in a Japanese video store, one of these pathetic slobos came in to ask the clerk for 'adult animation.' The clerk referred him to a section on violent cartoons like **AKIRA** and the **DEVILMAN** remake. The geek said: "No, uhh, well, umm, I mean, erotic animation," pausing bashfully to look around and make sure nobody was listening, "animation where they show [gulp] EVERYTHING!" As he wiped his greasy, sweaty palms on his beer belly, I headed for the exit, concerned I'd break out in laughter or technicolor yawns. But enough on the fanboys of anime, and on to my next Japanime topic: 1993's Americanization of **SPEED RACER**!

I still like the original Japanese series **MACH GO GO GO** (Tatsunoko; 1965), but this

64, as *'Eighto Man,'* Broadcast on the TBS network, released to America in 1965, consisting of B&W, 30 minute episodes, and re-released & distributed by Trans Atlantic Video in 1990

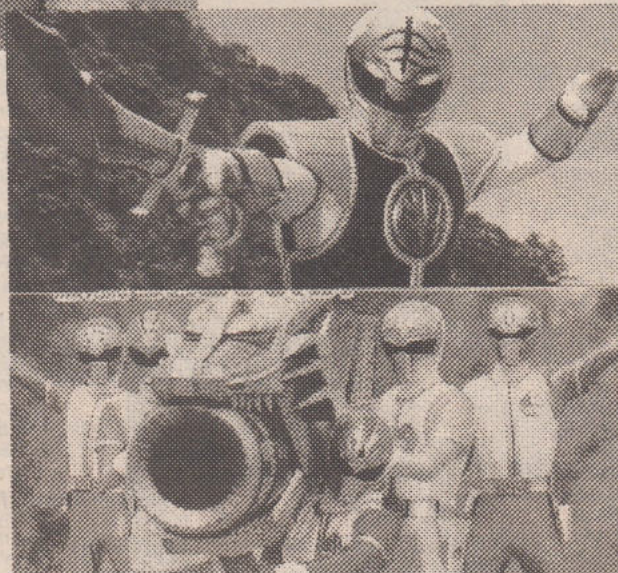
I wanted to write about the new **8TH MAN** movie, so I figured, what the hell, I might as well watch an original episode of this old cartoon. So I concealed my gun under my jacket, got out my mace and ventured into deepest, darkest K Mart. I found an episode apparently called "Gold Shrinker," and stood in line at the check out stand. After hearing customers & employees alike speak languages from countries I never knew existed, I coughed up two whole bucks for my new tape.

Watching the opening credits brought back memories of my childhood, when I watched this show in the 1960s. Ironically, the opening credits are all I remembered, and that was American animation, though looking pretty much the same as the Japanese drawings. Actually, I shouldn't call them 'credits', as there are no graphics. It's just a silly sequence of a dinosaur coming out of a flying saucer half his size, and then 8th Man wraps the creature in its own tail. The music sounds painfully old fashioned & conservative. Like some kind of military chorus, which seemed outdated even in 1965! Otherwise, I have no memory of the show in the 1960s.

My low rating for this episode is largely because I'm not really into cartoons. But I'm curious as to how little kids today, raised on Ninja Turtles, Captain Planet, X-Men, etc., would react to this show if it were ever re-released. As a semi-literate adult with an almost average I.Q., **8TH MAN** came off as too campy, tacky and cheesie to me. But would little kids notice these flaws? Anybody out there know how current twerps and brats react to older 'classics' like **8TH MAN**? In this age of so-called 'sophisticated' cartoons like **BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD** and **THE SIMPSONS**, is there room for long lost cartoons?

This particular episode starts with 8th Man recalling his meeting with 'Gold Trigger and the Numbers Gang.' The remainder of the story is apparently a flashback. The best thing about this epi-

Top: **ULTRASEVEN** - Middle: **DAI RANGER** - Bottom: **GRIDMAN**



VEN's awkward timeslot on TNT, and the upcoming **ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO** mentioned a few paragraphs ago, **KIKAIDA** is finally being re-broadcast in Hawaii, with English subtitles (more on that next issue too). **GRIDMAN** will come to America as **POWER BOY**, now featuring footage of Mathew Lawrence in place of the original Japanese actor. Somehow, I can't imagine this one actually being worse than the original Japanese version. Already, there are newspaper articles on it, trying desperately to make it seem all American, in fact, its domestic distributor is called All American! Pretty fucking ridiculous if you ask me. But nobody asked me. Meanwhile, the original pioneers of superhero deceit, Saban Entertainment appears to be screwing around with either **SPIELVAN** or **METALDER** next. They'll no doubt hack whichever series to pieces, try to remove any hint of Japanese origin, and apparently call it **CYBERTRON** (which, coincidentally, is also the name of a superhero in a video I made a year ago). We can also 'look forward' to another season of **POWER RANGERS**, which I assume will actually be 1993's **DAI RANGER**, now under the knife.

In the Japanese cartoon department, did any of you lame animation freaks sit through 1993's **GOUZAURA**? Yet another 'anime robo' travesty, along the lines of **DUNBINE**, **MACROSS**, **VOLTRON**, **YUUSHA RAIDEEN**, **ROBOTECH**, and all that other one-dimensional stuff. **GOUZAURA**, from what I've seen, was quite childish when compared to the good old days of **MAZINGA** and **RAIDEEN**. Oh well, at least it doesn't try to be one of them trendy, pretentious new 'adult' cartoons! Speaking of which, did you know that the dorks who are so into anime and manga are collecting (get this) 'erotic Japanese comics!?' These guys just get more pathetic all the time. It's bad enough that these overweight, unfashionable, badly groomed couch potatoes can't get girlfriends and must beat off to photos. But to whack off to 'adult' comic books? Getting turned on by a drawing? That's the ultimate escape from reality.

new remake sucks like an industrial strength vacuum cleaner! Trixy, a blond? The only one who looks like he did in the original was Chim Chim, and Pops bears a slight resemblance. Speed & Spridal are virtually unrecognizable, but Racer X, no matter the decade, still comes off as a cool character. Some of the stories are remotely interesting (i.e. spoofs of **TERMINATOR** and **JURASSIC PARK**), but my hatred for remakes prevents me from enjoying this new version of the original classic. And they made a *new* theme song?! The original 1960s song was classic! They had the audacity to make some whole new 'updated' song! But as for other old 1960s cartoons gaining 1990s remakes, this column starts off with a look at **8TH MAN**, new and old.

エイトマン
TOBOR, THE 8TH MAN

Shown in Japan from 7/11/63-12/24/



sode is its campy, unintentional comedy. There's Japanese writing all over, like signs and newspapers. In one scene, a night watchman fumbles in the dark, see's a Japanese sign and says, "Making those signs oriental doesn't help." Later, the narrator says: "They pass the authentic oriental sign." I never realized the word 'oriental' seemed so outdated. Oh well, it was commonly used when I started OC, so the title stays! Back to the corny dialogue; it's all very descriptive and exact, obviously meant for little kids and morons, not to mention little morons. 8th Man's voice must have been a specific influence when Gary Owens did the voice of Powdered Toast Man on **REN & STIMPY**. With its tacky dubbing and crude art & animation, **8TH MAN** seems like a parody of itself. Regardless, it's remotely entertaining, and I'll take **8TH MAN** over **DIRTY PAIR** any day.

Plotwise, as mentioned earlier, 8th Man is after Gold Trigger and his henchmen; the Numbers Gang. No mention of Saucerlip, 8th Man's arch enemy in other episodes. The story starts off rather cheesie, full of 'oriental' signs as villains steal golden buddha statues. Mr. Tobor (aka 8th Man) wonders how such large, heavy statues could be so easily carried away. So our hero infiltrates enemy base and discovers Gold Fingers' 'quick shrink' gun. The device can reduce or enlarge gold statues. 8th Man also rescues his two young friends, Skip & Lillie (captured by the villains early on). So this is done, and after a few close calls, the villains are apprehended, with help from Inspector Fumble Thumbs.*

警視庁

8マン

8番目の刑事
FOR ALL LONELY NIGHTS: 8 MAN

Produced by Rim Publishing Co. & Act Films, Dir.: Mitsunori Miyazaki, Chief Producer: Hiroshi Yamamoto, Starring: Kai Shishido, Jo Shishido, Daisuke Shima

With a title like that, and an opening subtitle which reads, "One day, 8 Man is in Some place in Tokyo," I knew I was in for a real stinker. Aside from the fact that this scene is set at night, the line lead me to assume 8 Man already existed, yet he's not actually conjured until at least ten minutes into the film. So already there were signs of a pathetic movie. **FOR ALL LONELY NIGHTS: 8 MAN**, unfortunately, yet again reminds me how much I hate remakes. Especially when they suck as badly as this one! It doesn't seem too faithful to the cartoon, so right there it fails as an 8 Man story. Worse yet, it fails as a sci-fi hero tale in general, which I was of the mistaken impression were suppose to be fun and exciting. I shouldn't have expected this to be fast paced & lively; after all, it's a recent Japanese movie. Japanese movies have sucked like an industrial strength vacuum cleaner for over ten years, and just keep getting worse. After this, they can only start to get better, I hope.

To begin with, like **SHIN KAMEN RIDER PROROGU**, it's a rather mature superhero movie, not of interest to kiddies or action fans. It's dead serious, pretentious, as boring as watching paint dry in slow motion, and the whole fiasco amounts to little more than a lame love story, thinly disguised as a superhero farce. Better fun to be had cleaning all the toilets in a crack house, using your tongue.

Getting into more specific complaints, I've nothing against its cinematography, photography, or FX (which are seldom seen). But the acting is poor, and the music!?! Over and over, we gotta listen to some dorky Nip trying to sing love songs in English. The music is sappy, and his accent reduces whatever romantic impact we're suppose to feel.

The hero would appear to be Detective Atsuma, of Azuma Private Investigation. He gets gunned down by a mobster one night, causing the obligatory "We can rebuild him. We can make him better than he was; better, stronger, faster." So he becomes the robot 8 Man, who runs real fast. That is, when he's not romancing his main squeeze Sachiko. Once or twice, we actually see the 8 Man costume. The costume is okay, but we rarely see it, amid romance, endless dialogue, and more ballads than **THE SOUND OF MUSIC**. Like the whole movie, our hero is flawed. His eyesight blacks out, interfering with his love life. Eventually, he seeks revenge against those gangsters who killed him after the opening credits. There's a shootout or two, and then 8 Man confronts his most powerful



RAINBOWMAN

enemy; a high powered warrior who also runs really fast. The duel takes place in an open field of cardboard crosses, meant to be a cemetery. At first they run around like the Road Runner & Wiley Coyote, but later fly and set fires. 8 Man wins, Sachiko and the magic villain die. The final battle is worth watching only if you avoid the rest of this god awful, miserable motion picture- that is, I mean, motionless picture.

愛の戦士レインボーマン

RAINBOWMAN, WARRIOR OF LOVE

["Ai no Senshi Rainbowman"] Produced by Toho Co. Ltd., Broadcast on TV Asahi from 10/6/72-9/28/73, 52 episodes, Creator: Yasunori Kawachi, Writer: Tsunehisa Ito, Directed by Ken Yamada, Music: Jun Kitahara, Starring: Kunishita Mizutani & Akihiko Hirata

Critiquing a series I've only seen one episode of makes as much sense as a Trojan rubber at an all-lesbian party, but in this case, I have no choice. The only episode of **RAINBOWMAN** I've seen is the final episode, which may not be representative of the whole series. **RAINBOWMAN** is one of those obscure, forgotten programs which has become so hard to track down.

The episode I've got does feature a couple imaginative FX, but otherwise, is rather low budget. Available photos imply the other episodes are equally cheap, as some of the monster masks make those in **SPECTREMAN** look like million dollar props. I think this was the first Toho superhero series shown on TV Asahi, and this early in the genre, perhaps neither side was willing to invest a lot of yen.

The over all story would appear to be about some geeky wrestler called Takeshi Yamato (Kunihiisa Mizutani), no relation to the Takeshi Yamato of **ULTRAMAN 80**. Takeshi's wrestling tactics are no match for the sinister plots of criminal mastermind Mr. K, played by longtime Toho veteran Akihiko Hirata. To combat Mr. K and his strange menagerie of villains, Takeshi learns the magic of Indian mysticism. So some old guru or yogi called Daiba Data teaches our young wrestler how to become the genie-like superhero, Rainbowman. Rainbowman's powers include the usual swordplay, lasers and flying, but also, he can change into six different superheroes, though one at a time, I assume. Each represents a different element and/or environment. Their names are: Dash 1, Dash 2, and Dashes 3, 4, 5, & 6.

Regrettably, the final episode (my one & only) lacks these other forms of Rainbowman. Regardless, it starts off with its opening credits, featuring a slick theme song and interesting images of our heroes. Animated photos of these guys flying up from a rainbow. Sadly, the episode itself isn't as good as its opening song. The previous episode had our wrestling genie captured, so this one starts with him tied to a cross, facing Mr. K's firing squad. He has flashbacks about deceased friends and then his master's ghost releases him, and kills the squad of soldiers, using lightning.

The episode has at least a couple fights, as our hero goes around killing off all of Mr. K's followers. Unfortunately, none of these battles are especially good. One duel has him stab some witch who was trying to steal his blood. This fight is a little gorier than average, it's not often you get to see a hero stab a woman to death! In between fights, there's a quick shot of a missile launcher, actually stock footage from **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS**.

Rainbowman's climactic duel with a squad of Mr. K's soldiers could have been good, had they shown the whole thing. Instead, there are constant cuts to some people at an airport! I'd much rather watch a superhero battle a platoon of green berets, than people getting on an airplane. If Rainbowman ever killed Mr. K, I missed it. But I'll be extra generous and give this series a high rating. This episode is average, but I assume other episodes are more well written. They have to be!

真・仮面ライダー 700-7 序章

Toei; 1991, Producers: Tsuji Osamu & Satoshi Kubo, Executive Producer: Koji Murakami, Music: Ryudo Uzaki, Action Coordinators: Osamu Kameda (Ken Ono Yukai) and Kazuyoshi Yamada (Japan Action Club), Special Effects: Nobuo Yajima, Starring: Mr. Ishikawa

I see the Japanese still haven't realized they rarely make good movies. Somebody over there still likes them, apparently. The only person who'd enjoy this terrible, made-for-video-only movie are those unfamiliar with the other Kamen Riders. It's a lame remake, a bastardization & disgrace to the Kamen Rider genre! What the fuck is the point of this out-of-place flick? An excuse to show a Kamen Rider movie with lots of gore? The first 'adult' Kamen Rider movie? I suppose it's one of these ideas, since it sure as hell doesn't fit in with **KAMEN RIDER** (1971), **KAMEN RIDER V3** (1972), **FRANKEN-STEINS KUNG FU MONSTER**, or any other superior Kamen Rider production! This one is way out there.

But they could have made this a worthwhile sci-fi adventure if only they'd have eliminated usage of names like Kamen Rider and Masked Rider. On its own, as an ordinary thriller, it does suffice. The special effects are quite good, as are the cinematography and suspense. But it falls flat on its face if you try to pass it off as a Kamen Rider adventure, or expect anything even remotely exciting as a team up between V3, Amazon, X, Stronger & the boys, none of which are present in this alternate dimension of Kamen Riderdom.

The story, being all in Japanese, and with a complex plot, was rather hard to follow. The fact that I was annoyed at the writers' audacity to screw up the genre didn't help matters much. But I gather it's about a top secret experiment where scientists are creating new forms of life through crossbreeding and genetic transmutation. By mixing some guy (Ishikawa) with grasshoppers, they've created the newest Kamen Rider, called 'Shin Kamen Rider' ('New Masked Rider'). But unlike the long established tradition, this one is a



SHIN KAMEN RIDER

scientifically correct, genetically accurate creature, not a cybernetic superhero of the good old days. To be fair, it's a magnificent costume, about as realistic as can be expected (I've never seen a guy who was half-grasshopper, but I imagine this is what he'd look like). And I should also point out that Steve Wang did not make this costume, as I'd accidentally reported in a back issue of OC.

that they're somehow affiliated with one of the mad scientist who keeps making monsters.

Shin Kamen Rider's climactic duel with the mutant isn't half bad. Just don't expect a lot of martial arts. There are punches, scratches, and grasshopper-like high jumps, but it's a far cry from the good old days of Hiroshi Fujioka wasting a whole gang of Shocker henchmen. *

Regardless, this green, naked Kamen Rider doesn't even ride a motorcycle, making the title seem all the more ridiculous. Also different is his transformation from human to bug-eyed creature. No more fancy, charismatic arm poses and 'Henshin,' as it's hard to talk during the metamorphosis. This guy changes involuntarily, and rips out of his clothes, much like Bill Bixby becoming Lou Ferigno. To the accompaniment of gross, painful-looking effects, the Japanese man becomes Shin Kamen Rider. The end result being a Japanese variation on the remake of **THE FLY**, but with a rival monster (another mutant) thrown in for bad measure. But any effect, any action scene or simple stunt is ruined by endless dialogue, and it's all so dead serious.

But wait; it gets worse. There's this dragging love story, featuring a little nudity (for the first time ever in a Kamen Rider movie). Our hero screwed his girlfriend, who'll now give birth to some baby who's half human, half insect (another quick steal from **THE FLY**). But never mind, she gets killed near the end. Not only is there a monstrous mutant out killing people, but at least a couple squads of gunwielding soldiers. I don't know what they have to do with the rest of the story, except

ROBO HEROES...

enough. *1/2

SPARKMAN - A Korean ripoff of **SPIELVAN** & other Toei originals, see this issue's Korean section. ***

SPIELVAN - Yet another Toei series, showing how this particular Robo Hero (Spielvan) kills outerspace warriors in just 36 episodes. There are at least three females who also have Combat Suits, who appear from time to time. But this inferior series is a dreadful bore, despite nice performances by Hiroshi Watari, Naomi Morinaga, Machiko Soba, and Michiko Nishiwaki. **

SUPERFORCE - A shortlived, U.S. made series about a vigilante astronaut, on his motorcycle, attired in a futuristic space costume. Not bad

for American TV, but painfully low budget compared to its Japanese counterparts. It lasted for the 1990 and 1991 seasons. *



Left: Jiban rides into action against Dr. Giba's ghoulish creatures.

Above: Michiko Nishiwaki (left) and Machiko Soba as villains in **SPIELVAN** (Toei; 1986).

LETTERS...

person, and the actions he does are 'acrobatics.'

You seem dismayed by the resurgence of HK historical films. I think of this phenomenon as similar to the recent revival of the western in American cinemas. Just as westerns will probably die again and then have another resurgence, I'm sure the same thing will happen with these Tsui Hark-influenced period films. As for your comment about how much worse the current pictures are than their 1960s/1970s predecessors, what can I say? [How about, "Damon, you're God and I agree with everything you say, and I worship the ground you spit on! Now tear up my clothes and use my body!" -DF] How about this: Recent westerns like THE UNFORGIVEN are very different from John Ford's classics, and it's just as logical to assume that current HK filmmakers will make period films that are very different from those of Chang Cheh and his contemporaries. Tsui Hark and his imitators might say that they're not clones of Chang Cheh and have no desire to copy the 1970s stuff.

As for John Woo's future, he doesn't have much of one, unless he can find a company willing to release his pictures unrated. When the MPAA forced him to cut HARD TARGET in order to get an R Rating, the message came through loud & clear, John Woo will not be allowed to make the kind of action films he made in HK.

You made a few mistakes about THE GREEN HORNET in OC#15. First, he's the Grand Nephew, not the nephew, of the Lone Ranger. Also, on the radio show, Kato was originally Japanese, until the outbreak of WWII, when he transformed into a Filipino!

I wrote to Fox Network to complain about POWER RANGERS, and asked why they wasted money shooting this rubbish of the five inane American teens. I reminded them ULTRAMAN had been shown here intact back in the 1960s, so why was ZYU RANGER being cut? Do they think Americans are more racist now than in the sixties and won't watch a program with an all-Japanese cast? I received a response from the head of the Fox Children's Network. Essentially what she said was that POWER RANGERS was getting fabulous ratings, so they had made the right deci-

sion by adding the sequences of American teens. She explained that the reason they did this was that the Japanese actors couldn't speak English, and U.S. audiences hate dubbing. However, Fox gave no explanation for why the Japanese performers (i.e. Machiko Soba, as Rita) don't get any credit, leading viewers to conclude that it's an entirely American-made series. She didn't say if there are plans to buy more Japanese superhero programs and turn them into half-American, half-Japanese hybrids, but her statements about the good ratings for POWER RANGERS led me to believe that this is certainly a possibility.

Lana Zukowski - Phoenixville, PA

Dear Lana,

First of all, yes, I think Fox is releasing a new series, either SPIELVAN or METALDAR. I actually grew to enjoy POWER RANGERS, since the original Japanese version, ZYU RANGER, wasn't all that great either. My predictions last issue turned out correct, leading me to apply for a job on a Psychic Hotline. POWER RANGERS did indeed take American kiddiedom by storm, and its dolls were the hottest selling items during 1993's Christmas season. With any luck, some dumb kid

will put his eye out, playing with one of these toys, and they'll be banned, and there will be no more Japanese superheroes bastardized & butchered for American release, and the stagnation & saturation will disappear. But as for the series itself, my only real complaints against it are that 'all American boy' who plays the red hero, and those annoying clowns, Bulk & Skull. First, the red hero. Whenever he yells "Tyrannosaurus", he sounds like a constipated Football player trying to rap. The two school bullies were added for comic relief, but reach new levels in TV stupidity.

As for my inappropriate usage of 'acrobats,' and 'acrobatics,' it's an example of my poor English and lack of a good education. I got kicked out of high school for doing an acrobatic stunt off a classroom roof, and for kicking a hole in the wall of the gymnasium. I was in a gang at one point, cut classes, and got into more than my share of fights. However, to an extent, my use of 'acrobats' is appropriate, as a film can't have acrobatics, without acrobats to perform them! That is, unless they have some very foolish, brave actors willing to take a risk. -DF

Dear Damon,

A local newspaper did an article on POWER RANGERS, and not once were the words ZYU RANGER, Toei, or Sentai printed. They made it sound like an American show, thought up by Americans, with some footage shot in Japan for the show. This kind of stuff really pisses me off.

Michael Keller - Ft. Worth, TX

Yo Damon-

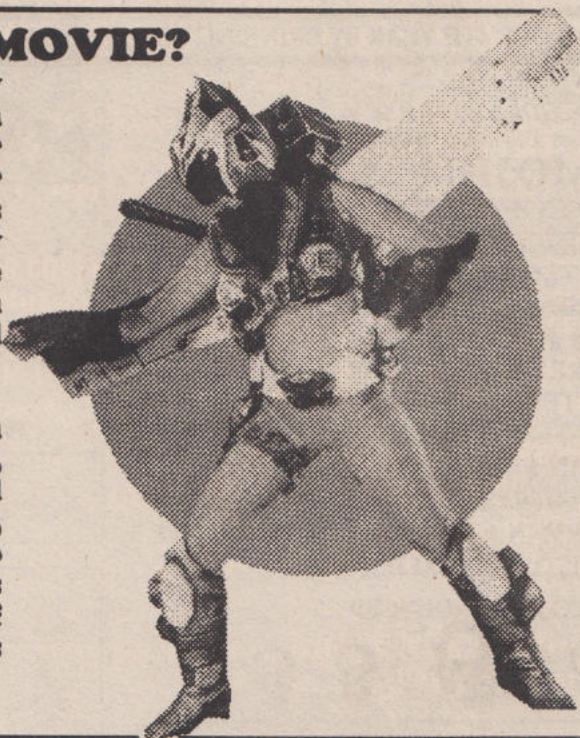
I'm glad you're continuing to cover the whole gamut of Asian films, and not just what's trendy or even good, but I think your snobbery towards John Woo & Tsui Hark is unjustified. So what if they're trendy, the trendies will go the way of grunge when the fad dies, but the films will still be good. I ignored Chinese cinema most of my life, because all I saw was 1970s kung fu period films, which I don't particularly like, but A BETTER TOMORROW changed that, and now I try to watch whatever I can rent, good or bad. I also started carrying guns and shooting people, so go figure.

T. H. Storm - Spring, TX

MYSTERY MOVIE?

This shot of a sexy heroine (also on this issue's cover for easier recognition) is from some rarely seen Japanese production which might be called PRETTY EGUZEKUTA.

Any film which has super heroes, martial arts and giant monsters, are of interest to O.C. and it's readers. Do any of you have this impossible-to-find movie?



CORRECTIONS FOR LAST ISSUE

The previous issue's many spelling and punctuation errors are the results of communication problems between mine and Hugh's computers. However, we're working out that glitch.

More importantly, I shall set the record straight, about our many translation errors. Hugh's Japanese language capability is as good as my ability to breathe underwater. Having picked up a lot of Japanese over the years, I sometimes forget what's English and what's Japanese, so long as I can read and understand it.

Correction #1:

The original Japanese title of Yusuburo Sakaguchi's "Masked Ninja With a Red Shadow" (Toei; 1966) series is KAMEN NO NINJA AKA KAGE, not KAMEN NO NINJA AKA KAGR, AKA KAGE NO NINJA, or, as Hugh misinterpreted my writing, "KAMEN NO NINJA" aka "KAGE." The AKA should not have been confused with our own aka (abbreviation for 'Also Known As'). 'AKA' is the Japanese word for 'red!' It's part of the full title!

Correction #2:

On page five is a photo of Lion Maru, full title KAI KETSU LION MARU ("Heroic Lion Knight"), yet it was accidentally spelled 'Lion man.' I hope everyone knows I'm familiar with Lion Maru, and that the 'man' part is just a typing error! How it happened will forever be a mystery.

Correction #3:

To the best of my knowledge, there was never any fanzine called JAPANESE GIANTDOM. There was, however, JAPANESE GIANTS and GIANTDOM, two separate publications. How these names got mixed together, somewhere between California and Illinois is unknown.

Correction #4:

On page 4, left-hand side of page, it says, "Resulting in Korea's salsa." Salsa? I believe the correct spelling to be 'Sulsa', Korea's ninja warriors.

Correction #5:

Also on page 4: "Some of the Lain C traveled." The word, as I know I originally typed it, is clan! Not 'Lain C!'



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