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#6

ORIENTAL CINEMA

THE GAMERA ISSUE!

FEATURING GAMERA HIMSELF, ZIGRA,
GAOS, GUIRON AND MORE!!!



ALSO INSIDE: HONG KONG'S STARS AND
STARLETS, MIRRORMAN, KOREAN WRESTLERS,
GODZILLA, JAPANIMATION,
KUNG FU and MORE!



ORIENTAL CINEMA

VOLUME 3

ISSUE 6

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Welcome to the 21st issue of OC! If you're one of my newer readers, you're probably confused by the misinformative "Number 6" on the cover. The 'Six' refers to it's being the sixth issue published by Draculina, and is the sixth edition of Volume 3, when in fact, OC has actually existed (in one form or another) for 21 issues, since it first came out in the 1970s! Anyway, onto the main topic of this issue: Flying fire turtle Gamera! I suppose I've always had an unfair prejudice against Gamera, dating back to when I was a snotty little brat with a chip on my shoulder. You see, by the time I was seven years old, I knew I was a fan of Japanese monsters, mainly just the Toho stuff like Godzilla. But the first time I recall Daiei's GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE airing, I flat out missed it! Either it was on too late & I fell asleep, or I'd forgotten it was going to be on, or maybe nobody told me it was shown. So the next day at school, all the stuck-up kiddies are raving about Gamera and I felt neglected & left out. I was envious & jealous as hell, and to protect myself, I adopted a "I didn't want to see it anyway"-type attitude. Of course, less than six months later, GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE was repeated and I saw it. Like most twerps, I enjoyed it- but could never get the chip off my shoulder. So I always sort of looked down on Gamera and still tend to, I never really forgave the old guy for entertaining everyone but me so very long ago.

Throughout the early 1970s, the only Gamera movie shown here was the first one, so I'd assumed Gamera was a one-shot monster like VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE, DAGORA THE SPACE MONSTER, or Gappa, that MONSTER FROM A PRE-HISTORIC PLANET. Imagine my surprise when I saw a photo of Gamera battling Jiger in some thick monster movie book. A year or two later, I just happened to accidentally tune in and see to kids in a flying saucer, and the commercial announcer calling it ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS. I tried to make a guess as to

which monsters were going to be attacking (Godzilla? Ghidrah maybe?), but was completely amazed to see Gamera flying through space! What the hell is going on?! Just how many movies did that stupid turtle make?! In 1975, a TV station's 6:00 P.M. movie slot had Gamera Week! Finally, I'd seen nearly all of Gamera's flicks, not including GAMERA SUPER MONSTER, which didn't come out until 1980.

But unlike Godzilla, still king of the monsters, the impact of Gamera's goofy farces didn't hold up over the years. As an infant, I loved these colorful kiddie films. But the older I got, the more they annoyed and embarrassed me. The only Gamera movie which reached the level of an intelligent Toho film was GAMERA VS. BARUGON (aka WAR OF THE MONSTERS), which was Gamera's biggest budgeted movie and apparently his least successful. The remainder of Gamera's movies (not including the new one) are comparable to GODZILLA'S REVENGE, the most infantile of the Godzilla pictures. But I do not hate Gamera's movies, if I did, I sure as hell wouldn't be making OC#21 a Gamera Issue. In one way or another, the Gamera movies basically succeed in being what they're meant to be-- entertaining. Gamera movies were continually ignored until now that Daiei has finally gotten off its fat ass and made a new Gamera film, tentatively titled "Gamera: Showdown of the Giant Monsters" (basically a remake of 1967's RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS). So just watch, this hyped new film will create the usual group of trendies and newcomers who'd never have watched an older Gamera movie, but because of this new movie's slick look, will lie, and claim they've always liked Gamera. Expect these two-faced geeks to start having serious debates as to who's stronger, Zigra or Jiger!? "Golly willickers, if Zigra and Jiger got into a fight who'd win? Gosh! Noriaki Yuasa is my hero! Gee wiz!" Supposedly, they're already making a sequel, with Gamera battling Jiger (aka Mon-

ster X) again.

As mentioned earlier, OC has existed for at least 21 issues, so as you can imagine, I'm running out of things to write about! This problem is especially frustrating when it comes time to make these editorials. So from now on, I'll recount whatever comes to mind, stories from my past which may or may not relate directly to Asian movies. For example, one hilarious event happened during the late 1980s, during a rehearsal for a Japanese superhero stage-show for some sci-fi convention. Several friends, including August Ragone, Butch Portillo & Tony Delgrosso played demonic, ninja-like villains, while Barrie Evans and myself had the seemingly hopeless task of performing martial arts & acrobatics in vision-impairing Kamen Rider outfits. After choreographing the battle (with no casualties, I might add!), we stepped inside [my house] for a lunch break. The phone just happened to ring, and that's where the fun begins.

As fate would have it, Barrie Evans was closest to the phone. Barrie answered it, and his eyes lit up and he now had the grin of a boy in a candy shop, an NRA member at a gun show, a homo at the gerbil section of a pet store, etc. Why was Barrie so amused & excited over this phone call? We realized what was going on when he said, "Why, yes. This is Oscar". It was a wrong number, and on that day, we were

about to experience the mischievous fun of 'prank answering', instead of 'prank phone calls'. Seems some bubbly, airheaded, semi-shy teenage babe was trying to locate her new boyfriend Oscar, and had dialed my number by mistake. She wasn't fooled

by Barrie's voice, but was still unaware she'd had the wrong number. Barrie: "You're right, I'm not Oscar, I'll get him". Barrie excitedly handed the phone to me, trying desperately not to laugh. Barrie (to me) said: "Damon, come here quick, it's a wrong number! You be Oscar!" But she didn't believe me either. She said: "Hey, you don't sound like Oscar either! I recognize your voice, you're Jason!" I said I was indeed Jason, but she asked what we were up to. I was honest to her for once, and told her I was playing Kamen Rider in a mini-play. She said, "Huh?! What the hell are you talking about?!" Barrie realized I may have blown our cover, and quickly grabbed the phone from me and said: "I'm sorry, but Oscar told me to tell you he doesn't like you any more". Girl (her voice now suddenly concerned and dead serious): "W-w-w- why not?" Barrie: "Well, this isn't my personal opinion, but Oscar himself said that you're ugly, you're stupid, and you've

got a smelly pussy." Click.

Sincerely, Damon Foster (Editor), P.O. Box 576, Fremont, Ca, 94537-0576



DAMON FOSTER - OC FOUNDER

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LETTERS

Dear Mr. Foster,
Do you know anyone who has
KAMEN RIDER V3 episodes
with English subtitles?
Lee Tonouchi, Hawaii

Dear Lee,
Hub? You live in Hawaii and you're asking me if I have subtitled episodes of KAMEN RIDER V3!? Hell no, though I most certainly wish I did! Though there were subtitled episodes shown in Hawaii in the early 1970s, nobody had VCRs back then. It's too depressing to even think about it. Excuse me while I go sniff Super Glue. -DF

It has taken me a little while to get used to the style of OC, but the Gangster issue was the best yet. It warmed my heart to see you give a good review to Chang Cheh's **THE CHINATOWN KID**, one of my alltime favorite films. I get sick and tired of reading articles on HK cinema by people who think HK started film production with **THE KILLER**. Further, I share your dislike of Tsui Hark's "Wong Fei Hung" series and the new wave bullshit that has fol-

lowed in its wake. "Wong Fei Hung" stole most of its ideas from Yuen Wo Ping's **DREADNOUGHT** anyway. All my heroes are from the 1970s and 1980s.

David West, Massachusetts

Just thought I'd write in to correct some mistakes and answer some questions I spotted in the "Hong Kong Gangsters" edition of OC.

One of the most common mistakes made by both the (western) news media and filmmakers is assuming that the tongs and triads are one in the same when, in reality, they are two separate types of organizations. It's sort of like how the media lumps together all Italian organized crime, under such terms as the "mafia", or "the mobs" when groups such as the American La Cosa Nostra, the Sicilian mafia and the Neapolitan Camorra are actually three different entities entirely. Each of these organizations are themselves divided into families and these are, in turn, divided into sub-factions
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 51)

GAMERA



GAMERA PROFILE

SPECIES: Fire-eating turtle

HEIGHT: 80 meters

WEIGHT: 8 tons

NATURAL HABITATS: Arctic regions, undersea, outerspace, in the sky, just about anywhere.

SPECIAL SKILLS: Can fly like a flying saucer, spit fire and understand Japanese, English, and whatever languages his movies are dubbed in.

FILMOGRAPHY:

11/27/65: **大怪獣ガメラ**

[DAI KAIJU GAMERA/"Giant Monster Gamera"]

{American versions titles: **GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE** and **GAMERA**}

4/17/66: **大怪獣決闘ガメラ対バルゴン**

[DAI KAIJU KETO- GAMERA TAI BARUGON/"Great Monster Battle: Gamera vs. Barugon"]

{American 'versions' titles: **WAR OF THE MONSTERS** and **GAMERA VS. BARUGON**}

GAMERA CREATORS DAIEI MOVIE COMPANY

Now just calm down! Don't worry, all you impatient Gamera fans (both of you), this issue of OC will get to everyone's favorite fire-breathing turtle uno momenta; but first, I figured, what the hell, why not have a long, boring look at Daiei, the movie company responsible (sometimes irresponsible) for him? I suppose it all starts with Masaichi Nagata (also translated Hidemasa Nagata), who actually began working for Nikkatsu (best known in America because they'd later produced **MONSTER FROM A PREHISTORIC PLANET** in 1967) in 1924, and worked there for ten years. He'd worked his way up the corporate ladder and became a manager of production & scenario departments before his eventual resignation. It's believed that he left Nikkatsu because the studio was investigating the report of his having accepted bribes from longtime Nikkatsu-rival Shochiku (who'd also enter the sci-fi scene with 1966's **THE X FROM OUTERSPACE** and 1991's **ROBOTRIX**), to sabotage production within Nikkatsu's then-new studios in Tokyo! At this time, both rivals Shochiku and Nikkatsu were interested in expanding; Nikkatsu bought out Tamagawa Studios (a floundering independent company), and Shochiku merged with Masaichi Nagata's own Shinko Kinema, forming new

branch Dai Ichi Eiga. The belief that Nagata had negotiated (against Nikkatsu) with Shochiku was strengthened when Nagata suddenly became head of Shochiku's new Dai Ichi Eiga! Among the controversy, it was also believed that some of the money needed to continue Dai-Ichi Eiga came from some exclusive children's English school of Kyoto's snobby elite, managed by Masaichi Nagata's own wife, yet where the rest of the money came from is undetermined (but was suspected it came from the alleged bribe). But Dai-Ichi folded in 1936, yet would later have a mutant resurgence as Daiei.

But less interestingly, the early 1940s weren't easy for movie companies in Japan. A governmental war-time maneuver in 1941 demanded that the ten major movie companies in Japan become united together, to form just two; and this merging's organizing was assigned to Kyusaku Hori (head of Nikkatsu). The government needed to hold the companies by the gonads, since raw celluloid became considered 'war material', its being available to the companies depended on the industry's producing the type of flicks the state needed. What was needed was propaganda war movies where the Japanese were always winning, of course. If nothing else, this demand [by the

militaristic government] gave then-young FX technician Eiji Tsuburaya (a freelancer who worked for Nikkatsu, Schochiku & Toho, of course) a chance to get acquainted with miniatures of jets & tanks (which would prove useful when making Godzilla movies ten years later). This oppressive control created a lot of maneuvering, as industry workers foresaw the chances of possible promotion and/or demotion. So in 1942, Kyusaku Hori's Nikkatsu was combined with movie companies Daito and Masaichi Nagata's Shinko Kinema, which officially formed Dai-Nihon Eiga, which means "Greater Japan Motion Picture Company", the motion picture company we came to know as Daiei. Daiei was officially established in January of 1942 by Masaichi Nagata. The government's order [which combined them] made Nikkatsu combine its big theatrical chain in the joining without getting equal credit for the assets, since

the merger was developed in terms only of production facilities. Kyusaku Hori pissed off the higher powers (got them madder than a sports geek who's TV got stolen the day of the Super Bowl) when he attempted to salvage Nikkatsu. So when it came time to join assets, Nikkatsu was intentionally undervalued, yet Shinko Kinema was padded out to become the merger's dominant company. Since Masaichi Nagata was already the Managing Director of Shinko Kinema, he officially got promoted to head of Daiei, later in 1942.

In 1943, Daiei produced the film, **KABUTE KAMIKAZE WA FUKU**, which was Daiei's first movie to use special effects. Details are more illusive than a bottle of Perrier in a cowboy bar, but it seems the SPFX were left to Eiji Tsuburaya at Toho, as is the case with 1944's **IKERU ISU**. At this point, Daiei was still new & disorganized (partially due to behind-the-scenes turmoil), and just wasn't organized enough to do FX-related films, and often relied on help from

3/15/67: 大怪獣空中戦ガメラ対ギャオス
[DAI KAIJU KUCHUSEN- GAMERA TAI GYAOS/"Great Monsters' Sky Battle: Gamera vs. Gyaos"]
{American versions' titles: RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS and GAMERA VS. GAOS}

3/20/68: ガメラ対宇宙怪獣バイラス
[GAMERA TAI UCHU KAIJU BAIRASU/"Gamera vs. Space Monster Viras"]
{American version's title: DESTROY ALL PLANETS}

3/21/69: ガメラ対大悪獣ギロン

[GAMERA TAI DAI AKUJU GIRON/"Gamera vs. Giant Evil Beast Giron"]
{American versions' titles: ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS and GAMERA VS. GUIRON}

3/21/70: ガメラ対大魔獣ジャイガー

[GAMERA TAI MAJU JYAGA/"Gamera vs. Demonic Beast Jiger"]

{American version's title: GAMERA VS. MONSTER X}
{British title: GAMERA VS. JIGER}

7/17/71: ガメラ対深海怪獣ジグラ

[GAMERA TAI SHINKAI KAIJU JIGURA/"Gamera vs. Deepsea Monster Zigra"]
{American version's title: GAMERA VS. ZIGRA}

3/20/80: 宇宙怪獣ガメラ

[UCHU KAIJU GAMERA/"Space Monster Gamera"]
{American version's title: GAMERA, SUPER MONSTER}

Toho's Eiji Tsuburaya.

In the meantime, that Masaichi Nagata guy claimed that the two-movie-companies order was concocted by Shochiku's head, Shiro Kido, and that it was all just a gimmick to build up Kido's personal strength, and Shochiku's power. In his memoirs, Shiro Kido did confirm some sort of rivalry between himself in Nagata. "It was mostly fate, not talent, that made Masaichi Nagata big", Kido was once quoted as saying. But Nagata's claim placed him in favor with certain people within the movie making industries who we're also pissed off at the governmental oppressiveness. So Nagata was elected to be head of a countermeasure committee. It was believed that, being a Kyoto man, he'd be more aggressive than the Tokyo ass-kissers who'd come in frequent contact with the government's Office of Public Information (or, considering all the propaganda & lies so common in war-time, how about "Office of Public Misinformation"!). Masaichi happily accepted the offer to head the committee, knowing he'd end up unemployed under the government's two-company plan, since Nagata's Shinko Kyoto studios would deteriorate or be lost in the merger, as a result.

Naturally, Nagata wasn't exactly thrilled at the government's plans for Japan's movie industry, as head of the new 'countermeasure committee' he offered an alternate plan that wouldn't form two, but three movie companies. The Office of Public Information believed that this upcoming third company, composed of weakly managed firms, wouldn't have an established executive staff who would oppose the government's policies, providing the Office with basic control of a new company that

would be 'semi-official'. Masaichi Nagata's plan was quickly agreed upon and made valid, and the only one who disapproved was Kyusaku Hori, Nikkatsu's

head.

Because Kyusaku Hori was permitted to keep Nikkatsu as a theater-holding company, Nikkatsu didn't completely dissolve. This left



Scenes from Daiei's TOMEI NINGEN films.

Daiei with a number of studios, but without any theaters other than a few originally supplied by Shinko Kinema & Daito. Another problem was finding target audiences. Shochiku appeased the women, and Toho concentrated on the urban audience. Only farmers and children seemed to remain for Daiei. NEW SNOW was the first successful film from Daiei, but it apparently wasn't profitable enough to bail Nagata out of jail! It seems The Home Ministry, who issued warrants and was a rival of the Office of Public Information charged Masaichi of bribing the Information Office to get his three-company plan passed! Though Masaichi denied the accusation, he was jailed for fifty days.

WWII came to a close, and it was at this time when Daiei really began experimenting with FX (coming up with the most advanced FX of the age), but the Occupational Forces (led by Douglas MacArthur) kept Japan in control. The Occupational Forces were busy hunting for war criminals. How this effected the film industry was that it was believed members of the Drama Employees Union were communists at odds with the management of the filmmaking industry. One of the people singled out by the Occupational Forces was Masaichi Nagata, whom the Americans felt needed 'rehabilitation' for producing movies not democratic in nature. The rehabilitation was complete in 1948, then Masaichi Nagata got reinstated within Daiei, and ready to make more movies. Only this time, movies could be produced for entertainment value, and not pro-Japanese militia war movies.

The special effects-oriented movies proved to be the biggest challenge for the then-young Daiei, and caused nu-

merous problems & setbacks. One flick was the first Japanese science fiction movie ever, NIJI OTOKO (which means "Rainbow Man", having absolutely nothing to do with Toho's early 1970s **RAINBOWMAN** series), released 7/18/49. Next came 1949's **TOMEI NINGEN ARAWARU** ("The Transparent Man Appears"), released 9/26/49. It was only a Japanese variation on **THE INVISIBLE MAN**, but is important historically because it was the first Daiei flick where they made their own special effects (though ones learned from Eiji at Toho). The FX sent **TOMEI NINGEN ARAWARU** so over budget that the late actress Takiko Mizunoue wasn't getting her promised yen, so she quit, and instead she ended up in the cheaper, generally non-FX movie **HANAKURA BE TANUKI GOTEN** ("Flower Garden of Raccoon Castle"). Problems of this nature plagued Daiei's FX films from the start. For about the next ten years, Daiei improved their FX, but most were for historical & modern plays; which included at least three Monkey King movies made in the 1950s.

Daiei was the youngest of the before-WWII studios, and it had survived the post-war era without a theatrical chain, and it was organized in a period when distributing was in the clutches of a monopoly. There wasn't any opportunity to gather contracted movie-houses. Also, Daiei had been basically faithful to the military's demands until WWII's end, and had no movies to be screened, since most of its flicks were apprehended, possibly destroyed by the American militia because of anti-democratic or feudal subject matter. With no big name stars at Daiei, Daiei's Kyoto branch more or less folded (not until 1966 when

they made the "Majin" films did the Kyoto branch see a lot of action). To get back in power, Daiei offered Toho a distributing tie-up plan since obviously, Daiei was now interested in a two-company industry! Shochiiku frowned upon on this, and the concept was abandoned. Meanwhile, in the movie production department, Tatsuyuki Yokota (one member of Daiei's FX crew) won first prize for his FX in **SHI NO MACHI O NAGARETE** (Daiei, 1952). For about the next ten years, Daiei improved their FX, but mostly for historical & modern plays.

The next step for Daiei was exploitation films involving eroticism, adultery, and kissing scenes (you gotta' remember, this was a long time ago). One such example of a post-war kiss considered 'classic' was in Daiei's movie **BRILLIANT REVENGE**, which supposedly, only for the purpose of throwing in a random kiss, had spliced in a scene from a play based on Leo Tolstoy's Resurrection novel. Apparently, Japanese didn't kiss in public back then, and since the characters on stage were meant to be crude caucasians like me, it was okay. But Daiei also occasionally continued experimenting with sci-fi, with some mutant gorilla movie called **TETSU NO TSUME** (released 2/24/51, literal translation "Claws of Iron").

In the early 1950s, Nagata came to the USA and checked out a film festival or two. After returning to Japan, he decided the real money was in these international film festivals. What made him realize this was something said to him in America: "Do they make movies in Japan as well?!" Meanwhile, Akira Kurosawa is hard at work on **RASHOMON**! Nagata was not in favor of this offbeat flick at first, yet the head of



透明人間と蠅男

WARNING FROM SPACE



Italifilm Branch in Japan, Guillian Stramigoli showed interest in **RASHOMON** (reviewed in OC#5, back in 1983!). This came as a surprise to Nagata, who was originally against Akira Kurosawa's classic, and didn't want it produced because it seemed too weird. **RASHOMON** went on to win the Venice Film Festival, and several others. Finally, Nagata had found his niche, the next step being 1953's **GATE OF HELL**. It was normal enough for the domestic audience, and 'Japanese' enough for international audiences. It should also be noted that it was one of the first Japanese movies to use color, and apparently did so beautifully. Like **RASHOMON**, **GATE OF HELL** (aka **GATEWAYS TO HELL**) was later released to American TV both in dubbed and subtitled versions.

Now finally, Daiei was on top, with **GATE OF HELL** winning the Grand Prize at 1954 American Academy Awards. Yet Japanese film critics were baffled by the American hype since nobody in Japan was particularly im-

pressed by it. But Daiei kept the 'exotic' samurai films a coming, and learned his cycle of churning out "period films to appeal to foreigners" had run its course. Masaichi Nagata realized, in 1955 his gimmick had finally died. His films ceased to win anything at international film festivals, and had only basic success in Japan because they were made of poor quality, but also possibly because they were made primarily for foreign export. Daiei's dependence on foreign markets made them neglect their domestic films, resulting in an over all drop in quality of all their movies.

Masaichi Nagata's next step was to make a co-production with the famous Shaw Bros. of Hong Kong! The movie in question was **THE PRINCESS YANG** (**YOHKI**), and although it wasn't a huge hit, it was one of several Chinese-oriented movies Daiei experimented with throughout the 1950s, which included **NICHIREN TO MOKO DAI RAISHU** (a period film from 1958) which means basically "Battle between Nichiren and Moko",

though much of it (including a climactic sea battle shot in a huge outdoor tank) was shot at Daiei's Kyoto studio. One thing they learned was that cutting a boat with an electric saw doesn't look very natural for a boat hit by a bomb, because it was too clean. The next step was to damage the four-thousand dollar prop with an axe, and generate a heavy wave to submerge it.

But infinitely more popular in the 1950s was the growing Japanese sci-fi boom, started by Toho's **GODZILLA** from 1954. Though technically, Daiei had already produced Japan's first science fiction film, 1949's **TOMEI NINGEN ARAWARU** ("Transparent Man Appears"), Daiei didn't make another one until 1956 when they cranked out **WARNING FROM SPACE** (Japanese title: **UCHUJIN TOKYO NI ARAWARU**, which means "Spacemen Appear in Tokyo"), with FX by Tetsuro Matoba & Tsukiji Yonesaburo. One effect [invented by Tsukiji Yonesaburo] for **WARNING OF SPACE** was to airbrush the Milky Way on glass, and placing a miniature rocket on one side, and the camera on the other, making the rocket appear to be flying into it (into the Milky Way that is, not the camera), an effect which would later gain wide usage.

Though unlike Toho's superior **Godzilla** movies in every way, **WARNING FROM SPACE** was inspired by **Godzilla's** success, which in turn owed plenty to **KING KONG's** (RKO; 1933) re-release, and of course, Warner's 1953 movie **THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS**, known in

Japan as **GENSHI KAIJU ARAWARU** ("Atomic Monster Appears"). But even dubbed in English, **WARNING FROM SPACE** is a dreadfully dull tale of starshaped aliens visiting Tokyo. — **WARNING FROM SPACE's** only major contribution was its being Japan's first sci-fi movie filmed in color. Another interesting note was that Daiei had produced their own Tarzan ripoff in 1955, called **BURUBA**, in B&W. Many of its 'African' sets were actually filmed at sets in Hollywood, Calif.!

August 8, 1957 saw the release of Daiei's **TOMEI NINGEN TO SEMI OTOKO**, a sequel to their 1949 movie, "The Transparent Man Appears" (English title). Though I've seen neither, available photos from both B&W films show a vast improvement in FX, as the sequel included not only an invisible guy, but a shrunk man and exploding buildings. This demonstrates how much more generous Daiei was getting with putting special effects-related material in their films.

For the remainder of the 1950s, the most stable genre for Daiei were samurai adventure movies. But even this was under threat, since Toei had become more efficient at producing such films; they

Kojiro Hongo and Shintaro Katsu in **THE WHALE GOD**.



made them cheaper, quicker, and often with more excitement. That all changed in the 1960s, when Daiei cast Shintaro Katsu not only in 1962's **THE WHALE GOD** ("Kujira Kami"), but of course, in the highly successful Zato Ichi movies! Zato Ichi's many films are known, but **THE WHALE GOD**, a Japanese variation on **MOBY DICK** about a whale menacing a fishing village, remains an obscurity. Yonesaburo Tsukiji was originally assigned to do the FX, and his concept was that the huge whale prop [required in the script] was to be a 10-meter, inflatable balloon. But at the last minute, Yonesaburo was sent to go work on **TAI SHIKOTE** instead. So Matoba Tetsuro stepped in and made not only a miniature whale, but a 10-meter, 3 ton model which could only be moved with a hydraulic crane! Another elaborate, big budget Daiei FX film was 1963's **HUSOKU**

NANA-JU GOMETO ("75 M.P.H. Wind"). This disaster movie was Daiei's biggest movie to date, and proved to be a disaster in more ways than one; and again proved Daiei had a ways to go before they were truly FX masters. A scene of a flooded city required 15 tons of water poured onto a miniature set, which caused considerable damage to equipment, rendering the studio useless for future productions.

Also, the genres of fantasy and horror proved successful to Daiei, thanks to supernatural films like 1968's **THE HUNDRED MONSTERS** ("Kaiyo Hyaku Mono Matari"), **ALONG WITH GHOSTS** (1969), **CURSE OF THE GHOST** (1970), and of course, the ever cool film series about haunted-statue-turned-marauding-war-god Majin from 1966, which consisted of three films: **MAJIN THE MONSTER OF TERROR**, **RETURN OF GIANT MAJIN**

and **MAJIN STRIKES AGAIN**. Daiei also continued producing Chinese-type costume dramas in the early 1960s, like 1961's epic, spectacle 70 millimeter movie **SHAKA** ("Buddha") which was apparently shot on London Technicolor & Vistavision (whatever the hell that is) and 1962's **TAI SHIKOTE**. Interesting to note that some sort of devil prop (either a costume or statue) appeared in both **SHAKA** and **THE HUNDRED MONSTERS**.

Also of note

**DAI GUNJU
NEZURA**



was a movie about giant rats called **DAI GUNJU NEZURA**, which was never completed. The use of real rats caused an epidemic of fleas on the set, so the project had to be scrapped. But what was Daiei to do with all the miniatures and other FX they'd made for the ill-fated **DAI GUNJU NEZURA**? Well, everybody knows that fleas aren't attracted to fiery turtles made of rubber, so Gamera was born! Of any Daiei film series from the 1960s, beyond a doubt the most wellknown was the Gamera films. These presented their overdue return to sci-fi, and to the best of my knowledge, the only Daiei genre to get plenty of airplay on American TV and be in plenty of American videotores.

This is not to say it was easy to produce Gamera films; like any Daiei sci-fi films, the Gamera series was plagued by more problems and accidents than there are trench-coats in an adult theater. In **DAI KAIJU GAMERA** (aka

GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE), they shipped three truck loads of ice into the studio for the scenes taking place at the North Pole. After tedious chiseling, a snow like effect was achieved in the film, but the whole studio had to be refrigerated for days, making the set as freezing cold as the real thing! Despite refrigeration, some ice did melt and damaged a lot of equipment. Later in the movie, where Gamera is in the water, the costume actually exploded (luckily, no person was inside it) because of the gasoline inside it which was suppose to ignite his fiery breath. While there were no injuries, the costume was severely damaged and took a whole week to repair, therefor delaying production for a week.

But even when production was going well for **GAMERA**'s crew, the whole thing was a pain. Gamera's shell's skeleton consisted of bolts and steel girders, not to mention the plastic spikes (plates?) on the back, which had all been stuck on indi-





vidually, adding to the weight. So the Gamera costume weighed what felt like a ton, and the original actor suppose to be in it got too tired and quit. Next they hired some part-time student who also happened to be a body-builder! But even he got tired of the incredibly heavy costume after a mere three days. From that point on, all the crew members took turns in the costume, practically having to draw straws each day, until all the footage was done (with several exhausted people 'doing time' as Gamera!).

There were minor problems at the beginning (Gamera's attack on Kurobe Dam) of **GAMERA VS. BARUGON** too, mistakes which altered the scene. Though these small accidents were left in the film (as mentioned in the Japanese language book, **DAIEI SPECIAL EFFECTS MOVIES**), somebody not looking at them would never spot them. For example, the dam was meant to break the moment

Gamera's flying shell banged into it. The dam itself was constructed of a thin, cement-like substance, with Gamera dangling in front, and a tank holding 12 tons of water behind it. The idea is, when the technicians open the tank's door, the force of the water will immediately flood out and break through the dam. The problem was timing, the 'door man' didn't know exactly when Gamera hit the dam, and a gap in time occurred which accidentally made it look like a struggle for the supposedly almighty Gamera to damage the dam! The other error mentioned, tiny though it is, is of the dam's water putting out a fire below. You'll note that the fire is a bright orange-red-ish color; this was done thanks to a red light down there, shining on the fire. But nobody realized the red light needed to be turned off until it was too late, and 12 tons of water was pouring down to put out the fire! Not only did the water on the light damage some wiring, but if you look closely, you can see

part of the building appear slightly red, even though the fire was supposedly put out. Of course, these are measly problems virtually invisible to the casual viewer, and the whole sequence comes off beautifully in the film.

All the Gamera films had similar problems, like Gaos's beam in **GAMERA VS. GAOS**. The super imposing, sliced targets & explosions averaged to about three-thousand, five hundred yen (whatever the hell that amounts to) every time Gaos fired it, so the movie went over budget. Setbacks like this were more common than pro-lifers with lots of time on their hands, and they happened throughout the entire Gamera series, but Daiei continued to make the flicks, as Gamera had become their biggest yen maker ever.

While the Gamera movies were made in Tokyo, the films of Majin (Daiei's other profitable monster series) were made in Kyoto, since being period films, Kyoto's locales proved useful.

For example, in **RETURN OF GIANT MAJIN**, during the scene of Majin walking across a lake (which he makes split in half, an effect accomplished by matting to shots of the lake together, photographed from opposite angles), it was filmed at Kyoto's famous Komogawa Lake. What's totally amazing is that although Gamera and Majin were made by Daiei, both series are completely different, the contrast sets them at opposite ends; Gamera is modern, Majin is jidai-geki. Miraculously, all three Majin films were made in 1966 (the Tokyo branch took a whole year to complete & release the average Gamera film!), despite superb, almost flawless production values.

The Majin trilogy was very much influenced by B&W, silent German movies (i.e. 1914's **DER GOLEM**, 1917's **DER GOLEM UND DIE TANZERIN** and 1920's remake, **DER GOLEM**) about a marauding statue: The Golem. So the Japanese took a basic premiss of the Golem

and turned it into the old Japanese Majin (god of evil) legend about a stone wargod who comes to life. For the Majin flicks, they made two huge props, full Majin statues; 4.5 meters high (at least twice the height of an average man) each. Both these models were made to increase fear and realism, and weren't too big to build (as opposed to an absolutely humongous beast like Gamera, making a full-size prop wasn't possible). One was in Majin's dormant stage, and the other was his 'evil samurai on the loose phase'. The expense to make them was five million yen (about fifteen thousand dollars based on the exchange rate back in 1966), and took three months to complete. Despite these two creations' awe in the films, they were comparatively easy to produce, and could have been made much larger, but the 4.5 meters size was chosen to fit it in the studio, and for easy transportation. At least one of these two models was still intact when the studios closed, and somebody bought it. 'Til this day, one of the Majins remains stored in a warehouse somewhere! There were additional Majins constructed, including two costumes (worn by Riki Hoshimoto) and large props of Majin's hands and feet.

One effect which Daiei perfected was the blue-screen matte (a way to combine two films, creating double exposures & super impositions). Though many Japanese monster movies (including Daiei's Gamera flicks) have used this effect, it was done exceptionally well in **MAJIN, MONSTER OF TERROR**, thanks to usage of 190 light bulbs shining brightly to capture all the detail. Even so, there were glitches to be worked out. One problem was trying to coordinate both films, like a scene where the angle was all wrong (you see samurais in

the foreground, watching Majin, but he's off in the corner, barely visible!). This told Masaichi Nagata (who by this time, was investing a lot of money on FX flicks) how important it was for the directors and cameramen to get together and carefully, precisely plan everything out.

The final Majin flick was **MAJIN STRIKES AGAIN** (the only one of the three never released to America, and possibly doesn't exist in any English prints anywhere, which sucks like a black hole), the most far-fetched of the trilogy. Among other things, fake snow was made out of not so-fake plastic, rocks, and shredded potatoes of all things, for scenes which supposedly only last on film for thirteen seconds (that's according to a Japanese book, though I've not watched the flick in years). These tiny white particles were blown around by an electric fan, to simulate a storm. The set had Majin coming out of a 3-meter whole, accomplished by having him lifted by crane. For the last scene, Majin's 'melting, foaming' effect was done by making a Majin form out of swirly vanilla ice cream (really liquidy) and blowing it full force with an electric fan, to give the illusion of it exploding. Yet **MAJIN STRIKES AGAIN** had the most problems of any Majin films. Details are incomplete and sketchy, but it appears that to do the many optical effects required a certain type of film developing (which normally took about two days to develop properly). This procedure was forgotten, and they had to start over from scratch again, basically shooting the whole flick twice!

Yet despite the international success of Gamera and Majin, it was also during this period that Daiei went bankrupt, and closed in 1971. It's been said part of the reason

Daiei's films started failing was because talented FX men like Yonesaburo Tsukiji & Komesaburo Kikuchi retired from the business. Also, there had been rumors, suspicions & accusations of corruption in the management over political involvement and of course, money. The long bankruptcy conflict continued on into April, 1972. Daiei's bankruptcy administrator sued former Daiei president Masaichi Nagata, and three other ex-Daiei executives for about a million bucks, for damages compensation. According to a suit which was filed at the Tokyo District Court, all four executives had made illegal donations to some political parties and additional accounts beyond Daiei's normal business practices, resulting in major loss to Daiei until its demise on December 23, 1971. Daiei had gone the way of dinosaurs, Russian communism, unsafe sex, safe sex, and any possibility of there ever being a Pezz dispenser of Nicole Brown Simpson. Though Daiei would revive afterwards (as we'll see), this resurrection never had as big an impact as the original company that founded anything from Zato Ichi to Gamera.

Newspaper publisher Yasuyoshi Tokuma came to the rescue in 1974, when he became president of the newly reincarnated Daiei, because you can't keep a good Daiei down. Though their movie making reputation wasn't as big as before, the company survived through alternate business ventures. At this point, Daiei had four subsidiaries: One did movie distributing, another dealt with production, a branch in Tokyo, and one in Kyoto. They were also affiliated with Toko Tokuma Co., which dealt largely with importing Chinese films, and exporting Japanese movies into China, that

place where a tremendous amount of Chinese happen to live. Up until 1978, the new Daiei had made eight films, one of the more well known ones being **YOBA**, an occult thriller. It was co-produced by former Daiei president Masaichi Nagata, apparently not concerned by his legal problems in the past.

So far as I know, Daiei's stability has fluctuated over the years. It's obvious 1980 was a bad year for them, because their **GAMERA SUPER MONSTER** was such a cheap piece of crap, shot on the budget of a deaf-mute panhandler's welfare check. However, available photos would indicate 1987's **SHUTO SHOSHITSU** ("Capitol City's Disappearance") to be a decent disaster film with tolerable FX and miniatures.

Daiei moneymaker Zato Ichi seems to make a comeback every few years, and at the time of this writing, their latest Gamera movie sounds like an FX-filled, smash hit. Those who have seen it say it easily tops the last couple Godzilla flicks (no major accomplishment). Time will tell.

Assuming this long article didn't bore you to tears or snores, you now know a little something about Daiei. Info for this article came from a Japanese-language book called Daiei Special Effect Movies, Greg Shoemaker's Japanese Fantasy Film Journal #12 (1979), Cinefantastique #3 (1971), The Japanese Film (1960), Japan (1971), and the article "Daiei's 8 Pix Since its Revival Under Y. Tokuma" from Variety (May 9, 1979). Now that you're at least vaguely familiar with Daiei, let's continue our look at Gamera's roots with these biographies of the Daiei boys who helped create Gamera, that is, unless you've got something better to do.

湯浅憲明 NORIAKI YUASA



NORIAKI YUASA

- 1933:** Born in Tokyo
- 1954:** Graduated from Hosei University (a college which specialized in law studies)
- 1955:** Began work at Daiei
- 1964:** Directed his first film, a musical (literal English translation of the film's title: "Clap Your Hands if You're Happy"), starring Kyu Sakamoto
- 1965:** Began directing the series of Gamera films, and often directed special effects.
- 1970:** Directed the TBS comedy/drama series "Wife is 18 Years Old" (literal translation)
- 1971:** Left Daiei because they went bankrupt.
- 1980:** Directed episodes of Tsuburaya's **ULTRAMAN 80** and several other TV shows

(NOTE: The following article on Gamera director Noriaki Yuasa was translated under deadline as best as we could. The main difficulty was that even in Japanese, it consisted of a lot of technical terms we were unfamiliar with, so something may definitely be lost in the translation, and then of course, I tried patching up the rough edges by putting it in my own words. Regardless, it should present at least a vague idea of working with Gamera, and a big thanks goes to Kimie Johnson for her translating it! -DF)

According to an interview with director Noriaki Yuasa from a Japanese language book called "Daiei Special Effect Movies" (translated into English by Kimie Johnson), Yuasa's directorial debut (the 1964 musical) must have really sucked (of course it did, it's a musical!), it's the least popular of all his films and it bombed, despite it's starring then-popular singer Kyu Sakamoto. The next step was to jump on the FX film bandwagon, starting off with some obscure flick called **DAI GUNJU NEZURA**. Originally, **DAI GUNJU NEZURA** was assigned to somebody else who refused it, so it got dumped on Noriaki Yuasa, who was new and had less seniority & experience. **NEZURA** dealt with giant rats on the loose, and using actual rodents as props created inevitable problems. An epidemic of fleas prevented completion of the film, so instead they came up with **DAI KAIJU GAMERA** (rubber turtles don't have fleas!).

Naturally, Yuasa was ecstatic to be given the opportunity to direct **DAI KAIJU GAMERA**, since the musical and giant rat movie really went nowhere. However, Noriaki Yuasa's boss

Umeji Inoue gave Noriaki his 'last chance' with **GAMERA**, and was told if he doesn't succeed with Gamera, he's finished. Adding to the paranoia was scoffing and pressure from his boss (as I understand it, Inoue was originally a director too, and that Yuasa studied under him as an assistant director) at Daiei, who basically told him "You must be stupid" for taking an FX film so seriously, since special effects cost so much money, and seemed like a risk (in the early 1960s, Toho was the only Japanese company to achieve major success with FX films) or a gamble at the time. Also, the main thing for an FX flick is obviously props, without which, no FX film can be produced. So needless to say, producing & completing **GAMERA** was a major challenge for a relatively unsuccessful & generally inexperienced director who had the odds against him from the start.

Yet despite a generally low budget, Yuasa came up with resourceful ways to create a watchable, ambitious film which turned out to be one of Daiei's most wellknown movies ever. During production of **GAMERA**, he virtually lived in the film studio and film processing & lab, learning the ropes day and night. Through experimenting with some piece of film equipment called an "Optical Printer" (I don't know what the hell they're talking about, I think of an Optical Printer as a high-tech xerox machine), he figured out how to combine images for mattes, super impositions and blue screen-type FX. It also proved handy to have friends at Toho; one of their special effects assistants helped Yuasa out occasionally, since at the time, Daiei's FX technology was still limited. It didn't exactly generate confidence when company president Masaichi Nagata & other bigwigs would come in to look at rough drafts in production and story boards and say Japa-

nese equivalents of: "This is it? This piece of crap is the movie we're spending money to make?!" But fortunately for Gamera fans the world over, the opinions of Nagata and others changed drastically when they saw an edited rough print, complete with sound FX and music. Their reaction was no longer of disappointment, but of intrigue and amusement.

TAI SHIKOTE was some sort of historical film that Daiei began work on around the time of **GAMERA**. Originally, it too was to involve FX, but it seems only Yuasa was interested in the FX angle. During tests and pre-production, there was a lot of controversy and disagreements. Among other things, there were two older cameramen who insulted Noriaki Yuasa and put him down for his lack of experience. So **TAI SHIKOTE** (which I believe to be about China or Manchuria) instead concentrated on fancy cinematography, and FX were left to Yuasa's next project, a follow-up to his hit **DAI KAIJU GAMERA**.

GAMERA was on what Daiei called a "B-Class Budget", but it's sequel, the superior (in my opinion) **GAMERA TAI BARUGON** was on a higher "A-Class Budget". However, the actual main director of **BARUGON** was Shigeo Tanaka, and Noriaki Yuasa was only partially involved in overall directing, but was put in charge of special effects (done by an even younger crew). One problem was when Gamera spat out his fire, it originally had an actual person in the costume manning the gasoline pumped out from Gamera's neck. This proved too be way to dangerous. Water, like fire, caused problems too. Because of the foam rubber-like material the Barugon costume was made of just wouldn't sink, it became nearly impossible to film his climactic death at the lake. The costume just kept floating so they cut the tail off,

and later all four legs. Not until they severed the body was the affect achieved, that's why the last shot of Barugon's face above water shows no body, all that was left at this point was head & neck! Another reference in the interview toward Barugon was how expensive it was to do the shot of the frozen Tokyo Tower and Osaka Castle, and how it took all night to do shots which last mere seconds. These were basically optical effects done in post-production, by touching up the film. But this final result was only accomplished after days of frustration and failure.

An easier, more successful affect mentioned in the interview was in Kojiro Hongo's airplane scene, the actors are in a mock plane, and it's the set (on railroad-like tracks) which is actually moving past them. This same gimmick was used for the 'sliced helicopter' scene in **GAMERA TAI GYAOS**.

But unlike **GAMERA**, FX weren't necessarily the main high point for **GAMERA TAI BARUGON**, as the script itself concentrated more on human characters and a complex series of subplots. **GAMERA TAI BARUGON** was moderately successful, but didn't top the original **GAMERA**, so they cut the budget for Noriaki Yuasa's next film, **GAMERA TAI GYAOS**. Yuasa was returned to the role of main director, but his struggles & burden were increased by putting him in charge of FX too! With less help and money, it was a major pain to do the complex scenes of the 'flying Gamera' model in **GYAOS**. The fuel [inserted into Gamera's shell] for Gamera's flight jets was only enough to burn for a minute and a half, making the scenes all the more hectic and difficult to film. One trick Yuasa used to compensate for the 90 second limit was to film all the flying scenes at high speed, so that the finished footage comes out slower, and

has been stretched out. For scenes of Gamera spitting fire, they decided not to use the dangerous method utilized in the first two Gamera movies. So instead of having an actor inside a costume which could catch on fire, they used a plastic model, though the interior of the neck was plated with chrome which occasionally made the prop too hot to handle. They'd shoot gasoline from a tube (in the neck) and have a spark ignite the flame itself, which proved occasionally to be hazardous too. Hazardous and difficult, there was always a universal feeling of relief and happiness on the set when Gamera's fire scenes were completed.

Details are a bit sketchy, but then Noriaki Yuasa's interview goes on to explain why, after **GAMERA TAI GYAOS**, the series became exclusively a kiddie film series. Seems that in the early 1960s, many Japanese kids had pet turtles (just like in **GAMERA** and **GAMERA SUPERMONSTER**), and many named their turtles Gamera, and younger ones honestly thought their pets were Gamera, or would grow to Gamera's length. **GAMERA TAI BARUGON** seemed to be less successful than the other films, and coincidentally, was the only one not to involve an irritating brat. Another reason so many boys ended up in Gamera's films is because young actors helped cut the cost, allowing the movies to be as cheap as possible, without looking it. Foreign markets considered Japanese sci-fi to be kid stuff regardless, and requested them to be as naive and family oriented as possible. American buyers also requested some of the Japanese actors wear military uniforms, fearing U.S. audiences might think all the Japanese 'look alike!' Yet another suggestion from American & probably European distributors was for more caucasian families, which explains why so many

Gamera flicks had white kids. Back then, there were far less foreigners in Japan, so they had a hard time finding these people.

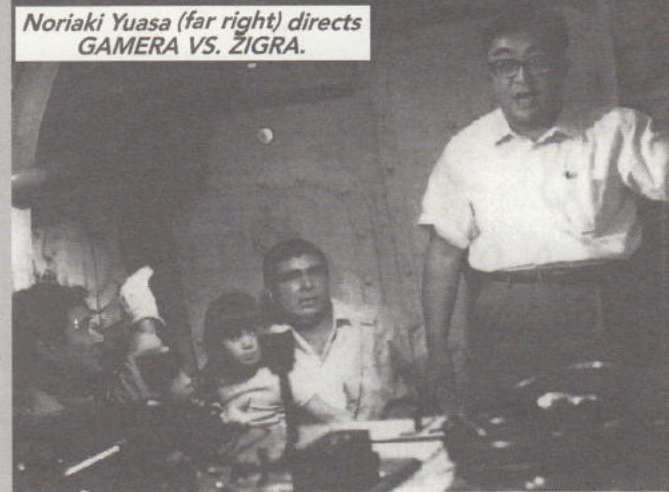
The next question from the interviewer was if it's difficult to come up with new monsters for Gamera to battle. They hadn't the time to design an additional monster needed for **GAMERA TAI GIRON**, so they painted an old Gaos (aka Gyaos) costume silver to be the "Outer Galaxy Gaos", who in turn got beheaded by Giron (which demonstrates the increasingly violent content in the film series). But by this time, it didn't matter, because the first signs of Gamera burn-out were in the audience. It seems that Daiei began going bankrupt in 1970, while **GAMERA TAI JIGER** was in production. So 1971's **GAMERA TAI ZIGRA** was a last-ditch effort, made as Daiei officially closed. Everyone was surprised when Daiei collapsed, as they'd been making successful movies on relatively low budgets. "I couldn't believe it", Noriaki Yuasa says when commenting on Daiei's return in 1980, with the ultra cheap **GAMERA SUPER MONSTER**! At the time, it seems female wrestler Mach Fumiake would be a logical choice as a lead heroine, but her presence didn't help an already helpless, hopeless movie. Most of the FX Yuasa used for this film were video generated, used by something the interview calls a "Chroma Key" (?). It seems to be referring to the cheap scene of the van becoming a flying object.

Noriaki Yuasa's final statement in this interview seems to be summing up what monster movies mean to him. He sees them as a series of tricks & illusions, which he compares to a circus show, or like a Haunted House ride at Disneyland.



GAMERA & Noriaki Yuasa

Noriaki Yuasa (far right) directs GAMERA VS. ZIGRA.



MASAO YAGI

美術・造型
八木正夫

美術・造型

MASAO YAGI

[Freelance Art Dir. and Prop maker]

1926: Born in Aichiken.

1954: He worked with Toho on **GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS**.

1956: Began working at Daiei.

1964: He briefly left Daiei, only to return a year later to assist on production of **GAMERA**. Of all the monster costumes & models he helped create, which include Barugon & Gaos, his favorite is Viras, for its realistic, squid-like appearance. Also, in his memoirs, he states he had a hard time creating the Viras costume, and learned a lot in the process. In comparing monster props he's worked on, he states the Godzilla costume was heavier than the later Gamera costumes. He'd had bad experiences with Godzilla, because the safety of the actor in the costume was a concern. The costumes had to be thick to protect actors from pyrotechnics (fire & explosions) on the set. So when it came time to create Gamera, he designed a safer, more comfortable costume, something he'd learned from Godzilla. But the Gamera suit too had to be thick, because unlike Godzilla, it used real fire, and there was a fear the costume might melt or catch fire.

YONESABURO TSUKIJI

Born in 1923, Tokyo. He entered Shinko Kinema in 1937, one of the companies which would later evolve into Daiei. Originally a production assistant, he became a special effects technician & cameraman in 1946. Movies he worked on include:

1958's **NICHÍ REN TO MOKO DAI SHU RAI**

(some sort of religious adventure set in Manchuria)

1962's **SHIKOTE** (a Japanese title of a story set in China)1963's **HUSAKU, THE 75 METER WIND**

He worked on many other Daiei FX flicks before his final one, 1965's **GAMERA**, after which he retired.

TAKAHASHI NIISAN

Born: 1926, Guma Prefecture, near Kanto.

Real name: Takahashi Yukito.

He won a number one award for a scenario he wrote for Daiei in 1950. According to Japanese info, he continues to write scenarios 'til this day, and even wrote for most of the Gamera films, and has written scripts for TV shows.

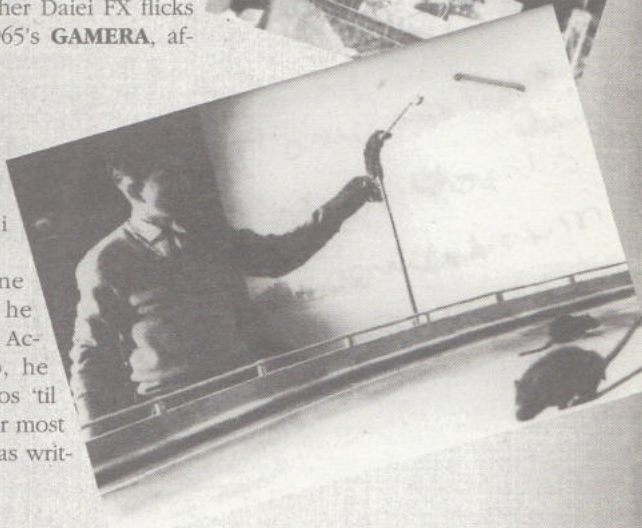
AKIRA INOUE

Born: 1929; Tokyo. Entered Daiei as an Art Director in 1953. He debuted in 1960, and also worked on the first five Gamera movies and several others. Also worked on 1965's **THE GUARDMAN** TV show on TBS. In 1971, he retired, much like Daiei's money.

YONESABURO TSUKIJI

特撮技術
築地米三郎

特撮技術



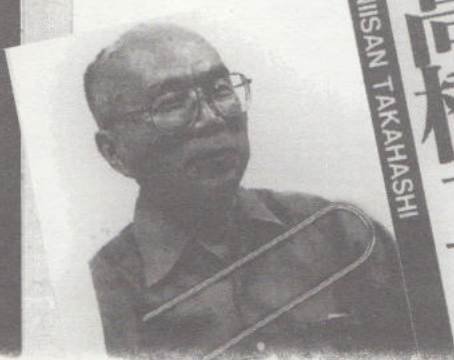
AKIRA INOUE

美術
井上章

美術

脚本
高橋三
NIISAN TAKAHASHI

脚本



GAMERA



THIS IS YOUR LIFE!

GAMERA IN THE 1960s:

Gamera's first appearance was in the Daiei 1965 flick which first came to the USA as **GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE**. The movie proved to be little more than another Japanese monster-on-the-loose farce. Again you gotcher' prehistoric reptile (who spits fire, of course) revived from hibernation by nuclear foolishness, nosey reporters after that big scoop, militaristic failures in destroying the creature, etc. Like its big inspiration, **GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS** (Toho; 1954), it was in B&W, and featured the obligatory scene of the Japanese giant destroying a train and several buildings. Perhaps this sounds more fun than it really is (though I personally prefer to see monsters fighting mon-

sters, not monsters fighting army tanks & jet planes), but looking back on it, I'd say Japan's original movie is bland. One advantage its American version, **GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE** has over its Japanese original is its elimination of a stupid scene involving misfit Toshio's (the lead kiddie in the movie) rock collection (thrown into the water by an obnoxious bully) he claims he was going to use to "build a home" for Gamera?! Just who wrote this, and was he sniffing Crazy Glue?! On the whole, **GAMERA** (Sandy Frank; 1985) is the more faithful of the two versions, except for two scenes: 1. **GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE**'s opening credits, where the graphics are the same as in the Japanese version, except, of course, that the Japanese

version's graphics are in Japanese. 2. A scene of an old man seeing Gamera is dubbed, "A fireball!" in the Sandy Frank version, yet **GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE** actually leaves the dialogue in Japanese, amazingly.

Over the years, Gamera appeared in more movies, including **WAR OF THE MONSTERS** (the series's peak, in my opinion), and the comparatively childish **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS**, where the pattern was set. Yet to me, **DESTROY ALL PLANETS**, though even more infantile than **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS**, was more fun. I've watched both the English & Japanese versions of **DESTROY ALL PLANETS**. The only major difference is near the beginning, after Gamera destroys

Viras's first spaceship. It makes more sense in Japanese, since after Gamera's lethal attack, the alien issues a warning about Gamera to other Virans. He describes Gamera as "a deadly creature", and says "its name is-". In the Japanese version, the doomed alien's line is completed by the opening title, which then says **GAMERA**, as in **GAMERA TAI BAIRASU**. In the English **DESTROY ALL PLANETS**, the alien just seems abruptly cut off, and seems to fail to finish his sentence for no apparent reason.

GAMERA IN THE 1970s:

With infantile stupidity at its peak, the Gamera movies reached a childish low. **GAMERA VS. MONSTER X** has got to be one of the most

stupid movies I've ever sat through, but see my review elsewhere in this issue. Gamera's second and final 1970s film was **GAMERA VS. ZIGRA**, which didn't come to America until around 1985! While it has its pathetic moments, I must point out that I disagree with some of Frank Strom's scathing attacks on it when he reviewed it in this issue. Contrary to what that meany said, I did enjoy the FX in **ZIGRA**, and some of the miniatures were okay. I just thought I'd let you know that.

GAMERA IN THE 1980s:

GAMERA SUPER MONSTER (Daiei; 1980) was the first hint that oldman Gamera wasn't really going to make much of a comeback in the 1980s, unlike Godzilla, who was about to be back in action big time, thanks to **GODZILLA 1985** and its sequels. But if nothing else, a number of Gamera's older movies were getting re-released yet again under 'new' (kind of) titles, and were even given all new English soundtracks, though the origi-

nal English dubbings were good enough. Here's the deal, Sandy Frank buys the rights to Japan's **DAI KAIJU GAMERA, GAMERA TAI BARUGON, GAMERA TAI GYAOS, GAMERA TAI GUIRON**, and **GAMERA TAI JIGURA**, now calling them **GAMERA** (formerly **GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE**- confused yet!?), **GAMERA VS. BARUGON**, **GAMERA VS. GAOS**, **GAMERA VS. GUIRON** and **GAMERA VS. ZIGRA**. As mentioned earlier in this brilliant article I've blessed you with, many of these movies were alr eady available in English, in alternate, 1960s dubs like **GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE**, **WAR OF THE MONSTERS**, **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS** and **ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS**. Between these generic titles and the "Gamera vs-" titles, it appears as though there were twelve Gamera films, when in fact there are only seven.

Generally, the differences between the 1960s versions and 1980s versions are in the dubbing (translated differently from version to version), though there were occasional visual edits too. For example, it's commonly agreed that

GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE is more enjoyable than just plain **GAMERA**, partially because of **GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE**'s cool opening credits sequence. The credits don't appear in the film until Gamera himself does, about five minutes into the movie. The graphics are super imposed over tight close ups of Gamera's face and shell, as he marches to attack a ship. But in both English dubs of this movie, there are stupid American soldiers, but which of the two are sillier? The ones in **GAMERA** are just plain bad actors Daiei probably picked off the streets in Tokyo. Their screentime is minimal, their humor unintentional. In **GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE**, the Americans are seen much more and purposely ham it up with intentional humor. It's all pretty dumb in both prints.

GAMERA VS. ZIGRA really only has one American dubbing, since A.I.P. TV never released a version, but Sandy Frank did. While nobody seems to like Sandy Frank releases, were it not for them, we'd have no English print of **GAMERA VS. ZIGRA**. Like Sandy Frank's other Gamera movies, this one too starts off with generic footage of water for the opening credits. The start also features an illogically spliced-in shot of Gamera & Zigra battling underwater, causing confusion and screwed continuity, since in the story, Zigra doesn't get giant until after his flying saucer is destroyed in the middle of the movie! In this respect, the Japanese version is better, the film starts off with the Zigra saucer destroying some sort of exploratory base on the moon, followed by the opening credits (in Japanese), accompanied by the cheerie "Gamera" song, sung by kiddies. At least in Sandy Frank's version, the 'waves'

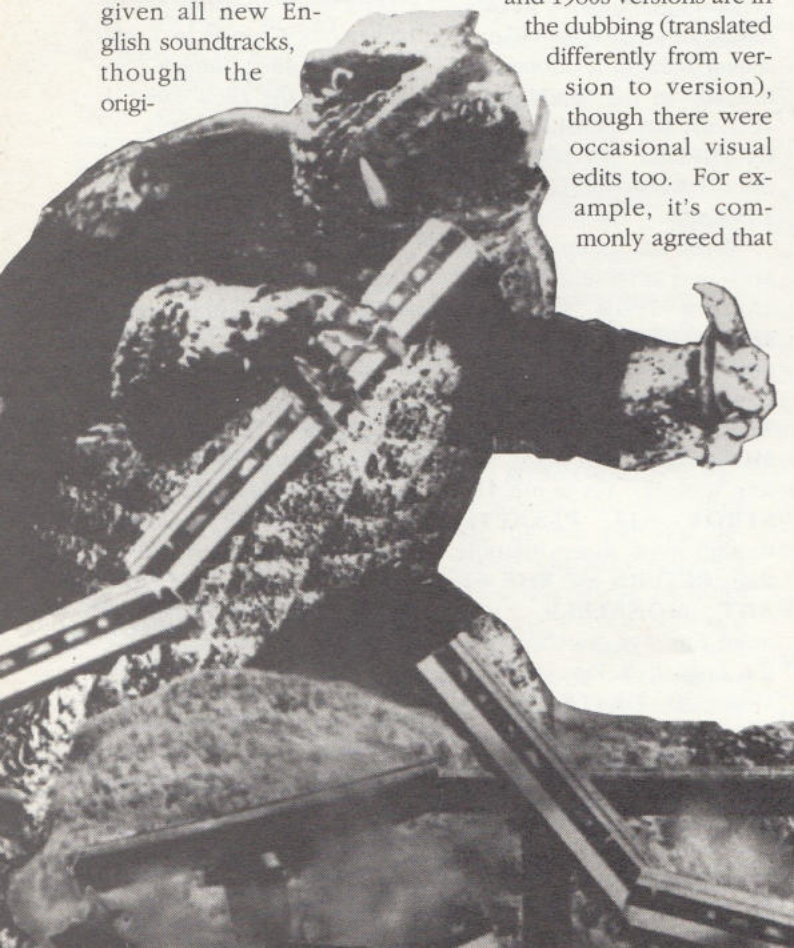
opening has less irritating, surf-ish tunes supplied by Shunsuke Kikuchi (also used in the scene of the space lady chasing two children at some Seaworld-like park).

GAMERA SUPER MONSTER, like **ZIGRA**, only has one English version in America, but it's not from Sandy Frank, nor do I think it's from A.I.P. TV. **GAMERA SUPER MONSTER** was dubbed by Britain's "but still" people, and there's virtually no difference between the Japanese and English version. It is, however, interesting to note that under its Japanese language title **UCHU KAIJU GAMERA**, there's also the English subtitle, **SUPER MONSTER**, as it appears in the film itself.

GAMERA IN THE 1990s:

From the beginning, Gamera was always a Godzilla imitator. This new Gamera continues that tradition, imitating the new Godzilla! So the success of the 'new age' Godzilla movies caused Daiei to announce on April 25, 1994 that Shusuke Kaneko will direct **GAMERA: SHOWDOWN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS** (though possibly renamed **GAMERA THE GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE**), which should be completed and released by the time you read this (your distant past is my future!). So after a 15 year absence, everybody's favorite Japanese turtle is back in action, as is everybody's favorite laser spitting Rodan-wannabe, Gaos! This time, the longtime rivals (but not really, as this new movie is more of a remake than a sequel, ignoring the existence of Gamera's older flicks; in fact Gaos is no longer a prehistoric cave-dweller, but a manmade mutant!) will tangle in a number of cities, including Tokyo and Fukuoka.

Though I hope to review



ガメラ

超音速の大決闘。
超遺伝子獣ギャオス来襲!! 戦え、守護神ガメラ
子供たちの未来のために。

総指揮●徳間康快 監督●金子修介 特技監督●樋口真嗣 脚本●伊藤和典 主題歌●爆風スランプ
伊原剛志 小野寺 昭 中山 忍 藤谷文子

監 雪次郎 本田博太郎 長谷川初範 本郷功次郎 久保 明 袴田吉彦(特別出演) 松尾貴志(特別出演) 渡辺裕之 風吹ジュン(友情出演)

製作代表●加藤清之/藤戸清治/大野 茂 製作●池田勝也/藤原敏雄/須田幼日子
製作補●尾田 剛/高橋 博/西條久雄 企画●佐藤政敏/武井英彦/森江 玄/鈴木伸子
プロデューサー●土川 勉 ラインプロデューサー●南里 幸 撮影●戸塚隆一
美術●及川 一 録音●堀本泰夫 照明●吉角恭介 音楽●大谷 幸
音楽プロデューサー●三浦光紀 編集●荒川蘭雄 助監督●片島昌三 製作担当●植野 亮/及川義幸



■特撮スタッフ■撮影●木所 寛 照明●林 方谷 美術●三宅邦夫
怪獣造型●原口龍生 編集●倉嶋信一 ビジュアルエフェクトスーパーバイザー●坂本 徹
編集●坂本 徹 助監督●神谷 誠 製作担当●堀川雅也
協力●防衛庁/海上保安庁/福岡ホーム 協賛●エプソン/雪亮 製作●大映/日本テレビ放送網/博覧堂
製作協力●MAGICA/徳間書店/徳間コミュニケーションズ 配給●東宝

this movie in a future OC, all I have to go by now are photos. Despite impressive miniatures and an over-all high-tech, polished look, I think the new Gamera & Gaos look stupid! Perhaps the sappy 'cuteness' of the older movies is what gave these wacky movies their charm. As near as I can figure out, Daiei was trying to make Gamera and Gaos look realistic (which they don't), which defeats the whole purpose of a Gamera film. Other changes include

Gamera's size, who, like Godzilla, had to be enlarged to fit the times (buildings are bigger now, so monsters gotta' grow too). Gamera is now a whopping 80 meters tall and flies at speeds as high as Mach 3.5.

Ironically, U.S. martial arts star Steven Seagal's half-Japanese daughter Ayako stars in this movie! 14-year old Ayako Fujitani makes her movie debut in **GAMERA**, though she's also done TV ads for Mitsui Rehouse. While I'm no fan of Steven

Seagal or any American action stars (more on them next issue), I was intrigued that this karate actor has a daughter who's in a Gamera movie. It seems that at the age of 17, Seagal had moved to Japan (around 1969) to train with Aikido masters, and because of an interest in the Omoto-Kyo religion. He married Miyako Fujitani and the marriage lasted ten years. They had two kids, Kentaro (who's now 18 years old) and of course, **GAMERA** star Ayako.

Daiei is producing the film, and amazingly, the one and only Toho will be distributing it! In fact, Toho owns the property in Tokyo's Chofu District, where Daiei's studios are, so Daiei is a commodity of Toho. With the two companies working together, it's long been speculated that a movie finally featuring both Gamera and Godzilla is inevitable!! Nothing is definite or official, but both Daiei president Kokai Tokuma (son of Yasuyoshi Tokuma, who revived Daiei in 1974) and director Shusuke Kaneko are interested in the possible team-up. Personally, I think the best time for them to meet would have been in the 1970s, somewhere inbetween **GAMERA VS. MONSTER X** and **TER-ROR OF MECHAGODZILLA**. In that dimension, both monsters had plenty of battles behind them, and both were much more exciting. This new confrontation (assuming it ever happens, which it very well may not) will be between newer, less experienced adaptations of classic movie monsters. Whether or not Godzilla ever tackles Gamera, one thing is for sure: Gamera is back in action, already Daiei is preparing for his rematch with a new & improved Jiger!



G T A H M F E I R R A W A V E

GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE

Presented by Harris Associates Inc., Asst. Dir.: Sid Cooperschmidt, Art Dir.: Hank Aldrich, Optical Effects: Yonesaburo Tsukuji, Sound: Murray Rosenblum, Editing: Ross Gaffrey, Asst. to Prod.: Fran Wolf, Dir. of Phot.: Julian Townsend & Nobuo Munekawa, Screenplay: Nizo Takahashi, Additional Dialogue: Richard Kraft, The Gamera theme song by Wes Farrell & Artie Butler, Produced by Masaichi Nagata, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, Starring: Albert Dekker, Brian Donlevy, Diane Findlay, John Baragrey, Dick O'Neill, Eiji Funakoshi, Michiko Sugata, Harumi Kiritachi, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Way back when I first sat through this movie as a young twerp, I missed large pieces of it because I continually passed out. Of course, that's because I had to stay up until midnight to view it, but guess what? Now I've got **GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE** on video, and it still has the potential to be an effective narcotic! Let's face it, **GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE**, even though it's in English, is one boring movie! It's being in B&W (out-of-date even in 1965!) doesn't help, and it doesn't hold up to today's exciting standards. The human characters are downright uninteresting, and the scenes of scientists talking about Gamera are as dull as always. Some of these long conversations are in the original Japanese versions, while others were added for the American release (yep, just like in **GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS**).

The footage of American actors (press conferences at the United Nations) is generally dull, but the scene of over acting scientists who's debate on live TV (a 'does Gamera exist or not' argument), which turns into a shouting match is kinda' amusing. Otherwise, the American footage is okay, at least it's better than the



'original' Americans cut out of the Japanese version, who's acting rivaled that of a common tape worm. So I think this is one of those rare occasions where the American version is better than the Japanese version. The opening scenes of scientists up near the North Pole are more fast-paced & quickly edited, and it features a cool, surf-like rock song called "Gamera", not unlike the old **BATMAN** theme. Interesting to note that one brief scene (an old man see's Gamera flying one night) is left in its original Japanese dialogue.

But whether we're talking about the Japanese version, America's **GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE** or the exact same movie's later release & re-edit **GAMERA** (Sandy Frank; 1985), the high point is always Gamera's rampage in Japan. Gamera's costume is decent, and the miniatures are as excellent as always for a Japanese film. The scenes of Gamera flying, as well as the explosions are first rate.

This is one point I'll debate with anyone! Sure, **GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE** may be stupid at times and dull at others, but dirt cheap it is not. If I hear one more asshole complain about its supposed "cheap", "chincy" special effects, I'll hit him with his white cane! Hell, I dare say the miniature sets are so convincing that, were it not for the appearance of what's obviously a man in a rubber costume (we all know turtles don't get that big), they could easily be mistaken for the real thing.

GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE isn't without its flaws. The early scene of Gamera destroying a ship didn't convince everyone it looked like Gamera was really that huge. So later they add some super-imposed shots of people running, and these little guys obviously look animated. Though this did indeed accentuate Gamera's size, these tiny humans are obviously escaping death, yet the script says

there were no survivors! It's even dubbed in the English version, shortly after we see these teeny weeny crewmen run to safety!

GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE would appear to start out up North with American jet planes chasing Soviet jet planes which accidentally trespassed (whether they're identified as Russians in the Japanese version is unknown). So the trigger-happy Americans shoot a jet down, and the jet just happened to be carrying an atomic bomb which explodes and releases Gamera from his two million year hibernation! The eskimos get scared, and so do Dr. Hidaka, his assistant Kyoko and a reporter called Ayagi. In the Japanese version, and Sandy Frank's faithful **GAMERA**, Ayagi has a crush on Kyoko, but that minor subplot (like much of the boring dialogue scenes) was completely removed from **GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE**. Unfortunately, one thing not removed from **GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE** is an irritating kid called Toshio Sakurai, who talks like **SPEED RACER**'s Trixie (familiar voice dubbers through out) who happens to love turtles, including Gamera. Meanwhile, we keep splicing over to semi-humorous scenes for American audiences only. There's an American army general who seems to have difficulty knowing his lines, a Russian ambassador, and a Japanese guy who confuses his Ls and Rs quite stereotypically (he says "Excerent", etc.), unlike the 'dubbed' Japanese, who have a much better grasp of English! Regardless, like Dr. Hidaka, these guys agree that the only way to defeat this flying, fire-breathing turtle is to trick him into a spaceship and send him to Mars. Being a fire eater, military weapons have proven ineffective against him. So Ayagi starts a fire which Gamera follows, and ends up concealed in the rocketship. So against his will,

it's off to outerspace. ** -DF

WAR OF THE MONSTERS

*["Gamera Tai Barugon"]
Presented by A.I.-TV, Dir. of
Photography: Michio
Takababashi, Music: Chuji
Kioshita, Special Effects:
Noriaki Yuasa & Kazufumi
Fujii, Produced by Masaichi
Nagata, Directed by Shigeo
Tanaka, With: Kojiro Hongo,
Kyoko Enami, Yuzo Hayakawa,
Reviewed by Damon Foster*

In Gamera's 2nd film, he's still pretty much considered a menace by the movie's human characters. Not until the very end when he destroys fellow menace Barugon (60 meters long, weighing 70 tons) does he seem to get even the slightest respect from the main characters in the story. And even then, nothing is said to indicate that they now regard him as a hero. This is the kind of level that, at least to me, works best in a Gamera movie. It's boring to just keep seeing him destroy buildings & Japanese artillery, yet on the other hand, he's not playing around with kiddies. This is the only Gamera movie that has no kiddies in it at all! This isn't the only good point which makes it my favorite Gamera film. **WAR OF THE MONSTERS** is well made,

nearly flawless, and can be considered the **GODZILLA VS. THE THING** of Gamera movies. I use that comparison for a number of reasons, such as: 1. Both are considered by fans of 'serious monster cinema' to be the best in their serieses. 2. Both are made in a serious, dramatic, no-nonsense manner. 4. Both have human subplots depicting the evil & consequences of greed.

In comparing **WAR OF THE MONSTERS** with its alternate English dub **GAMERA VS. BARUGON** (Sandy Frank; 1985), I'd say I prefer this here original 1960s version. All the cool jungle adventure scenes are left intact in **WAR OF THE MONSTERS**. However, unless some fan collector has edited missing scenes [from both versions] together to create an uncut English version, there is no complete print of it. **WAR OF THE MONSTERS** omits a ten minute scene of scientists talking about how they plan to destroy Barugon, and they decide to bribe the beast with a diamond! Though the scene of Barugon following this glimmering bait (lowered from a helicopter) remains in **WAR OF THE MONSTERS**, the scientists' actual discussion does not; instead **WAR OF THE MON-**

STERS offers abrupt, hasty narrating to suddenly explain what's going on. But still, at least **WAR OF THE MONSTERS** doesn't drag as much as the other version does. **WAR OF THE MONSTERS** starts off with a cool background (some abstract, colorful painting) behind the credits, yet Sandy Frank's release again offers generic footage of water.

Even in Gamera's second film, it becomes apparent that them Daiei dudes wanted their giant monster battles to differ from those in the Godzilla movies. Godzilla's battles consisted mostly of men in suits standing upright, while Gamera and Barugon seem to spend most of their time on all fours. Though both creatures fire things at each other, they also bite and spend some time just staring at each other, sizing each other up, like two alley cats using their instincts to know when to attack the other. Gamera's only human-like move is when he gives Barugon a swift punch in the face, allowing plenty of blue blood to ooze out, and is my favorite shot in **WAR OF THE MONSTERS**!

Former Daiei superstar Kojiro Hongo (whatever happened to him?) plays Keisuke, a pilot sent to some strange part of New Guinea inhabited

by Japanese natives! Also on hand are some nasty scorpions who seem to guard an opal they're sent to find. So yes, they find this opal, not knowing it's actually a dinosaur egg which hatches Barugon, a 'quick freeze lizard' who goes on a rampage in Japan! So along with a Japanese native girl from New Guinea, heroic Keisuke watches as Gamera (who returned to Earth because his rocket crashed into a meteor) battles it out with Barugon. Subplot: Evil man Onodera is up to no good! First he allows a comrade to die of a scorpion's sting (or a 'bite', as they seem to call it), then he bombs Keisuke in a cave, and then he kills Keisuke's handicapped brother! But wait, there's more, despite Keisuke's attempt to beat the living crap out of nasty Onodera (a decent fist fight), Onodera still manages to get in the way of things until Barugon (a hero, for once) decides the mad man might be kind of tasty. Eventually, this serious, intelligently written tale ends after Gamera drags Barugon underwater. **** -DF

RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS

["Gamera Tai Gyaos"] Pre-



sented by American International TV, Screenplay: Fumi Takahashi, Music: Tadashi Yamauchi, Dir. of Photography: Akira Uehara, Special Effects Photography: Kazufumi Fujii, Directed by Noriaki Yuasa, With Kojiro Hongo, Kichijiro Ueda, Hisayuki Abe, Reviewed by DF

Having just watched its later English version (**GAMERA VS. GAOS**), which came out nearly 20 years later, it's hard not to compare the two, though Sandy Frank's **GAMERA VS. GAOS** appears to be the more faithful of the two. But still, the dubbers of **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS** at least tried to dub star Kojiro Hongo in a Japanese accent! Also unique is the scene of Gaos slicing a reporters' car in half (a scene later in both **GAMERA VS. GAOS** and **GAMERA SUPER MONSTER**), and one guy scrambles to get into the main half of the car he'd gotten separated from. As he runs, his buddy yells out the Japanese word (with a slight American accent) "Hayaku", which means 'hurry', and was no doubt actual dialogue from the Japanese version. Also unique to **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS** are a couple brief inserts of English

written signs, "Stop the Expressway" and "To Summit Mt. Futago" (both written in "oriental"-looking signs, much like OC's logo), yet it's obvious the Japanese actors are really looking at Japanese signs. Any other differences between **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS**, **GAMERA TAI GYAOS** and **GAMERA VS. GAOS** are only minor editing differences, and basic choice of words in the dialogue. This is one of the few old Japanese monster movies which makes use of naive stereotypes, at least twice, Japanese characters (a couple bumbling road workers, sort of a Japanese Abbot & Costello) are dubbed saying, "Ah so".

As a film, **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS** is only slightly better than average for a sci-fi/monster romp, though there are those fans who swear this is the best in the Gamera series. Personally, I'll take **WAR OF THE MONSTERS/GAMERA VS. BARUGON**, for its non nonsense and serious, semi-realistic approach, and feel this follow-up comes in a close second. Part of the problem is it's a throwback to the kiddie content of **GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE**, in that it, like the rest of Gamera's movies,

features a child protagonist. Fortunately, the token brat Eichi is nowhere near the advertisement for the absolute necessity of birth control that **GAMERA's** kiddie was. Eichi's screentime is a little less (more of the story deals with road construction, of all things!), and he only draws one stupid drawing of a turtle!

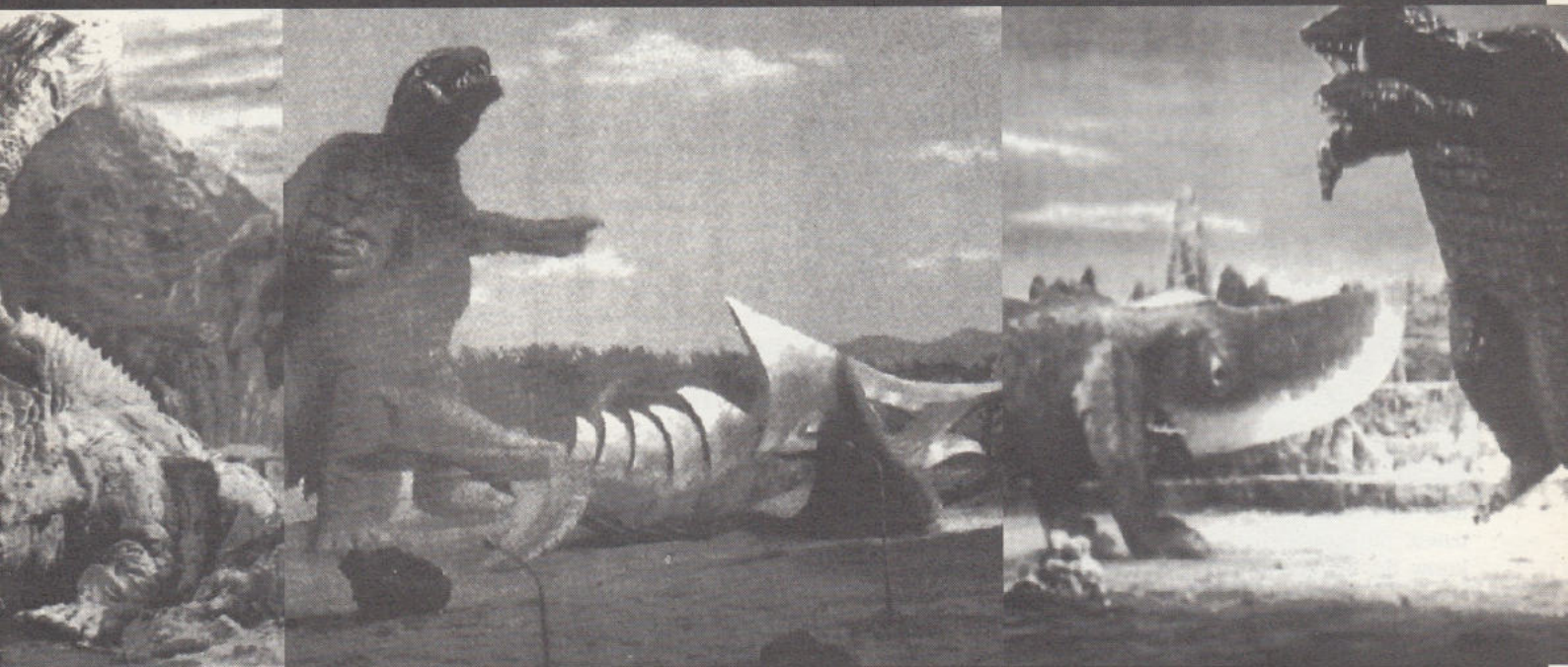
Trouble begins when some fat kid called Eichi leads a reporter (soon to be lunch) in search of that 'big scoop' into Gaos's cave. Unfortunately, Gaos just happens to be a prehistoric bird who spits out a razor sharp lazer beam, and can fire some weird yellow smoke out of his stomach. But back to the laser beam. Not only does it almost cut off Gamera's arm (in this version, Eichi calls it Gamera's "hand", and in **RETURN**, he calls it his "leg", but it's his arm, damn it, arm!), but slices jet planes in half. One spiffy effect is a helicopter being split down the middle as scientists riding it fall to their death. If only it weren't so obvious that one of these stupid cocksuckers was carefully 'jumping' to his death! Who hired these stuntmen, Helen Keller?! Anyway, after some subplot about scientists trying to destroy Gaos using sunlight and dizziness, we get to see more of yet another subplot!

Eichi's grandfather is telling mountain villagers to be very stubborn when it comes to selling their land to contractors trying to build a road. But once this heavy dialogue is out of the way, and Gamera has bitten off part of Gaos's foot, the two monsters confront each other for their third and final battle (not including stock-footage rematches in later flicks), where Gamera drags Gaos into his volcanic death. *** -DF

DESTROY ALL PLANETS

[*"Gamera Tai Uchu Kaiju Bairasu"; 3/20/68*] Presented by American International TV, Photography: Akira Kitazaki, Screenplay: Fumi Takahashi, Music: Kenjiro Hirose, Produced by Hidemasa Nagata, Dir.: Kenji Yuasa, American Re-Recording: Titan Prod. Inc. [Dir.: Bret Morrison, Edited by Eli & Emil Haviv], Starring: Kojiro Hongo, Toru Takatsuka, Kurl Crane, Reviewed by DF

Here's where the infantile pattern officially sets in, though **GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE** and **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS** offered the first hint of childishness to come. Starting with this here **DESTROY ALL PLANETS**, the Gamera movies are kiddie films all the



way, rivaling something from a Disney fantasy. So although **DESTROY ALL PLANETS** is a naive kiddie movie, it's definitely one of the better naive kiddie movies I've seen! It's big fun, and I really like a lot of the nifty special effects used throughout. What other G Rated movie shows you a monstrous squid who chops the heads off a group of Japanese men dressed like French painters? The squid is Viras, a cool monster costume, and Gamera himself doesn't look half bad either. The unique design of the alien spaceship scores additional points for **DESTROY ALL PLANETS** too.

Now, if only they'd cut the screentime of the awfully irritating kids in the film, and got rid of that stupid, marching 'Gamera theme song' (it sounds like a mixture of nursery chimes and parade music), then I'd say they'd have an honestly decent sci-fi flick. I mean, what's not to like about a colorful tale of aliens invading Japan who get thwarted by a fire breathing, jet propelled turtle? Ah yes, it had such potential, but they had to add plenty of scenes of embarrassing twerps. And that white kid Jim (Kurl Crane), is he one ugly boy or what? I bet when he was born, the doctor slapped the mother instead of the baby.

Another problem, and something which isn't exactly uncommon in Gamera's flicks, is excessive use of stock footage, added as time filler and to save yen. In this case, the villains decide to watch Gamera flashbacks on their spaceship's screen, and it easily takes up about twenty minutes. Again we watch Gamera's duels with Barugon and Gaos (pronounced 'Gayos' this time). Gamera's fight with Barugon (from **WAR OF THE MONSTERS**) consists of shots from both fights in that film, which may look convincing to the uninitiated, but not to those who know the script for **WAR OF**

THE MONSTERS! Their first confrontation happened near Osaka Castle, and later on, they had a rematch further away, at some lake. The no-continuity-allowed editing for **DESTROY ALL PLANETS** makes this fight (s) seem like the lake was right next to the castle. But Gamera's tackling of Gaos is even worse. Here we actually see Gamera drag Gaos (into the volcano) to what's meant to be his death, but then it immediately cuts back to their first duel! Also, the stock fight has glimpses of Kojiro Hongo as roadworker Tsutumi (character from **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS**), yet Hongo also has a 'legitimate' role in **DESTROY ALL PLANETS** as a completely different character (a scout leader). What's the deal? Does he work on expressways in the mountains part time, and do volunteer work with boy scouts near the beach? That's one hell of a commute.

After a cool opening of invaders from Planet Viras destroyed in space by Gamera, we gotta' watch all this Boy Scout crap. Obnoxious Jim & Masao tamper with some mini-submarine that looks like the toy it really is, and then the second Viran spaceship arrives to try and conquer the Earth. When not lassoing things or annoying the audience, Jim & Masao seem to enjoy saying, "Gamera", "Gamera" over and over again for no reason at all. Fortunately, both kids get captured by our would be-conquerors, who also gain control of Gamera. This is where even the FX get stupid, since the stock footage of Gamera destroying Tokyo is from **GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE**, therefore it's in B&W! The remainder of **DESTROY ALL PLANETS** is in color. Also stupid is how these supposed 'advanced' alien squids seem to have technology that two little boys can so easily figure out and use against them! So the kiddies reverse

the affect, so Gamera is free from alien control, and the brilliant brats even figure out the teleportation system and beam down from the spaceship! So Gamera destroys the strange looking vehicle, and then battles it out with lead alien Viras, who, despite being a squid, seems to have difficulty with water and coldness. Despite an over abundance of illogic throughout **DESTROY ALL PLANETS**, the climactic duel between turtle and squid is big fun. It's fast paced, and very amusing, and unlike later films, the battle never quite reaches the level of stupidity. Gamera wins because he takes Viras up to a high altitude and he gets real cold. *** -DF

ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS

(Japanese title: "Gamera Against the Giant Evil Beast Guiron") Produced by Hidemasa Nagata, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, Screenplay: Fumi Takahashi, Special Effects Direction by Kazafumi Fujii, Monster Design by Ryosaku Takayama, Starring: Nobuhiro Kazima ("Akira", *Najima in Japan*), Christopher Murphy (Tom), Miyuki Akiyama (Tomoko), Reviewed by John Marshall

ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS is the **CITIZEN KANE** of Gamera movies, meaning it is a series of dull characters telling pointless stories about Gamera in flashback scenes with great camera angles and lighting. On second thought, maybe **ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS** is the **CASABLANCA** of Gamera movies. Naah, more like **ERNEST SAVES THE EARTH**.

If you can't find **ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS**, then you can console yourself with the knowledge that **GAMERA VS. GUIRON** contains footage of Guiron chopping up Gaos, which was not included in **ATTACK**. At

any rate, this movie has all the color and motion you could want, plus the scene that to me defines what Gamera movies are all about: Guiron hurls Gamera through the air, but Gamera catches a tube mysteriously running between two buildings (a pipe? A skyway? Are the buildings mating?). Anyway, Gamera begins to spin around faster than Michael Jackson materializing in a day care center and flings himself back through the air! You'd never see that in a boring old Godzilla flick! **GAMERA VS. GUIRON** is by far the best out of all the films bastardized by Celebrity Home Video. And, at the risk of sounding kaiju-blasphemous and like a geek at the same time, I have to admit that the **MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000** treatment of this flick is really fuckin' funny!

Now I'm totally lost. Oh wait. **ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS**. Okay, first of all the original title of this gem (in English, anyway) is indeed **ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS**. The video release by Celebrity Home Video called **GAMERA VS. GUIRON** replaces more than the title, however. The original English dub of the soundtrack has been switched with one done by shoe salesmen, and not actors. Fortunately, the plot is the same. Two kids, one oriental and one disoriental, find a spaceship and take off in it. Gamera tries to warn them about something but they don't speak turtle, so the kids wind up on a distant planet where they see an outer-galaxy Gaos get trashed by Guiron, a knife-headed dinosaur. Then some groovy space chicks with plastic basketball halves on their heads try to eat the kids' brains! Then they find out "Rosebud" is just a feakin' sled and the movie ends. \What the hell are you talking about, Marshall?! -DF/ ***** -John Marshall

GAMERA VS. MONSTER X

[*"Gamera Tai Majyu Jyaga"; 3/12/70*] [British title: **GAMERA VS. JIGER**] Presented by American International TV, A Daiei Motion Picture Inc. Production, Produced by Hidemasa Nagata, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, American Version: Titan Production Inc. (Edited by Eli & Emil Haviv, Dir.: Bret Morrison), Cast: Tsutomu Takakawa, Kelly Varis, Katherine Murphy, Kon Omura, Junko Yasbiro, Reviewed by DF

It's so childish that even when I was a kiddie and saw it about 20 years ago, I considered it infantile.....even way back then! For a kiddie flick to be too naive even for kiddies is pretty pathetic. Now I'm so old that when I fart, dust comes out; and you can imagine how moronically childish **GAMERA VS. MONSTER X** seems today! Part of the problem is that god awful 'Gamera march' song, just who the hell came up with this sappy, uppity assassin of the ears?! But no matter how stupidly cute this bubbly tune is, infinitely more annoying is this little girl named Susan! I don't like looking at her, she's enough to scare any pedophile straight! Worse yet is the phenomenally bad voice she's got, it made me want to shove six-inch needles into my ears!

Yet despite its many, many flaws, **GAMERA VS. MONSTER X** is never dull. It's immensely entertaining throughout. Far-fetched, imaginative, and consistently

amusing. Gamera himself looks awesome, this is probably my favorite Gamera costume (like Godzilla, Gamera's appearance changed from film to film, though the differences are only slight). There are outstanding miniatures throughout, the set of Osaka city is great, and I was particularly impressed by the one for Wester Island (yes, spoofing Easter Island. Try to hold down your laughter), where Gamera gets whipped by Jiger (the first of their three fights).



Photo's like this appeared in Japanese magazines, accidentally starting a rumor in the late 1970's that there was going to be a **GODZILLA VS GAMERA** movie. But this was not to be, the photo is just a cut and paste, and merely compares the two monsters powers.

Despite the unrealistic approach, **GAMERA VS. MONSTER X** is interestingly written, almost educational. Much of the story takes place at Expo 70 (a World Exposition of international exhibits & stuff) in Osaka. I believe these scenes were actually filmed at the real Expo 70, since it resembles Expo 85, which I attended in Tokyo and got sunburned.

Though not credited in the opening graphics, a guest star is Ryu Hayama, playing Expo 70 worker Kaizuki Sawada. Ryu Hayama would later go on to play the title

hero of **KAMEN RIDER X** (Toei; 1974). Another interesting thing about **GAMERA VS. MONSTER X** is that the only stock footage occurs during the opening credits.

Some black chief guy who looks & sounds more African than Polynesian warns us not to remove "The Devil's Whistle" from Wester Island (hardy har har) because the removal will release giant Jiger, aka Monster X. Gamera also shows up to express concern that removing of this ancient statue will result in havoc, but naturally

etration shot in a kiddie movie! But seriously, two kiddies, Hiroshi & Tommy get into the same mini-submarine seen in **DESTROY ALL PLANETS** and cruise inside Gamera. Using sound waves, they kill the larva (a mini Jiger with a smaller horn) so Gamera can wake up. So yet again, Gamera engages in a campy duel with Jiger, and throws the statue into the stupid-looking villain's forehead! Gamera's exploits amount to 3, maybe 4 stars worth of fun, but the three dreadfully obnoxious twerps are on screen constantly, which detracts from **GAMERA VS. JIGER** significantly. *** -DF

GAMERA SUPER MONSTER

[Japanese title: **UCHU KAIJU GAMERA**, which means "Space Monster Gamera"] Produced & Distributed by Daiei Film Distribution Co. Ltd. in 1980, Planned by Masaya Tokuyama, Producers: Masaya Tokuyama, Shigeru Shinohara & Hirokazu Obba, Screenplay: Nisan Takahashi, Music: Shunsuke Kikuchi,

Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, Cast: Mach Fumiake, Yaeko Kojima, Keiko Kudo, Koichi Maeda, Tosbie Takada, Hiroji Hayashi, Tetsuaki Toyosumi, Hideaki Kobayashi, Makoto Ikeda & Kisao Hida, Reviewed by DF

Easily Gamera's worst movie ever, it's the **GODZILLA'S REVENGE** of Gamera flicks! It too has some lonely boy as the protagonist, the kid dreams of monsters, and all the monster battles are stock footage from older Gamera sagas! This ridiculous film no doubt came out during Daiei's revival in the late 1970s, as it's so cheap when

compared to any of the earlier Gamera movies. So on the whole, I'd say this stupid movie sucks like an industrial strength vacuum cleaner; it stinks like stale milk, etc.

Yet despite its many flaws, this unbelievably childish romp does manage to entertain as an unintended comedy, and it's never dull. Former pro-wrestler Mach Fumiake stars as one of three superheroes, and she sung the movie's theme song, "Love for Future". Her and two other sexy space ladies steal the film, and I think more of the movie should have concentrated on these characters, and not randomly edited shots of Gamera, Gyaos etc. taken from older movies. The three heroines look nice in their form fitting superhero leotards, their flying FX are welldone & convincing, and Mach Fumiake's brief, karate-inspired fight with an acrobatic villainess (who looks sensational in hot pants) is one of the better scenes in **GAMERA SUPER MONSTER**. Other FX, as scant as they are, include the simplest visuals & super impositions. The only 'new' shots of

pet who flies. Other than his bottom jaw which opens and closes mechanically, he's motionless.

Unique to this movie is a tendency to throw in jokes. In one scene, Gamera accidentally knocks over a poster with a picture of Godzilla on it, though the satirical monster is called "Dojira". Gamera also meets cartoon spaceships Space Cruiser Yamato (to the accompaniment of the old **STARBLAZERS** theme) and Galaxy Express 999 while cruising through space. His near collision with the Yamato ("Argo", in America) is a kid's dream sequence, but the brief encounter with Galaxy Express 999 happens on his way back from some planet where he killed Guiron. Again. I suppose these guest appearances are attempts at humor, so try to hold back your uncontrollable laughter.

I suppose to the uninitiated, this could seem like all-one movie, as the stock battles come and go rather effectively.

And unlike Godzilla in **GODZILLA'S REVENGE**, the changes in the Gamera costume, from film to film, were only slight. But there are continuity problems, like

when Gamera 'again' flies to an alien planet to destroy Guiron. In the original **GAMERA VS. GUIRON**, Guiron was destroyed by missiles sent by a human character from that particular film. With human characters generally removed from **GAMERA SUPER MONSTER**, these missiles just seem to pop out of nowhere. In another stupid sequence, the Zanon spaceship takes possession of Gamera himself, so the space babes use an X-ray of Gamera for a diagnosis. Gamera is flying, yet whoever did this anatomical painting forgot Gamera keeps his hind legs inside his shell when he flies! The moron did a painting of Gamera flying like Ultraman! The destruction scenes include Gamera's demolishing a dam from the beginning of **GAMERA VS. BARUGON**, and of course, B&W shots from **GAMERA**, shown on a TV screen as part of a news cast! You think maybe the news station couldn't afford full color stuff?!

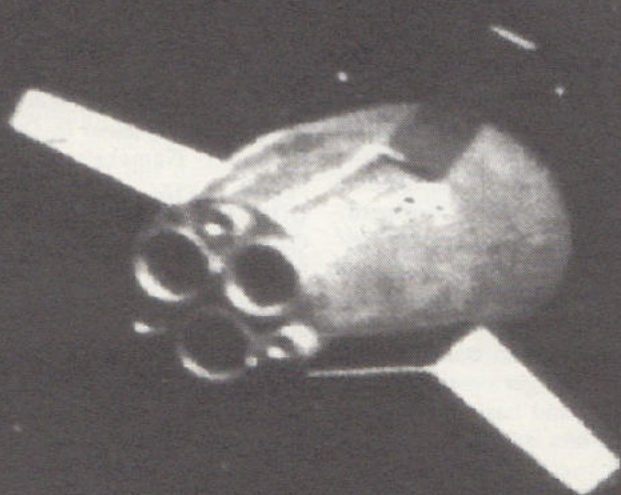
Unfortunately, our main character is an unbelievably irritating little boy normally called Keichi, but sometimes

pronounced Kaichi. Doubly unfortunate is that he likes to sing and play the organ. Hell, I almost wanted to play with my organ when the three alien ladies Marsha, Kilara, & Mitani (who's own planet was destroyed by the Zanon empire) appeared in their outfits, and later decided to help super monster Gamera protect Japan from attack! Yesiree, them Zanon invaders, in a spaceship miniature (one of the few props made for this film) looking like a **STAR WARS** prop are interested in conquering the world now, so they're reviving & unleashing all those monsters Gamera destroyed in previous movies; in order we see Gaos, Zigra, Viras, Jiger, Guiron, and Barugon. As such, this movie is a showcase of entertaining destruction scenes and monster battles, never a boring minute! We've seen all these shots before, but I guess watching them again, re-edited won't hurt much. Anyway, eventually Gamera crashes into the spaceship to his apparent death and the heroines take the kid on a flight over Japan one night.

* -DF

THE 2ND WAVE: SANDY FRANK'S GAMERA

Gamera in a rocket bound for Mars in GAMERA VS BARUGON.



GAMERA

A Sandy Frank Film Syndication Inc. release; 1985. A Daiet Motion Picture Co. Ltd. Production; 1965. Produced by Hidemasa Nagata. Planning: Yonejiro Saito. Screenplay: Fumi Takabashi. Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa. Cast: Eiji Funakoshi, Harumi Kiritachi, Junichiro Yamashita, Michiko Sugata, Yoshio Kitabara, Bokuze Hidari, Jun Hamamura, Ularo Hojo. Reviewed by Damon Foster

Sandy Frank, who gained notoriety among sci-fi fans in the 1970s for releasing Tatsunoko's **GATCHAMAN** as the butchered, highly infe-

rior edit, **BATTLE OF THE PLANETS**, did an infinitely better job at re-releasing this old, B&W monster movie. Unlike its alternate English dub (**GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE**) which came directly to American TV in the late 1960s or early 1970s, this home video version features no 'new' American footage of



domestic stars for U.S. release. The only major changes were the beginning and ending credits, now set against the same water which would appear in every Sandy Frank Gamera re-release to follow. Also, there are shots of Gamera, taken from the middle of the film, smashing some buildings, added to the very beginning. This was to make the opening more exciting, but instead damages continuity, as we're accidentally lead to believe Gamera is already up & about, when in fact he doesn't awaken until five minutes into the flick. Of the two English dubbings of this movie, this one is the more faithful to the Japanese version.

Possibly released to home video around 1985, it's nice to see that, 20 years after the movie's Japanese theatrical debut, we can finally see the movie as Daiei intended it, though with English dubbing. But predictably, **GAMERA** comes off as a typical Godzilla imitation, and the only way it breaks new grounds is that it's probably the first Japanese monster movie released to

America that dealt largely with annoying little kids. Otherwise, it's got the familiar cliches & formulas more commonly associated with Toho/Tsuburaya productions: International newspaper headlines announcing the monster's attack, a drunken old man singing at night and becoming scared of Gamera, monster revived from prehistoric hibernation via atomic explosion, monster rampages city and people run, kids go-go dancing to surf music in a club, and of course, a news reporter after that big scoop. Also on hand, of course, are the ingenious scientists who devise a plan to eliminate the marauding giant after military attacks prove as effective as a photo of Roseanne Bar used as a turn-on.

When I first saw this movie under the 'other' title, **GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE**, as a little kid, I missed huge parts of it because I kept dozing off. Of course, that's because it came on at midnight, but guess what? Now I've got the home video version, edited much differently and with some different foot-

age, and my eyelids are still getting heavier than a guilt trip! Could it be that even though I'm watching it around noon time, it's just a plain boring film? It's in B&W (out-of-date even in 1965!), and fails to hold up by today's exciting standards. The human characters are downright uninteresting, and the scenes of scientists talking about Gamera are as dull as always. The English dialogue, however, offers a few chuckles, with lines like this conversation between Kenny, Dr. Hidaka and Nora: "Gamera's a good turtle!" "He is good; he is good!" and "Yes he is!" These English names are typical in this print of **GAMERA**.

In the final analysis, **GAMERA** is average for 1960s Japanese sci-fi. While the human characters border somewhere between slightly dull to slightly dumb, the Eiji Tsuburaya-wannabe FX are fine & dandy. Cool explosions, good miniatures, and an interesting looking monster costume. I've never seen a fiery,

fanged giant turtle who walked on his hind legs in real life, but I imagine Gamera is exactly like one would look like! The most far-fetched thing about this fire-breathing/eating turtle is his flight capability. I would assume he achieved it as a result of some nuclear mutating, but some ancient eskimo markings reveal that this prehistoric race of turtles could always do that naturally. Gamera himself walks too clumsily, like an Irishman on Saint Patrick's Day, after his eleventh-leventh green lager!

But one problem with **GAMERA** is that even in 1965, it was out of date. The B&W tales of radio-active reptiles stomping Japan was more of a post-atomic 1950s thing. Hell, **GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS** came out a full decade before! By the time Gamera awoke and rampaged Hokaido & Tokyo, Godzilla already had a complex social life dealing with Mothra, Rodan & Ghidrah! Get with it, Gamera! Another



problem with **GAMERA** is that nobody had made a Gamera movie before! They obviously weren't sure how this should be done.

In **GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS** it was inhabitants of Oda Island who prophesized doom, in **KING KONG VS. GODZILLA**, it was primitive natives, so in this one, it's eskimos up north somewhere who warn us of Gamera, the "devil's envoy". So brilliant zoologist Dr. Hikada, who just happens to have a theory there were once giant turtles up near the north pole goes up there and guess what! He must be psychic! Seems some jet planes are having a fight, and the mysterious plane that failed to introduce itself is shot down, and since it also happened to be carrying a nuclear bomb, the explosion revives a prehistoric turtle who's been hibernating as long as Godzilla, Rodan, Dan Quayle's brain, etc. Strangely, everyone forgets about this unidentified plane and its potential threat (there could be more of these terrorists!) once we realize little boy Kenny has no friends and is obsessed with his pet turtle! Since Kenny loves little turtles, big turtle Gamera spares Kenny's life when the stupid brat runs inside a light house Gamera is destroying. Kenny is a moron indeed, he later climbs on board a train Gamera is smashing, and must once again be rescued. Later, Gamera reveals he can fly by putting his head, limbs & tail in his shell, so jet-like flames can shoot out and turn him into a flying saucer. Speaking of flying, that's how the United Nations eliminates Gamera; the Z Plan is where they lure him into a rocket (fire is the bait, he 'eats' fire!) which then shoves off to Mars.

*1/2 -DF

GAMERA VS. BARUGON

A Sandy Frank Inc. Presentation, a Daiei Motion Picture Co. Ltd. (Tokyo, Japan), Pro-

duced by Masaichi Nagata, Planning by Yonejiro Saito, Screenplay: Nizo Takahashi, Dir.: Shigeru Tanaka, Photography: Michico Takahashi, Special Effects: Kazufumi Fujii, Cast: Kojiro Hongo, Kyoko Enami, Akira Natsuki, Koji Fujiyama, Yuzo Hayakawa, Ichiro Sugai, Reviewed by Damon Foster

As I mumbled when I reviewed the original English version (**WAR OF THE MONSTERS**), this is my favorite Gamera movie. But of the two English adaptations, this is the inferior print, as I believe it deletes a whole segment involving our heroes traveling through a dangerous jungle (it's hard to say, I mean, the TV station could have been the ones who cut that out to show more commercials). But also, the native girl Kara is dubbed in too meek a voice this time. She sounded much better the first time she was dubbed in English in **WAR OF THE MONSTERS**. Otherwise, **GAMERA VS. BARUGON** at least retains a scene of scientists talking, missing from **WAR**.

What's to be said about this flick that hasn't been said before? I reviewed this movie in an old back issue of OC (in the mid-1980s), and have just reviewed the other English dub a few pages ago. Well, let me again remind you that of all the Gamera movies (not including the new one, which I've yet to see), this classic is the least laughable of the bunch. While Barugon is only mildly realistic, the FX generally are excellent. Amazingly, there are a couple minor flaws at the opening scene of Gamera demolishing Kurobe Dam (see Daiei article for complete details), yet neither are visible to anyone not looking for them.

Gamera comes back to Earth to tangle with some horned alligator called Barugon who hatched from a jewel everyone is fighting over. Barugon likes to freeze

things by firing a rainbow (huh? Who's idea was this? And whatever drugs they're taking, send some to me in a plain brown wrapper!) at them! Okay, so Barugon likes the cold, Gamera is into fire, so already we got conflicts arising. Strangely, for a cold monster, Barugon doesn't like water! Even stranger is that Gamera prefers fire, yet he drags Barugon into a lake, to his death? Oh well, minor continuity problems aside, **GAMERA VS. BARUGON** is an epic combination of tense human melodrama and the instinctive rivalries of overgrown reptiles.

***1/2 -DF

GAMERA VS. GAOS

Produced by Hidemasa Nagata, Planning: Kazutada Nakano, Screenplay: Fumi Takahashi, Dir.: Noriyaki Yuasa, Photography: Akira Uehara, Special Effects: Kazufumi Fujii, Film Editor: Tatsuji Nakashizu, Eiko Yanami, Isami Saeki, Mikiko Tsubouchi, Yasushi Sakagami, Koji Fujiyama, Reino Kasahara, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Where as the human subplots of Gamera's second flick were in good meaning with the central monster story, those in this 3rd flick are silly, boring and obviously mere filler inbetween monster sequences. Much of this nonsensical script deals with construction workers trying to build a road in Nagoya, and how some local old men argue among themselves while trying to decide how much to sell their land (to the company building the road) for. Daiei's main superstar Kojiro Hongo (who's name is somehow missing from this print's opening graphics!) returns to play Totsumi, the supervisor of the



*Characters from
GAMERA VS BARUGON*



road crew. Another supporting character is a little boy called Eichi. Like all Japanese kiddies in these movies, Eichi is fairly annoying, though not one of the worst. I must say, he was more irritating in the old **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS** version (American International) than in this more recent American dub (**GAMERA VS. GAOS**), because of the choice of voice dubber. The first English dub had a voice for him (also used as the voice for Takei in **MAJIN THE MONSTER OF TERROR**) that was way too female.

You'll note to the left that the credits (as they actually appear on Sandy Franks' reissue of the film) lack not only the name Kojiro Hongo, but anything to designate where Crew ends and Cast begins! Either that, or Tatsuji Nakashizu, Eiko Yanami, Isami Saeki, Mikiko Tsubouchi, Yasushi Sakagami, Koji Fujiyama, and Reino Kasahara really all worked on film editing! That's about the only screw-up in this version. The new dubbing was done by the same British who always say "But still" when dubbing Chinese kung fu farces. But in this Japanese monster movie, I only counted three "but still"s. It's semi-amusing

to compare both English versions of **GAMERA TAI GYAOS**. In **WAR OF THE MONSTERS**, when Kojiro Hongo reaches out to help Eichi down from Gamera's shell, he says: "Gamera, I can't reach!" In the **GAMERA VS. GAOS** version, the exact same scene has him saying: "Alright, stand up!"

I liked the scenes of the two giant monsters much more than I liked the scenes of human characters; but that's like saying I'd rather have sex with Kitten Natividad than Kate Smith. Gaos is a really slick costume. The creature is a mutant bird, and a well designed one at that. Its powers (razor sharp laser beam, and yellow smoke which puts out fires) are traditionally far-fetched. The battles between the two giants seem rushed and badly edited. This really screws up continuity, with Gamera flying & tucked into his shell one second, then magically on the ground, with his limbs & head out of his shell in the very next frame. Another element of fakeness is the occasional mechanical eyes that continually look back & forth automatically, which make Gamera look more like a robot than a turtle.

65 meters high, and weighing 25 tons, Gaos is rudely awakened from prehistoric hibernation when a volcano erupts. By this time, Gamera is regarded as a full-fledged hero by the Japanese humans, especially a particularly young Japanese human called Eichi. Gaos happens to find young Japanese humans tasty, so it's up to Gamera to rescue the little Japanese human from Japanese monster Gaos. Inbetween all three Japanese monster battles, and maybe a brief Japanese destruction scene we see the Japanese military's Japanese attempts to destroy Japanese Gaos. None of this Japanese stuff works, not even spinning Japanese Gaos to get him really Japanese dizzy. Japanese

meanwhile, Japanese villagers don't know how much to charge the Japanese company building the Japanese road, and let's see, what Japanese else happens? Oh yeah, Japanese Gamera bites off Japanese Gaos's Japanese toe. Japanese not only that, but Japanese Gamera drags Japanese Gaos into a Japanese volcano to his Japanese death,



but Japanese Gamera survives, as does the Japanese road. I have one final word to say: Japanese. ** -DF

GAMERA VS. GUIRON

Presented by Daiei Co., Planning by Kazumasa Nakano, Produced by Hidemasa Nagata, Screenplay: Fumi Takahashi,

Music: Shunsuke Kikuchi, Cameraman: Akira Kitazaki, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, Featuring: Nobuhiko Kazima, Christopher Murphy, Mizuki Akiyama, Yuko Hamada, Eiji Funakoshi, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Though I've always liked the knife-headed design of Guiron's costume, and other gaudy FX in **GAMERA VS.**

print is superior to the A.I.P. version. Though both involve irritating kiddies dubbed in irritating voices, at least this version retains that cool scene of Guiron bloodlessly chopping off Gaos's head! It was so nice to finally see this shot, since **ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS** so foolishly lacked it. Yet **GAMERA VS. GUIRON** also includes one of those annoying "Gamera March" songs, sung by kiddies.

Stupid, dumb, moronic, naive fun highlights this unintentional comedy about two dumb kids abducted by alien space babes who eat brains (so I guess this film's writers have nothing to worry about). So now these two brats are getting chased all around the loony space-age sets of Planet Tera. As serious sci-fi, it's at least as enthralling as (and quite similar to) Daffy Duck being chased by Marshall the Martian in **DUCK DODGERS IN THE 24TH AND A HALF CENTURY**. Some of the props & miniatures are cool, while others (like underwater sea plants obviously made of pipe-cleaners) are, well, not quite as cool. Let's see, what else happens? Oh yes! As is often the case when alien invaders are up to no good, the aliens watch stock footage from old Gamera movies to refresh their memories and the movie's budget. Speaking of Gamera, he arrives, attacks and kicks ass. Reptilian battle axe & ninja-star shooter Guiron suffers defeat. So Gamera brings both twerps back to Earth, unfortunately for Earth. ** -DF

GAMERA VS. ZIGRA

A Sandy Frank Syndication Inc. Presentation, A Daiei Motion Picture from 1971, Produced by Hidemasa Nagata, Screenplay: Fumi Takahashi, Dir.: Noriaki Yuasa, Photography: Akira Uehara, Special Effects: Kazuo Fujii, Film Editor: Zenko Miyazaki, Music: (CONTINUED ON PAGE 52)

GUIRON, this infantile fantasy was just too childish & embarrassing to watch twice! So no, I did not sit down to watch **GAMERA VS. GUIRON** and **ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS** back to back! But I have both on tape, and have seen them both. This is the only instance where I think Sandy Frank's

HONG KONG HEROES

Unless you're blinder than a cyclops with an eyepatch, you've probably noticed that, starting with OC's previous issue, HK HEROES's 1990s section is growing like a cock in a strip joint, while the sections on 1960s, 1970s & 1980s films remain comparatively small. That's because everyone and his brother seems interested in contributing reviews of new movies. Naturally, I'm grateful and only too happy to include these recent reviews in OC, because it saves me the headache of sitting through all this trendy new crap. However, I hope to even things out, so if any of you fans & writers

are interested in reviewing the oldies too, go for it! Anyway, my 1960s section is as short as always, it's so hard to locate HK films from the 1960s. To make up for it, I'm including a rare article on 1960s starlet Ivy Ling Po, translated from CINEMART #12 (263rd edition; Dec. '91). Though she's not of interest to most of you because she hasn't been in Jet Li or Tsui Hark flicks, please read her bio anyway-- you might actually learn something.

1960s: A MAID FROM HEAVEN

(aka 7 ANGELS FROM

HEAVEN) Produced by Run Run Shaw, Directed by Ho Meng Hua & Chen Yi, Starring: Fang Yin, Hsia Yi-Chiu, Chang Li-Chu, Pan Ying Tse, Shirley Huang, Yeh Ching, Lily Chen, Hao Li, Ivy Ling Po? Reviewed by DF

Have any of you dudes or babes sat through this old musical? Of course not, you've no reason to, after all, I'm the one making OC, and trying to keep 1960s fantasies within its pages. But if by some miracle, there's an individual as stupid as I am, who's seen it, can you confirm Ivy Ling Po's appearance for me? I swear it's her as one of the main characters! Yet she's not

mentioned in the credits! Could it be that, despite her dominance throughout, this boring musical is just so damn ancient that way back when they made it, Ling Po was obscure? Plenty of other actresses (like Fang Yin) are credited, but not Ling Po, the only one I happen to be familiar with. Anybody know what's going on? Could it be that Ling Po has a lookalike who stars in **A MAID FROM HEAVEN**?

But believe it or not, I'm not exactly dying of curiosity. I know it's Ivy Ling Po, but don't really care. That's because this is another romantic musical, in fact the most musical of musicals I've ever

此曲只應天上有，豈能不斷舞台唱。

凌波終於告別舞台

THIS MUSIC SHOULD ONLY BE HEARD IN HEAVEN, HOW COULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO BE HEARD ON STAGE TOO OF
A MEMORY LASTS FOREVER THE QUEEN OF WANG MUI OPERA



Ling Po started her career when she was a child. She became famous after she starred in LEUNG SHAN PO ZHU YING TAI ("Father Takes a Bride"). She has made dozens of Mandarin movies over the past 40 years, has her shares of contribution to the movie industries. Ling Po's original name was Kuan Hoi-tang. She was born in 1939, Amoy Fujian province. Unfortunately, she was born during World War II, her family was very poor. Her parents gave her away for adoption when she was only three.

In 1950, Ling Po and her adopted parents came to HK. She had grown into a beautiful woman in 1954. She made her first movie in Amoy accent LOVE OF YOUNG PEOPLE, using the stage name 'Shiao Juan'. After that, she made over 20 Amoy films, all in supporting roles. She became a little known in 1956. She

starred in RED CHILD, THE BURNING OF RED LOTUS TEMPLE, etc. Although there were a lot of movies made, it was not at her peak yet. Ling Po's adopted mother started her own movie company called China Amoy in 1957. Ling Po also made many movies there like FAKE MARRIAGE, SHIAO FUNG, COLOR CHAMBER STORY, THE STORY OF LI SHAN, THE STORY OF JADE CARP, and THE STORY OF LAU HOI, all in Amoy accent.

Her life like this wasn't bad, until an unpleasant event happened. She was 18 then, and beautiful. Her adopted mother forced her to live with a Philippine Chinese businessman. Ling Po was helpless and had to live with that man, and retired from making movies. After two years, that Philippine Chinese businessman bankrupted. Since they only lived together for convenience, they went their

seen. There's a lot more ancient Chinese opera singing than actual dialogue, there's a song every five minutes, and most of these ballads seem to last at least five minutes! So it's mostly singing, and that dainty way of running around in a circle while flinging streams of toilet paper the Chinese call dancing. This is ancient, traditional Chinese opera at its best- or worst, depending on your opinion of romantic musicals and general. As is always the case with antique Shaw Bros. musical soap operas, the sets and costumes are epic, lavish, very good, etc.

Naturally, there's absolutely no swordfighting (or action of any kind) in this cute little, charming fantasy about fairies up in Heaven. By the way, I don't necessarily consider 'cute' or 'charming' to be good things. One of the singing fairies is bored in Heaven so she comes down to Earth to marry a Chinese man called Tung Yung (Ivy Ling Po unconvincingly portraying a

man yet again). Their bashful frolicking in a forest (an obvious stage set) is naive & predictable, it's only high point being a talking tree (not cool like the ones in **H.R. PUFF & STUFF**) the fairy brings to life. After much coaxing, the two get married. By this time, I was literally dozing off, so it's all quite hazy from this point on. Seems this fairy, and her six sisters who visit her from Heaven can spin silk magically, and create lots of beautiful clothing. By this time, I must have spent a good twenty minutes unconscious, and could still hear the Chinese singing in whatever I was dreaming! The TV just played on, oblivious to my nap. You ever notice that no matter how short your sleeping period is, you feel all greasy and need to take a shower? Even a five minute nap makes me feel unclean! By the time I'd gotten out of the shower, I guess the fairy and Tung Yung have been married a while, and her magic has helped get them rich. They mentioned

they had a child. After they watch ducks swimming in a pond, the fairy's father (I assume it's God, or whatever the fellow's name is) gets mad that she's living among humans so he sends his opera-armied soldiers down to retrieve her and they both cry. The ending didn't make me cry, but the boredom did. -DF

1970s:

THE UNICORN PALM

1973 (aka *FIST OF UNICORN and BRUCE LEE AND I*), Starring: Unicorn Chan, Yasuaki Kurata, Wang Ing Sik, Mars, Reviewed by Damon Foster

I can now officially dispel with some rumors about this film; rumors which turned out to be false, they're rumors and only rumors. Here they are: 1. Bruce Lee made a walk-on cameo in this film to help his

friend Unicorn Chan. 2. Bruce Lee was secretly filmed, behind the scenes, and these Lee shots made it into the movie and pissed off Lee. The only scene of Bruce Lee is a still shot during the opening credits, and I do believe Lee choreographed some of the fights as a favor to Unicorn, the film's star. There's a photo presented on page 28 to prove it, Unicorn's hand is on Lee's stomach. This shot actually happens in the film, though it's some other actor that Unicorn is battling. So let it be known that there's really no Bruce Lee in this movie (despite some grappling scenes in the fights which look Lee-inspired), however I did spot a young Jackie Chan in a microscopic cameo as a background henchman (blink and you'll miss him).

But as a typically schlocky early 1970s kung fu romp, it's okay. There are cool fights, but most of the better ones don't involve Unicorn. There's some other

一個時代的終結 一段永久的回憶

**END? IVY LING PO FINALLY SAID GOODBYE TO STAGE PERFORMANCE! THE END OF AN ERA!
OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED HER RETIREMENT**

separate ways.

Ling Po needed money to support herself, so she tried to make more movies. But Amoy movies were not doing well at that time. Instead, with the help of her nominal father Chow Shi Lu (who worked for the Shaw Bros.), she became the singing girl for Jia Pao Yuk in the Mandarin movie *DREAM OF RED CHAMBER* behind the scenes. She became famous overnight. It was her turning point. Run Run Shaw liked her voice, and thought

she was talented, so he used her in a male role in the movie *LEUNG SHAN PO AND ZHU YING TAI* ("Father Takes a Bride"), and gave her the stage name Ivy Ling Po.

This movie was a success so Ling Po became the top actress in the Mandarin movie industry. She even won the Golden Horse Special Award. Later on, she won the 11th Asian Pacific Best Actress Award in 1964 with her performance in *LADY GENERAL HUA MU LAN*. She won the 6th Golden Horse Best Actress Award in 1968 with the movie *FIRE AND LOVE*, and the best movie performance award from Chinese Culture Organization. After winning several times, she made her place in the Mandarin movie industry. Ling Po gave her youth to movies, she's made dozens of them. Some of them were even produced by herself, like *CROSSROADS*, *RETURN OF THE RED*

CHAMBER, and *THE IMPERIOUS PRINCESS*.

In June, 1966, Ling Po married actor King Man. They both left Shaw Bros. in 1974. They and Tang Wei, Han Hsian Quin (another couple) started their own movie company called Today. Ling Po was the CEO and the pro-





translation of any kind), but it seems to have something to do with a Buddhist monastery and some monk accupunctures his palm. Anyway, Unicorn befriends a kid and some acrobats before he and his swift-kicking girlfriend finally waste the villains. ** -DF

THE WAYS OF KUNG FU

A Champion Film Co. Pro
THE UNICORN PALM

duction, Chin Hsin (H.K.) Co. Distribution, Producer: Wu Tung Tsai, Cameraman: Lai Wen Hsing, Lighting: Li Lung Yu, Film Editor: Chen Hung Min, Still Photos: Lai Ming Fang, Dir.: Li Chao, Starring Chi Kuan Chun & Liang Chia Jen, Reviewed by DF

ro, and a heroine who do their share of ass-kicking, so the battles are fast-paced and enjoyable. Otherwise, it's so ultra-average and predictable, I'm at a loss for words. It is interesting that Yasuaki Kurata plays a Chinese translator working for the Japanese, and it's Wei Ping Ao who plays an actual Japanese this time (with a Hitler mustache), not the interpreter.

Another low budget chop

sockey farce about revenge; evil Japanese slaughtered a family who's son grows up to become vengeful Unicorn Chan. His hand was slashed by a villain, and I'm not sure, but the scar tissue on his hand either increases his hatred and adrenaline so he fights better, or maybe the scar tissue itself (on his palm) is so tough it makes him more lethal. I'm not sure what the connection is (my print has no English



Haven't I reviewed this one a billion times? I've had **WAYS OF KUNG FU** on tape for at least ten years (re-



ducer. Aside from making movies, she also has appeared in several TV shows. She starred in the TV series **LIFELONG COUPLE**, and **SPRING SOUTH OF THE RIVER**. In 1981, she hosted the program **THE 18 YEARS OF GOLDEN HORSE AWARD**.

Ling Po made her fame with the movie **LEUNG SHAN PO AND ZHU YING TAI** ("Father Takes a Bride"), she has also sang the songs from the movie on stage several times. This time when she said goodbye to the stage, she sang again the songs from the movie. Being called best partners, Ling Po and Si Jing-ting held concerts last month in Taipei Taiwan Gaoshiong culture center. They sang the songs from the movie for many nights. Of course, the tickets were all sold out.

Being a grandmother, Ling Po is still very attractive. This time, she brought back the wave of **LEUNG SHAN PO AND ZHU YING TAI** again. Those grandmothers and grandfathers were Ling Po fans, they went to record stores buying **LEUNG SHAN PO AND ZHU YING TAI** cassettes. Over the past few years, Ling

Po had kept a low profile. Last year, Ling Po and Si Jing-ting performed **LEUNG SHAN PO AND ZHU YING TAI** on stage for the first time. People were very enthusiastic about it. And this time with the retirement concert, they invited Sun Chi-fung to play Zhu Ying Tai. Being over 50 years old, Ling Po when playing 20 year old Leung Shan Po, was still very good. The program was two hours long, she could still sing and act very well. Even Si Jing-ting and Sun Cui-fung were good. They got a lot of ovation.

When answering a curtain call, it was the most touching moment in Ling Po's life. Later she recalled that **LEUNG SHAN PO AND ZHU YING TAI** has made her a star, over the years, she sang the songs many times. But she felt different each time. She remembered the deepest was when she started with Li Di who is now dead. Ling Po thanked fans for their support. She will bring home the wishes of her fans and being a house wife. Although Ling Po loved stage, she said goodbye to stage and went home.

corded late one lonely night), but can't say I made it a point to watch it a lot. Yet it was all so familiar to me that I fear I've already reviewed this one more than once. I guess I'll have to start keeping track of what's already been written about! Or maybe this chop sockey romp is just so incredibly predictable, and typical of the 1970s genre that it's becoming yet another case of 'If you've seen one, you've seen 'em all'. If this old saying is true, then I've seen 'em all, perhaps a hundred times each!

As far as average 1970s revenge farces go, **WAYS OF KUNG FU** is certainly no worse than average. It's definitely inspired by Jackie Chan's **DRUNKEN MASTER** and any other late 1970s flick to involve excessive training scenes. Chi Kwan Chun and Meng Fei, who also worked together on the Shaw epic **FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH**, play well off each other in this independent

cheapie. Also on hand is a cameo by a much younger looking Wu Ma. Liang Chia Jen stars too, made to look much older. It's kind of amusing in that he was younger when **WAYS OF KUNG FU** was made, so they added makeup & fake beard & mustache to make him look old. Nowadays, he is indeed older, but doesn't need a fake beard & grey hair to play an older character. Another point about **WAYS OF KUNG FU** is that the main villain has a lame make-up job. It's meant to be scars on his face, but they look to me like Silly Putty, or whatever that stuff is called. You know what I mean, right? That gummy clay stuff that comes from a plastic egg and can pick up pictures from newspapers.

Anyway, poor, unfortunate Ta Kun (Chi Kwan Chun) is a downtrodden loser who works at a Buddhist monastery. He's the only one there with hair, so I guess he's just a janitor & cook, not a monk. Then one day, yet another

bully arrives to hassle him, only this time, it's a monk-gone-bad called Wu Tak (wanted for committing some crime never explained). Wu Tak barges in and takes over the whole monastery, so Ta Kun goes off to learn kung fu from Shen King (Liang Chia Jen) and his family. After endless training scenes, Ta Kun uses kung fu to get revenge against the bald bully with Silly Putty on his face. But Putty face wants revenge now, so he gets friends and a metal ring which proves to be lethal enough to remove excess characters from the script. Eventually, Ta Kun gets help from Meng Fei, master of the drunken style, and some sort of bounty hunter or detective gets in on the action and helps defeat the baddies. Putty face gets arrested. ** -DF

DEATH DUEL OF KUNG FU

Starring: Wang Tao & John Liu, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Them thar Chinamen sher liked a kickin' each other! Here's one action packed copsockey from the mid-to-late 1970s! By the way, a collage from this movie was accidentally included as the logo for last issue's Gangster article! Hell, the misplaced shot showed Wang Tao in a kung fu stance and a yakuza girl, so it looked like a montage from a gangster movie. Not until now that I've watched **DEATH DUEL OF KUNG FU** can I identify last issue's photo on page 4. So it was my mistake, **DEATH DUEL OF KUNG FU** isn't about gangsters, it takes place in the 1600's. But our two main heroes have out-of-place, 20th century hair styles, justifying my confusion.

Any kung fu movie with John Liu and Wang Tao is bound to have good fights. Liu's excellent legwork works well with Tao's complex 'grappling hands' technique and the occasional acrobatics are

Ling Po Profile

Original Name: Kuan Hoi Tang

Stage Name: Shiao Juan, Ling Po since 1962

Birth Place: Amoy, Fujian

Debut: 1954: Love of Young People (Amoy Movie)

Import Award:

The 1st Golden Horse Best Performance Special Award (1962)

("Leung Shan Po and Zhu Ying Tai")

The 11th Asian Pacific Best Actress Award (1964)

("Lady General Hua Mu-Lan")

The 6th Golden Horse Best Actress Award (1968)

("Fire and Love")

The Best Movie Performance Award from Chinese Culture Organization (1968)

("Fire and Love")

Marriage: Married actor King Han on June 18, 1968. Have Two Sons.

Important Films:

Amoy Films:

1954: 兒女情深

(Love of Young People)

1956: 紅孩兒

(Red Child)

火燒紅蓮寺

(The Burning of Red Lotus Temple)

1957: 真假姻緣

(Fake Marriage)

小鳳

(Shiao Fung)

綵樓記

(Color Chamber Story)

劉海遇仙記

(The Story of Lau Hoi)



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE --



Wang Tao in *DEATH DUEL OF KUNG FU*.

vealed there's some message hidden in a pendant somewhere. But forget about the over-formalized plot and cheer our heroes (Liu & Tao) on as they unite against a Ching leader for

the grand finale. *** -DF

AMAZONS AND SUPERMEN

(aka "Superuomini, Superdonne, Superbotte", and "Super Stooges vs. the Wonder Women") Produced by Olivido Assonitis & Giorgio Carlo Rossi in 1974, In Association with Shaw Bros. (Hong Kong) Movie Co., Story & Screenplay: Aldo Crudo & Alfonso Brescia, Editor: Liliana Serra, Music: Franco Micaluzzi, Production Manager: Ricardo Billi, Exec. Prod.: Stenio Fiorentini, Stunt Coordinator: Franco Pasquetto,

Cast: Nick Jordan, Mark Hannibal, Yueh Hua, Malisa Longo, Gene Woods, Karen Yeb, Kirsten Gilles, Riccardo Pizzuti, Reviewed by DF

Another Italian/Asian coproduction along the lines of **THREE SUPERMEN IN TOKYO** (pictured on page 31) and of course, **CRASH CHE BOTTE STRIPPO STRAPPO STROPPIO** (aka **THREE SUPERMEN AGAINST THE ORIENT**), reviewed in OC's Jackie Chan Issue and pictured on this issue's cover (lower right corner). In this case, the obligatory oriental star is none other than 1960s heart-throb Yueh Hua, of **THE MONKEY, COME DRINK WITH ME, THE WARLORD AND THE ACTRESS, SWORD AND THE LUTE, 7 BLOWS OF THE DRAGON, LUNG WEI VILLAGE, PAYMENT IN BLOOD**, and **IN THE LINE OF DUTY 3**, where he worked with Hiroshi Fujioka, the original Kamen Rider! My god, the family tree of superheroes is growing! Hell, in this movie, Yueh Hua appears alongside Nick Jordan (main hero), one of the original **THREE FANTASTIC SUPERMEN** (1967)! Both actors are heroes in their own right

(Yueh Hua played the Monkey King in **THE MONKEY!**), and it's hard to tell which of the two fights better. Yueh Hua apparently got his post-Peking opera training at the Shaw Studios, while Italy's Nick Jordan was one hell of an acrobat.

Unfortunately, **AMAZONS AND SUPERMEN** isn't quite as good as **THREE SUPERMEN AGAINST THE ORIENT**, and probably not as good as **THREE SUPERMEN IN TOKYO** (aka "Three Supermen A Tokyo"). This early/mid 1970s farce has boring moments and plenty of stupid moments. There's comedy throughout, and most of it, like its childish, cartoon-like music is embarrassing. Yueh Hua's charisma didn't give him enough screentime. His kung fu was never outstanding, but in his few fights in this romp, he manages to deliver a couple decent kicks and passable swordplay. He's neglected, especially to someone like me who's enjoyed his 1960s films from the Shaw Bros., and would like to see more of him in action in what's probably his only non-Chinese film. I also found the romantic and/or erotic subplots to be pretentious and cliché-ridden. They could have made this lively, wacky movie a real action masterpiece, they had enough talent in front of the camera, it's the idiots behind the camera that ruined it. The combination of gladiators and Chinese swordsmen could have been a real winner, but in this case, it's an even worse combination than loaded guns & bad tempers in a post office.

Okay, so the director, musician, & writer are a bunch of jerks so stupid they think a paradox means two physicians. Fortunately, Yueh Hua and Nick Jordan's stunt double make up for it! Of course, Jordan did cool gymnastics in **THREE FANTASTIC SUPERMEN**, but he's a little older in **AMAZONS AND SUPERMEN**, and since he wears a cowl, it's

Mandarin Films:

1961: 紅樓夢
1962: 梁山伯與祝英臺
1963: 七仙女
1964: 花木蘭
萬古留芳
故都春夢
1965: 魚美人
西廂記
1966: 明日之歌
新陳三五娘
1968: 烽火萬里情
兒女是我們的
1970: 十四女英豪
1973: 我父我夫我子
啼笑姻緣(新故都春夢)
1975: 愛心千千萬
十字路口
1977: 新紅樓夢
1980: 金枝玉葉

(Dream of Red Chamber)
(Leung Shan Po and Zhu Ying Tai)
A Maid From Heaven
Lady General Hua Mu-Lan
(Lasting Forever)
(Spring Dream in Old Capital)
The Mermaid
West Chamber
(The Song of Tomorrow)
The Mirror and the Lichee
(Fire and Love)
(The Children are ours)
(Forteen Female Generals)
(My Father, My Husband, and My Son)
(The New Spring Dream in Old Capital)
(Millions of Loving Hearts)
(Crossroads)
Return of the Red Chamber
The Imperious Princess





3 \$UPERMEN A TOKIO

DICK GORDON-WILLY NEWTON...GLORIA PAUL

Regia **BITTO ALBERTINI**

HEIDY FISHER - MICHELE MALASPINA - MINO DORO - ATTILIO SEVERINI - PAUL MULLER

co-produzione **CINESECOLO - I.N.D.I.E.F. Roma - TERRA FILMKUNST, MONACO**
COLORE della **TECNOSTAMPA**

probably a stuntman. These action scenes are pretty fun, and definitely make this movie a must see for action and/or superhero fans. Taken strictly as an action comedy, this movie succeeds. It's also pretty amusing that Jordan's character seems to do better kung fu than the Chinese guy! So much for historical accuracy and cultural comparisons!

Set in the old days, the abnormal Sword and Sandal film tells of superhero Darna (Nick Jordan), who's mask is made of iron mesh (like a British knight), but otherwise resembles a typical comicbook hero. He lives in a cave and claims to have some type of 'Sacred Fire' which gives him immortality, so a local army of evil amazons want this

power. Fortunately, Darna gets by with a little help from his friends, a black gladiator/muscleman called Moog ('Mugu' in the Japanese subtitles), and a Chinese kung fu expert & swordsman called Chang ('Chan' in the Jap. subtitles), played by Yueh Hua. Hua, in his kung fu uniform looks amusingly out-of-place among togas. Anyway, the amazons wear Ultraman-like masks to cover their identity when stuntmen double for them (it's painfully obvious), but

these iron masks fail to protect them during the disappointing climax where our three heroes, villagers and a group of thieves gang up against the amazons. After an amusing movie with decent action and great acrobatics, I'd hoped for a more thrilling end battle. It's set at night, so it's too dark, plus much of it involves ridiculous weapons and contraptions, all highlighted by what sounds like parade music.

**1/2 -DF

THE FIVE DEADLY VENOMS

Presented by World Northal, A Shaw Brothers Production; 1978, Produced by Runme Shaw, Screenplay: Yi Kwang, Sound Recording: Wang Yung Hua, Art Dir.: Johnson Tsao, Costumes: Liu Chi Yu, Producer: Mona Fong, American TV Editor: Larry Benski, Dir.: Chang Cheh, Cast: Chinag Sheng, Sun Chien, Kuo Chui, Lo Mang, Wang Lung Wei, Wei Pai, Reviewed by DF

Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't this disappointing stinker considered another classic from the Shaw Brothers and Chang Cheh? It has less action than the average 1970s Shaw actioner, and seems to concentrate more on a complex story and utter tor-

ture than actual martial arts! Anyone unfortunate enough to know me knows I'm definitely a fan of this genre, especially cool Shaw movies like **KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS** and **AVENGING EAGLES**. But even though **FIVE DEADLY VENOMS** was made by the same staff, and stars many of the same people, on the whole I think it kind of sucks. But I'm curious about one thing; isn't that Ti Wei at the beginning, playing the old kung fu teacher? The bad TV transfer has no room to show full opening credits, so I couldn't confirm if it was Ti Wei (aka 'Dick' Wei) under makeup and fake beard.

When the characters finally start to fight, the battles aren't bad at all. But by then it's too late, as we've seen a depressing story not saved by occasional comedic touches which came off as naive and stupid. So on the whole, I'd say **FIVE DEADLY VENOMS** is a barely fair movie, below average, though not by far.

If you enjoy watching Lo Mang slowly tortured to death, or just like looking at fancy costumes and nice sets, you may enjoy this tale of a young kung fu student (Chiang Sheng), sent into town by his teacher to investigate what his teacher's pre-



THE FIVE DEADLY VENOMS

vious five students are up to. All five originally wore Peking opera-like masks when they learned kung fu (snake style, centipede style, scorpion style, snake style and frog style), making their identities basically secret. Plenty of awkwardly translated dubbing (including no less than four "but still"s) punctuates our hero's (Chiang Sheng) quest for the truth. It seems that at least three of the older students have taken to thieving, and have stolen a treasure map from Ku Feng (whom they kill). Eventually, Chiang Sheng teams up with Kuo Chui (master of the lizard style), who's technique allows him to defy gravity-- he literally walks up walls! It's the other three students who've gone bad, including Sun Chien, who pretends to be a good guy at first. Sun Chien and fellow villain Wei Pai kill each other during the climactic free-for-all. This leaves only the two good guys as survivors, and they decide to donate all the treasure to some charity. ** -DF

DRAGON VS. NEEDLES OF DEATH

Dir.: Chong Kou, Starring: Ko Fon, Die Chien, Wong Ping, Reviewed by DF

This movie marks the third movie this issue that put me to sleep! Now I realize the reason I fell asleep during **DRAGON VS. NEEDLES OF DEATH** and **A MAID FROM HEAVEN** isn't just because the movies suck, but because of the medication I'm taking. Yet this doesn't alter the fact that **DRAGON VS. NEEDLES OF DEATH** is yet another one-in-a-trillion chop sockey revenge fiasco from the early 1970s. It's as typical as all the others, and for this reason alone, I don't like it. Though it's probably no worse than average, it's predictable farces like this which make even I dislike 1970s kung fu

movies. That really says something, since I've always been a supporter of this schlocky 1970s genre.

The quality of the fights vary. Some are performed by actors with skill, speed and limberness, and others are not. In either case, I suspect all the fights are sped up in the film, as nobody could

to throw nails, and learns kung fu in trade. So now they're one unbeatable team. Then my pill went into affect and I got some shut eye. When I awoke in the middle of the film, some mob is extorting money from food vendors. Then I fell asleep again, awakening just in time to see our two nail-tossing



fight that fast for so long and not collapse.

In between naps, I picked up that there are these two guys in turn-of-the-century Shanghai or HK, one a kung fu expert, and the other grew up around his father, a carpenter. Since he was little he started throwing nails, and has perfected this with incredible precision. They're now lethal weapons when thrown by him. So he teaches the kung fu guy how



heroes finally teaming up against the villains, resulting in another of those long, cross-country battles Jimmy Wang Yu made popular. After all the baddies are dead, there's some sort of conflict between the heroes, either they're fighting over the same girl, or one accidentally killed the other one's father. Whatever the case, one guy gets nails thrown into his chest and he dies. * -DF

1980s:

THE THRILLING SWORD

Hwa Liang Movie Co.,; 1982, Producers: George K. King & King Chang Lin, Presented by King Kai, Supervisors: Wang Ying Hsiang & King Chang Lin, Planned by Huang Shing-Ming, Dir.: Chang Shing-I, Reviewed by DF

Another wacky, outlandish; over-the-top fantasy, most likely from Taiwan. From the opening theme song stolen from **SPACE CRUISER YAMATO** (aka **STARBLAZERS**), to its cheap monsters & effects, I knew this would be one silly movie. Though intentionally comedic in its own Chinese way, the best laughs are its unintended ones: A talking chicken so fake it rivals the equally fake bear the villains turn our hero into, and cheap frog/bat monsters in a cave whose hands & feet are diver's flippers. so despite its being so colorful, ambitious and elaborate, it's still a low budget film.

Not only is this period film very goofy, but bizarre. The beginning would definitely make no sense to western audiences; a fireball comes down from the sky and hits a pregnant woman, causing her to lay an egg rather than give birth! Now, depending on who you ask, this scene could be described in two ways--first, the scientific explanation: A meteorite carrying an unknown, alien substance (just like in **YOG MONSTER FROM SPACE!**) lands on a pregnant queen, instantly altering her DNA so that she gives birth to a gross-looking egg. Now for the traditional old fashioned Chinese explanation: The queen is in labor, and receives a blessing from the heavens. But if this were the case, there'd be some reason for the princess coming out of this fleshy looking egg (sickening yet realistic, I

mean, if humans laid eggs, I'm sure they'd look just like this), since once she hatches, nothing is mentioned of the falling star or the egg she came from! No reason for this bizarre birth, so it must be part of some ancient Chinese legend, and something was lost in the translation.

One thing lacking in this flamboyant costume drama is kung fu. Though there's plenty of magic, lame sword-play and a few acrobatics, there are no kicks or punches. This disappointed me, but don't worry, I got better. That's because this movie offers a large, paper-mache hydra (called a 'Siren' in the subtitles) with nine heads, and even a reptile/insect cyclops creature looking like something from Japanese superhero TV.

Princess Yaur-Gi's egg ('flesh ball', in the subtitles) was banished by King Gau Shien for looking disgusting, so it floated down stream and was found by seven dwarves. Speaking of **SNOW WHITE** imitations, the lead villain, a beautiful witch asks her oracle, "Who's most charming", and since Princess Yaur-Gi (now hatched & adult, still living with the Chinese dwarves) is definitely the fairest of them all, the mean bitch gets mad. So this villainess and her wizard friend create monsters like the hydra and cyclops to cause mayhem, while these two cunning villains get power hungry and gain King Gau Shien's trust. This whole story isn't exactly heavy on action, but eventually, heroic Prince Yuh-junh releases a 'jeanie' (sort of) from imprisonment in a box and gets his hands on a magic sword and armored suit, so it's finally time to attack the bad guys! At first he gets help from three guys who wear greek togas (don't ask me why!), but the two main villains suffer defeat when it's they who get trapped in that small silver box mentioned about 57 words ago. ** -DF

1990s:

GREEN SNAKE

Golden Harvest; 1993, Dir.: Tsui Hark, Starring Joey Wang, Maggie Cheung, Reviewed by Amy Harlib

For 'culture vultures', **GREEN SNAKE** differs in detail from the White Snake Opera, but remains true to the theme & intent of the traditional theater version (in which Fa-Hai's patriarchal intolerance has tragic consequences). Opera sources of the film are obvious in the use of musical riffs, costuming, hairstyles & vocal recitation in one key scene in a deliberate cinematic nod to traditional theater inspiration. Martial art fans won't be disappointed as Fa-Hai and the snake sisters display wushu virtuosity in a fantastic climax replete with charmingly hokey SPFX full of flying giant snakes and a golden dragon, among lots of other pyrotechnics. Exciting pacing and brilliant performances are all here, making **GREEN SNAKE** one of Tsui Hark's best films.

Tsui Hark, premier director of fantasy martial arts films directs Joey Wong and Maggie Cheung in this gorgeous and riveting adaptation of a well known Chinese fantasy which, under the title **THE WHITE SNAKE**, is the story of one of the most popular and traditional operas in every province of China. Longing to experience life as humans, Wong & Cheung play beautiful & seductive sister snakes, who have been training diligently for hundreds of years to attain human form. They face difficulty when they come in contact with a self-righteous monk, Fa-Hai (Zhao Wen Zhou) who morally forbids their transformation, especially when the white snake gets romantically involved with a mortal, handsome scholarly doctor. Wong's sultry repose as the older sister

white snake and Cheungs' vivacious caprice as the little sister greensnake are indelible performances that range from lighthearted comedy to full-scale melodramatic tragedy. This rich film calls into question many divergent pairings of love- whether it's human/inhuman, spiritual/carnal or between sisters- and makes **GREEN SNAKE** deliciously provocative. *** -Amy Harlib

YOUNG WISELY II: THE REBIRTH OF THE GODDESS

Distributed by Tai Seng Video in 1992, Produced by Film Production Co., Ltd., Starring David Wu, Melvin Wong and Tan Yun Yee, Reviewed by Damon Foster

That no good, son-of-a-female dog lied! Contrary to what's written on the video box of this TV-made stinker, it has no subtitles at all! Whoever wrote that on the box ought to be kicked in the gonads until his own semen comes a squirtin' out of his ears! So **YOUNG WISELY II**'s plot makes absolutely no sense to me, even though I'm a fan of this mythical adventurer/writer Wisely; the character's exploits in **THE 7TH CURSE** and **THE LEGEND OF WISELY** were truly amazing. But this low key

ripoff is little more than typically stupid, over-the-top 1990s bullshit, hardly in a class with the two theatrical masterpieces mentioned about 35 words ago! The dramatic scenes fall flat, it's humor is only vaguely funny, and as for the adventure aspect.....

David Wu just doesn't have the heroic charisma of previous Wiselies Chen Hsiao Hou and Samuel Hui! To make up for this, the action scenes are typically goofy FX, suspension wires, explosions and far-fetched acrobatics. This in itself isn't bad, such artificial duels would be perfect in a Monkey King fantasy, but are dreadfully out-

Tan Yun Yee
of **YOUNG WISELY 2.**



of-place in a modern setting, and since none of this shit is in the two epic movies, the whole genre is annoyingly uneven. If nothing else, I can praise the costumes of the villains; they look like villains from Japanese superhero programs.

A couple notes about the cast: Contrary to what I said when I reviewed the first in this shot-on-video series (**YOUNG WISELY 1**; see OC#17, aka "OC #2"), Jason Pai Pao doesn't play Wisely Sr., I believe it's actually Melvin Wong playing the part. A main supporting actress is the beautiful Tan Yun Yi, who's name I've also seen translated as Tam Kun Yee, a half caucasian model. It's a pity she's covered neck-to-toe in this fiasco, as her body could have made this cheap video worthwhile. But don't worry, there are shots of her on this issue's front and back covers

which guarantee you guys will get a chance to exercise your wrists. Go ahead and try it, it's fun!

Story: Inbetween the wackiest Baseball games ever seen, Young Wisely meets some girl (Tan Yun Yee, aka Tan Kun Yee, etc.) at school who appears to be descended from/or possessed

by an army of futuristic warriors who carry swords despite the ability to fire beams & fireballs, and cause explosions. These skirmishes, often involving some idiot running around wearing a turtle shell, add comicbook-like

Veteran martial art movie director Yuen Woo-Ping, brings us a martial art movie version of the life of the creator of Tai Chi, Chang San-Feng played by Jet Li, probably the best Wushu artist working in movies today.

Mainland China) in which Jet Li and the feisty amazon Michelle Kahn/Yeoh are pitted against a former friend (Johnny Chin) now aligned with the oppressive royal eunuch's forces. A light look at the origins of the tai chi



來自日本的香艷女殺手 MICHIKO NISHIWAKI - FROM JAPAN

IN THREE YEARS SHE HAS MADE MORE THAN 20 FILMS IN HONG KONG- NOW SHE ANNOUNCES THAT SHE'S GOING TO CUT BA CK

Michiko recently opened her own gym in Japan. In Japanese she's been nicknamed the second Momoe Yamaguchi (a singer/actress from the 1970s who remotely resembles Nishiwaki, but was generally not an action star). She has won the country's bodybuilding championship three years in a row. Now she has invaded the H.K. movie industry and become a real success in the same amount of time. Nishiwaki had already appeared in Jackie Chan's **MY LUCKY STARS** (set & filmed partially in Japan), she arrived in HK in 1988. That same year she appeared in **IN THE LINE OF DUTY 3**, and later in **OUTLAW BROTHERS** and **GOD OF GAMBLERS** (1990). Nishiwaki: "In H.K. people generally judge an actor's worth by how many movies they make a year. They stress quantity over quality but I don't agree with this. At one point I was working on six films at once. I didn't sleep, I didn't exercise, it was crazy." Now she limits herself to two projects at a time.

"My plan for 1992 is to only make three movies a year; stressing quality over all else. And with my extra time I plan to add two more fitness centers in Japan. I already have two there now. I hope to increase enrollment to 2000! My dream would also be to expand my business to every street corner in Japan. My brother helps me with business. I'm already used to all the flying back & forth from Japan to HK. I still appear in a soap opera and talk shows in Japan, so as to keep my popularity. Also, every year I judge a body building contest in my native country. My name stays in the newspapers. Fortunately, my filming schedules in HK are very flexible and the directors are always accommodating."



fun, but are outmatched by oodles of boring dialogue. * -DF

TAI CHI MASTER

1993, Directed by Yuen Woo-Ping, Starring: Jet Li, Michelle Khan, Johnny Chin, Reviewed by Amy Harlib

The film version of Chang's Ming Dynasty career is exceedingly 'creative', bearing little resemblance to the scarce information that has come down to us from primary sources and most of that was apocryphal. Be that as it may, what we have here is a marvelously entertaining historical genre film (shot in

fighting style, Jet Li's comic character reaches a stalemate with his Shaolin martial arts training that literally makes him crazy. His co-star covers his back until finally, the forces of nature offer him insight resulting in his breakthrough martial arts realization. Along with lots of beautifully shot, beautiful move-

ment sequences (tai chi students will recognize their Yang Style form movements mixed with some Chen style), viewers get sugar-coated Taoist philosophy and you get to see tai chi applied in combat situations with the

real treat in which in line with genre rules, [native Chinese] Taoist-based fighting styles triumph over [imported] Buddhist ones, while Jet Li shines in top form! ***
-Amy Harlib

DAYS OF BEING WILD is a long, dull soap opera with Leslie, Maggie & Jacky Cheung, and Carina & Andy Lau. This is a dragging drama I rented by mistake, having seen **DAYS OF BE-**

low, mellow dramas, check it out. If you're too hyper & excited all the time and need to relax and fall asleep, check it out. In my opinion, the movie is crap, but who the hell am I to judge a realistic love story [about ordinary

people] such as this?

西脇美智子在港吃香 COMES A REAL KILLER LADY

"Even though I started in action films, I really would like to be a versatile actress. I'm very confident that I can branch out into dramas and comedies. My only problem is the language barrier, but my Cantonese is improving a lot lately. I'm working very hard on my pronunciation. Yet I actually landed an acting job in a HK movie because of my weird accent. More often now they record dialogue live during the shooting and I usually don't have to dub anything later. So my Cantonese must be pretty good by now."

When asked if she would do any Category 3 (NC-17) films she said she once posed for a photo session nude. But the publisher wasn't suppose to use any shots that showed her 'private' areas. Of course, later some photos did surface in a newspaper (obscured) and from that she received six offers from producers! She's accepted one offer, **STORY OF THE WHITE SNAKE** /A very famous story in Chinese culture, Lin Ching Hsia acted in a screen version over a decade ago. -Ed./ but because the Production Co. hasn't secured enough backers, the film is on hold. Also Veronica Yip /Who I now hear admits to having anorexia! -Ed./ and Isabella Chow (of **SEX AND ZEN**) both have lawsuits against the company. I really have to be careful not to hurt my image. Also, I'm interested in keeping my fitness business a success".

When asked if she has a dream director that she would love to work with, she said, "I know some actors do, but I don't concern myself with the director or budget. I really look for an interesting character to play. I just returned from Thailand shooting **POLICE AND WHORE**. It was a rewarding experience. It required good fighting and good acting. Plus, it's a suspense movie which was fun to do." She was asked if she had a favorite film of hers, to which she answered: "No, I really don't. I hope in the next two or three years to make a really good film that can be proud of my acting. Then I'll return to Japan to concentrate on my business."

[The preceding article is from Jan. 1992's **CJNEMAR** T #264, translated into English by Kam Lee and Darren Wheeling.]



usual physics-defying SPFX added in.

TAI CHI MASTER nicely balances the comedy with the exciting action and engaging characterization one would expect from a Yuen Family production. Lovely score, sets, scenery, costumes and high production values make this film a

DAYS OF BEING WILD

1991; World Video, A Film by Wong Kar-Wai, Presented by Rover Tang & Alan Tang's In-Gear Productions, Starring: Leslie Cheung, Carina Lau, Maggie Cheung, Jacky Cheung, Andy Lau, Reviewed by DF

ING DUMB and thought it was a satire of this! But no, this story has Leslie Cheung as a promiscuous guy and Maggie Cheung feels bad about it.

There's no action in this never-ending, drawn-out talker. But the characters are remotely interesting and it's well acted. If you like mel-

Script: In 1960 Macao, gigolo Leslie Cheung is torn between Carina Lau, Maggie Cheung and his free-spirited, lonely Foster mother. Jackie Cheung and Andy Lau make supporting cameos. 1/2 -DF

MASTER OF ZEN

Brandy Film Prod. Co.,



1994, Produced and Directed by Brandy Yuen, Reviewed by Amy Harlib

The life of the famous Indian Buddhist monk Dhar-Mo who came from India to China's Shaolin Temple in the 7th century A.D. to teach Buddhism and where he created one of the best martial art systems in the world. The film was shot on location in India and Mainland China with the re-created 7th century Indian costumes, really gorgeous locations (real places, temples and ancient-looking streets & plazas), spectacular. Likewise for the Chinese settings (though these were much more familiar from other movies).

The narrative was episodic, highlighting seminal scenes in Dhar-Mo's life in

India and China that contributed to his becoming a legend. Along the way you get lots of Buddhist philosophy sugar-coated as dramatic dialogue; gorgeous scenery, beautiful sets & costumes, the original cave where Dhar-Mo meditated for nine years, enough good martial art scenes to satisfy with SPFX to re-create Dhar-Mo's attributed superhuman powers, and a terrific score mixing synthesizer with Indian & Chinese music at the appropriate moments.

This was a very unusual and enjoyable movie that blended drama, action and philosophy, perhaps too much of the last for some viewers, but there was plenty here to enjoy and to meditate upon!! Highly recommended for serious martial arts fans who want to get cultural/histori-

cal background (albeit apocryphal) and entertainment simultaneously. **** -Amy Harlib

RENDEAVOUS OF JAPANESE KANTO

["Rendezvous", as it appears on the film is obviously a misspelling of 'Rendezvous', and another mistranslating for the movie is "Penda-Yous of Japanese Kanto", Chinese title: "Quan Dong Tai Yeh"] World Video; 1994, Starring Sybelle Hu, Reviewed by DF

Enjoyable flashback to 20 years ago; excellent back-to-basics chop sockey, ala' 1974! No wire FX! No fagbait arthouse pretentiousness! This is **FIST OF FURY** and **THE IRON MAN** revisited! Exactly why a kung fu throw-

back would come out today is anyone's guess, but I figure that they're getting experimental with new/old ideas, with the HK box office being in a slump.

This amusing movie is a typically anti-Japanese drama set in old Fentieng & Shanghai, about Japanese soldiers invading & oppressing the people. The Japanese send in their tattooed yakuzas to harass everyone, so Chinese kung fu masters keep on fighting them! Sybelle Hu dresses like a man and looks exactly like Angela Mao twenty years ago! But the whole film has that glossy look of other 1990s films, there's no recognizable stock music, and the production values aren't bad like in the 1970s. Hell, even the ending has our 'surviving' heroes gunned down by fir-

ing squad after the climactic fist fight, exactly as in **FIST OF FURY/CHINESE CONNECTION, BRUCE AND THE SHAOLIN KUNG FU, WARLORD & THE AC-TRESS**, etc.

I almost don't want to rehash the script again, as I've done this almost every time I've critiqued a cheap 1970s movie! In this case, one of the Japanese even has the obligatory Hitler mustache and a very unJapanese name, 'Olin! Talk about silly! Anyway, these villains are a hasslin' and a torturin' the peasants of Mainland China, so once in a while, heroic Li Shang Ta, the 'Tiger of Fengtien' beats them up! The kung fu is quite cool; that combination of 1970s chop sockey and 1990s slickness & pacing! Let's see, what else? Oh yes, the Japs have the hots for nightclub singer Weison, who's lipsyncing is terrible! The Nips keep interrupting her romantic interludes with our hero, so Sybelle Hu leads rebels against the invading Japanese. Kung fu! Gun fu! Sword fu! Bloodspit fu! Fun fu! Fu fu! If you don't like it, go fu yourself! *** -DF

SATIN STEEL

Distributed by Tai Seng Video, Produced by Ko Chi Sum Films Co. in 1994, Overseas Production Manager: Pamela Kuah, Floor Managers: Eric Gok & Hok Leng, Props Men: Lau Young Tai, Ko Cha Teck, Starring Jade Leung & Russell Wong, Reviewed by DF

Despite a couple sappy performances and far-fetched antics (no human actually has as much stamina as Jade Leung's character during the gripping climax), this witty little actioner could be used as the dictionary definition for fun! An epic modernday actioner, taking place on the streets, jungles and rivers. Sort of a throwback to a lot of the 1980s adventures.

While everyone knows Jade Leung from the **BLACK CAT** films, I was surprised to see Russell Wong, of the American TV series **RISING SUN**. What's the deal? I always thought he was just a Chinese American actor, and yet here he is in this Chinese language movie, and the lucky devil gets to make out with sexy, pretty Jade Leung! On the other hand, this is no porno movie (a couple erotic scenes, but no nudity), so I imagine rolling around with a beautiful actress like her, half naked, and not actually sending the one-eyed trouser snake on a voyage through tuna jungle

could be the ultimate tease.

I think this movie is an improvement over her **BLACK CAT** films because there's a little more emphasis on martial arts and more elaborate action scenes, rather than more assassinations and snyping. Though the fights are really keen, it becomes apparent Jade

solutely amazing stunt?!?!? He (doubling for a heroine) jumps across the track quickly, missing a rapidly approaching train by mere feet!!

Jade Leung stars as a trigger-happy detective with violent urges, and her husband was killed by mobsters on their honeymoon- and she feels bad about it. Anyway, her assignment takes her out of HK, into Singapore & Indonesia, as she teams up with another curvaceous cutie, Ellen Cheng. Using guns, kicks and homing transmitters, they're hot on the trail of that most evil of mafia/gun smugglers- a caucasian! You know how evil us corrupt whities are! Hell, one of his henchmen has some sort of unexplained, powerful bionic hand highlighted by sound FX probably taken from some Japanese superhero show! In between the chases (on foot, horse, car & helicopter), there are a couple romantic subplots you might want to scan through: Ellen's annoying finance, and Jade's fooling around with Ken (Russell Wong), the main villain's own lawyer. Angered, the evil white devil does the same thing I would do (being a white devil myself), killing the treacherous lawyer. This gets Jade all the more upset, because his death is not at all unlike the death of her husband-for-a-day, earlier in the film. So she accomplishes her mission (stealing a valuable computer disk) and kills whitie. ***1/2 -DF



Leung has no incredible mastery of kung fu. Fortunately, her stunt doubles do, there are plenty of cool spinning-back kicks to the faces, and typically nice HK stunt stuff. In one scene, Jade herself is dangling way the hell in the air hanging from a helicopter, and in another, a stuntman is nearly hit by a speeding train! Just how much did they pay this guy to risk his life doing this ab-



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KAIJIN NINGEN UPDATE



JUMBORG ACE

Okay, so I can forgive Saban Entertainment for screwing up **METALDER** and lame programs like **ZYU RANGER** and **SPIELVAN**. But I hear they're coming up with yet another American/Japanese hybrid, so I assume this fall, we can expect more along the lines of **MIGHTY MORPHING POWER RANGERS** and **V.R. TROOPERS**. The Power Rangers will 'morph' into 1994's **KAKU RANGER** (see the previous OC), while **V.R. TROOPERS** will backtrack to 1984, using footage from **SPACE SHERIFF SHIDER** (see OC #'s 10 & 17). But are you ready for the worst part? Saban has their greedy paws not only on **JIRAIYA**, but **KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX** too! Somehow, I thought Japan's Toei Co. had a little integrity and was honestly proud of their products, but to chop up a Kamen Rider series is a sacrilegious act, to many of us longtime superhero fans! Is nothing sacred anymore? Do Toei and Saban have no shame? How dare they tamper with a cool, established genre! Yes, fellow superhero fans, let's face the awful facts- Toei are way more interested in money than superheroes. What is this world coming to? Oh well, if people can re-write the bible, I guess anything is possible. I hear its English title will be "Masked Rider" (aka Saban's Masked Rider), so at least the title is faithful. The human character is made up to look just like Kamen Rider Black

RX's human form Kotaro (Tetsuo Karada), despite this replacement actor looking like a 13-year old kid! As I understand it, Saban's "Masked Rider" show (due out this fall) will also use footage from **KAMEN RIDER ZETO** and **KAMEN RIDER J**.

If prostituting Kamen Rider Black RX isn't getting enough yen into Toei's greedy clutches, they'll get even more from starting their own wrestling league. Their first two wrestlers are Shadow Moon (who we'll probably see in the English prints of **KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX** under some stupid new name), and Jiraiya, also doomed to appear on edited American TV. Ironically, Jiraiya already appeared in America, though only in doll form; he and other characters in **JIRAIYA** became known as "Tacky Stretchoid Warriors" (Bandai America) a few years back.

ジャンボ・グア & ジャイアント GLI UOMINI DI MARTE MARS MEN

(aka JANBORG A TAI GI-ANT) A Joint Production of Tsuburaya Co. & Thai Burin Film, Supervisor: Fu Ching-Hwa, Prodotto da: Tsi See-Shang, Ideato da: Fu Mei Shai, Fotografia: Lai Wen Shing, Soundo: King Recording Center, Copie Stampate da: Dab Du Color Co., Con: Wen Chang Lung, Yeh Hsiao-I, e la



MARS MEN



partecipazione di: Fang Mien, Cascatori della: Chen Hua Special Skill Performance Team, Sceneggiatura di: Jack Lin, Diretto da: Chen Hun Ming, el Based-o on El Japan's JANBORG A series (el-1973-o), Reviewed by Senior Maestro Damon Foster

Another European dub of a Japanese/Chinese hybrid movie. In this case, it all started out in 1973, with the 50-episode Tsuburaya series **JANBORG A** (aka **JUMBOG ACE**, and other translations), a series which, like **ULTRAMAN** proved popular enough in Thailand so the Thais brought this hero to Thailand to appear in this movie (much like the Ultra Brothers did in that Thai flick reviewed in OC#9). Only this time, the team up isn't with Hanuman, but some other Hindu god. But because I'm reviewing the Italian dubbed version (confused yet?), I don't know the name of this character. The Japanese dubbed version simply refers to him as 'Giant', so for the remainder of this article, I'll call him Jonathan. Jonathan was in his own Thai film before this sequel, and it was a huge box office hit in Bangkok. It sold out for over a month, so it was held over for an additional three weeks. Available photos make it look interesting, with dinosaurs, a giant frog, and Jonathan even takes on a wargod of some kind. This elusive Thai film looks like it may be worth checking out. I don't have it, but I do have its sequel, **GLI UOMINI DI MARTE MARS MEN** (Italian) which had help from Japan.

Part of the problem is I've never seen an entire episode of **JANBORG A** itself, or its sequel program, **JANBORG 9**. So I really can't make much of a comparison between the original series and this Thai/Italy adaptation. Perhaps the only continuity problem is the origin of our mighty Ultraman wannabe, Janborg A. The ac-

tual show had him materialize from a pilot flying in a small plane. The pilot (played in Japan by Naoki Tachibana), like all Japanese characters is edited out of this Thai/Italy feature film, leading us to believe the airplane just appears out of nowhere, and, with nobody inside, just automatically becomes our cyborg-like hero! This seems to be about the only translation error between versions. Aside from some inserted FX (i.e. destruction scenes), the remainder of the film, including giant monster battles was produced exclusively for the Thai version, as I don't believe the petrified wargod Jonathan (I mean Giant!) was in the Japanese series.

On the whole, this superhero movie is worth watching in any language, the battles are cool, and the Tsuburaya FX are dandy. But it's only the final half hour I recommend. For nearly a full hour before, it's a boring, pointless drama, full of uninteresting situations and endless talking; recommended only for those who speak fluent Italian (or Thai, if you're watching the Thailand version). So if you've got this on tape, fast forward past the first hour or so, and just watch the climactic 30 minutes. And although the villains tend to ham up the humor occasionally, it never gets quite as stupid as that other Tsuburaya/Thai mish-mash; **SIX ULTRA BROS. & HANUMAN VS. THE MONSTER ARMY**, or whatever the hell it's called.

The story starts off with some annoying Thai kids (with bad haircuts) playing baseball, made all the more annoying by their being dubbed in Italian. One of these brats later finds a magic statue in a cave, which he shows to his father, played by the guy who played Mr. Shen (leader of the good guys' kung fu school) in **FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH** (Shaw Bros.; 1970). But for whatever rea-

son known only to Italians, both characters seem to die even before the alien invaders reach Earth! These viking-like space demons, called Jan Killer and Demon Gone engage in spaceship dogfights with Thai's resident Science Patrol clones (called PAT, or Protective Attack Team in the Japanese **JUMBOG ACE**) before it's discovered the statue can grow giant and become the humongous Hindu wargod who, the prophecy says will protect the people of Asia, the avenging hero known as Jonathan! Hell, if that's not exciting enough, that Japanese giant Janborg A just happens to be in Thailand too, what a coincidence! At first there's some sort of misunderstanding and Janborg A and Jonathan confront each other, until it's realized they've both got the wrong superhero! So they unite to take on Jan Killer, Demon Gone, and resurrected monsters Double Killer (from episode #30) and Gaiagunesu (#25)! This long battle (or several short battles combined, depending on how you look at it) takes place on the Moon, and involves the usual post-Ultraman wrestling, laser beams, martial arts, explosions, camp, and swordplay. It's a tough battle, but in the end, our side wins again. ** -DF

KENKA-YA UKON

English Subtitles by Nippon Golden Network, Starring Ryutaro Sugi, and Hisako Manda, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Here's yet another samurai TV show, sort of another superhero for adults. Programs like this are more common than shirtless, drunken idiots on **COPS**. **KENKA-YA UKON** falls into the cleaner, more family-oriented genre shared by **MITO KOMON**, **TOYAMA NO KINSAN** and **ABARENBO SHOGUN**.

Though there are numerous swordfights and deaths, there's virtually no blood, and has that same light-hearted atmosphere I suspect appeals mainly to older generations of Japanese. But **KENKA-YA UKON** tends to be even more silly, thanks to its main character, Kenka Ya Ukon, The Mediator.

Sometimes called just Kenka-Ya, sometimes just called Ukon, he's played by the one and only Ryutaro Sugi, no stranger to TV chanbara. When I was a kid in the 1970s, when I wasn't pranking small children next door (i.e. I used to pee through knot-holes in the wooden fence! I'd stick my dick through the hole, into the neighbor's yard to relieve myself! One day a little boy next door tried to get me back, but I was ready for him, I picked up a large wooden stick! He stuck his thing through the hole, but before he could relieve himself, I swung, resulting in one hell of a high pitched scream!), I used to watch Ryutaro Sugi every week in **TOYAMA NO KINSAN**, and at least one other show, possibly the first season of **ABARENBO SHOGUN** (I could be wrong, since I also recall Ken Matsudaira in that role). Though Ryutaro Sugi has always had a pleasant persona, he's allowed to go all-out goofy & obnoxious in **KENKA-YA UKON**, playing an amusing character who's always clowning around and laughing it up. Sometimes he's funny, other times he chuckles like a Japanese Beavis or Butthead. In other samurai shows, he was more serious when tracking the bad guys, but this time, he's always joking around, even in the middle of a swordfight, surrounded by several sword-wielding villains. Example of his cockiness: In an episode titled "To Rescue a Beauty", he's slaughtered a gang of samurais-gone-bad by a pond, using his trustee sword. Then

he smiles, holds his sword up, turns it around and says to his main adversary: "Now I'll use the cutting side!"

Aside from the program's comedy, its other major difference is that no two episodes are identical. Where as each episode of **ABARENBO SHOGUN** is a repeated formula, each one of **KENKA-YA UKON** is unique from the others, independently written. Some episodes offer only the climactic sword duel, while others have smaller skirmishes through out the 60 min. running time. One problem with this show is a lack of credits, despite the accurate English subtitles during its Hawaiian broadcast. I'm guessing this series was probably made in the 1980s, but could just as easily been from the 1970s or 1990s (jidai-geki programs like this are so traditional, there's no progression from year to year). My suspicion comes from Sugi's looking older than he did in his 1970s series **TOYAMA NO KINSAN**. Also, Hiroshi Miyauchi appeared as a villain in one episode, and wasn't as youthful as he was in **GORANGERS, JACKERS, KAI KETSU ZUBAT** or **KAMEN RIDER V3**.

Kenka-Ya Ukon, The Mediator, gets paid to settle disputes in old Tokyo (then called Edo). He lives with his wise-cracking wife, who also works as his accountant & agent, always wheeling & dealing to make sure they get their money's worth, depending on how dangerous her husband's assignments are. Another supporting character who seems to appear occasionally in Boss Chuji, I guess he's a bumbling detective. Anyway, though I've only seen five or six episodes, I gather the course of this entertaining series has our heroic Kenka getting hired to break up feuds & fights, but always ends up uncovering some sort of scandal which officially designates one side as the 'good side', and the other as the 'bad side'. Therefor, his mighty kendo

skills always come in handy as he defeats criminals, renegade samurais, yakuza's, maybe an occasional ninja, and any other bad guys up to no good. If there's more to the story than this, I missed it. The opening narration explains it best: "There was once a couple that lived a very strange lifestyle.... almost unbelievable". *** -DF

ミラマン

MIRRORMAN

Tsuburaya Productions, 51 episodes, broadcast on Fuji TV from 12/5/71 to 11/26/72, Created by Hajime Tsuburaya, Writers: Fumizo Wakatsuki, Bunzo Wakatsuki, Hiroyasu Yamaura, Keisuke Fujikawa, Directors: Yoshiyuki Kuroda, Toshisugu Suzuki, Hiro Kimura, Kazubo Mitsuda, Ishiro Honda, Shohei Tojo, FX Directors: Koichi Takano, Nobuo Yajima, Yuichi Manoda, Jun Oki, Music: Toru Fuyuki (pieces of which would later be heard in INFRAMAN), Starring: Noboyuki Ishida, Reviewed by Damon Foster and August Ragone

1971 was a tough year for superhero makers, since the genre suddenly had all these new programs; **MIRRORMAN** had to compete with **SPECTREMAN**, **KAMEN RIDER**, and **RETURN OF ULTRAMAN**, but no series offered a greater challenge than **SILVER KAMEN** (reviewed in OC#15). **MIRRORMAN** and **SILVER KAMEN** had the same time-slot on different networks. Though **MIRRORMAN** whipped **SILVER KAMEN** in the ratings, **MIRRORMAN**'s ratings weren't all that they could be, so Fuji TV demanded changes (starting with episode 26) in the script to improve the ratings; changes which made **MIRRORMAN** even more like its granddaddy **ULTRAMAN**, but more on these changes later. Personally, I think the changes

(though adding more fun) were unfortunate, since creator Hajime (Eiji's son) Tsuburaya wanted a different type of giant superhero, and not another Ultra Brother. Hajime's original idea, as showcased for the first 25 episodes proved to be an entertaining, no nonsense, serious program. These early episodes remind me of **ULTRASEVEN**, except that it's not in English (too bad, **MIRRORMAN**'s stories do tend to be overly talky).

Ironically, in the original 20 minute pilot (possibly never aired, meant for network execs only as a sales pitch), **Mirrorman** wasn't played by Noboyuki Ishida, but by **GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER**'s Toshio Shibamoto, who'd instead go off to play **MIRRORMAN**'s rival in ratings, **SILVER KAMEN**!!! This rarely seen pilot features a **Mirrorman** who can be both human size or giant, and looks much different than the **Mirrorman** who'd appear in the show itself (his mouth was originally exposed, like **Riderman** or **Batman**). It also featured Osman Yusef in a brief montage/cameo for a story which was only speculated on; really just a sample fight as the human-sized **Mirrorman** uses martial arts to knock out a couple mobsters. Shot in Kobe, and featuring music off the

ULTRASEVEN soundtrack and a completely different cast (only a couple members made it into the show itself), this segment is valued as a novelty of nostalgia only; it's cheap, looks like an amateur film and for one of the few miniatures, the suspension wires are clearly visible. The only major action scene had something to do with our heroes dodging snipers and a helicopter.

So in its own unique way, **MIRRORMAN** offered an alternative to the endless **ULTRAMAN** imitations. But even within itself, **MIRRORMAN** was an odd series. I think I've seen most

of its 51 episodes, and there really seems to be no single episode which stands out as a good example as to what **MIRRORMAN** is all about! The diversity between episodes makes classifying this series very difficult. For example, when I was first going to write this article, all I'd seen were the first six or seven episodes, which all tend to basically mimic the dead serious, no humor approach of **ULTRASEVEN**. So just when I was prepared to label **MIRRORMAN** as 'boring', August Ragone grabs me by the shoulders, slaps my face and says, "Hold it right there! Get a grip on yourself! Wake up and smell the reality!" So Ragone shows me later episodes, where the human heroes engage in chases, fist fights and occasional shootouts with the mysterious Invaders! While these non-martial artist actors generally do weak kicks, their judo tosses, punches and occasional acrobatic stunt doubles suffice. Also, the 'punch' sound FX are more realistic than usual. So the variation between episodes offers unexpected surprises; you never knew if it'll be a giant-monster-marauding-Tokyo episode, an all-talk episode, or a **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE**-style adventure. I was amused that these are all part of the same show, so it seems **MIRRORMAN** followed no set pattern, absent are the repeated formulas commonly seen on Japanese superhero TV. Sometimes, the monster only appears at the ending of the episode, other times, the monster will be all through the episode.

One good thing I can say about **MIRRORMAN** is there's far less kiddie time! Though Hiroyuki Kawase (**MEGALON**, **SMOG MONSTER**) guest stars in episode #15, and #25 has a little girl as the protagonist, the only regular kid character is Dr. Mitorai's son, who's never really given a whole lot to do.

This is a sci-fi series from

Tsuburaya. That sentence is another way of saying **MIRRORMAN** has excellent special effects. By now you know I'll never trash FX on any Tsuburaya show (except maybe **GRIDMAN**), so it can be taken for granted that **MIRRORMAN** is full of cool miniatures and optical FX. The monster costumes aren't the best designs I've ever seen, and although none are realistic (making rubber look authentic is no easy task), at least they're no more laughable than a lot of the creatures in the Ultra programs. Being a Tsuburaya series, it's not uncommon to see occasional Toho guest stars like Hisaya Ito (**GHIDRAH THE THREE HEADED MONSTER, DESTROY ALL MONSTERS**, etc.).

Lead star Noboyuki Ishida was born Aug. 31, 1950, in Tokyo. He entered Toho's acting school, and at the age of 20, deputed in some Toho movie. He also starred in the TBS series **JUDO ICHO KUSEN** ("Straight Ahead Judo"), from Toei. Though not really a superhero series, its style of action helped influence **KAMEN RIDER** and the whole action hero/henshin genre. He'd also play a character later, in **JUMBORG ACE**. Speaking of **JUMBORG ACE**, two of the SGM members from **MIRRORMAN** also returned in **JUMBORG ACE**. So technically, because of these continuing characters, the programs **JUMBORG ACE** and **JUMBORG 9** are

sequels to **MIRRORMAN**, though there was never a team up (Mirrorman never met the Jumborgs).

Kyotaro Kagami (kagami means mirror), played by Noboyuki Ishida, is halfhuman, and half-alien ("Mirrormen") from some second dimensional world (the universe is supposedly made up of four dimensions, or whatever). So reflections are basically a link to this second dimension, so Kyotaro can only change into Mirrorman if there's something with a reflective surface (i.e. mirror, water, glass, etc.) in combination with nearby light and some magic pendant given to him by his mother. While in his human form, Kyotaro tends to hang out with the Science Guard Men, sort of a stripped down version of **ULTRAMAN**'s Science Patrol. The SGM's leader is Professor Mitorai, who also raised orphan Kyotaro since childhood. Mitorai also happens to be the only person (besides Kyotaro himself) who knows of Kyotaro's secret identity as Mirrorman. The Mirrorman that Kyotaro turns into is actually the second Mirrorman; his father being the first. Mirrorman Sr. (who we never really see much of) was the first defender, and Mirrorman Jr. (Kyotaro) continues that tradition, but is inexperienced, having been raised as a human on Earth (and in the first episode, has difficulty accepting his identity as a superhero). Some of this is also explained in the

action packed episode #14 (**KING ZAIGAR OTOSE**, which means "Smash King Ziger"), one of the better episodes. The ghost of Mirrorman's father tells him King Ziger was too tough for old man Mirrorman to defeat.

Getting back to the changes mentioned earlier, SGM didn't originally have jets, crash helmets or military weapons, and were really just investigators, and gatherers of information & research in the first 25 episodes. The SGM dudes didn't become more like the Science Patrol until episode 26, when their original base was destroyed by the monster Snake King. From that point on, SGM needed tougher weapons, and it was revealed that supposedly, all this time, they were secretly working on a futuristic, high-tech base (located under a lake) which included a cool spaceship/jet called the Jumbo Phoenix, which could split off into four separate vehicles. This was a ratings gim-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 52)



M I R R O R M A N



ASIAN ODDITIES

Once again, here we go with another of OC's column on non-HK action, non-Japanese monster & superhero, generally non-kung fu flicks. With this issue, I'm taking the brave step of including a few U.S.-made movies (previously out-of-place in a mag with a name like ORIENTAL CIN-

EMA), but only ones which have some sort of Asian aspect to them. Otherwise, as you know, "Asian Oddities" generally concentrates on more obscure stuff, like movies from Korea and the Philippines. Speaking of the Philippines, Ed Holland sent in the following article, which first ap-

peared in the Thanksgiving 1993 edition of the National Enquirer, written by Chris Pritchard:



MACHO MOVIE STAR BECOMES REAL-LIFE CRIME BUSTER

With violent crime out of control, the people of the Philippines turned to their own Clint Eastwood for help. They made their top crime busting movie star a real-life super cop. He's former matinee idol Joseph Estrada, who was elected vice president of the Philippines by a landslide margin last year and put in charge of the new Presidential Anti-Crime Commission.

The law enforcement agency Estrada heads is comprised of 120 crimebusters whose mission is to crush kidnapping, robbery and drug gangs which have been terrorizing the Philippines. And so far, the 57-year-old Estrada is living up to the Dirty Harry image he created in 100 films- with such titles as **KILL THE PUSHER, YOU'RE**

WORTH JUST ONE BULLET and MASSACRE.

"My men have arrested 112 kidnappers- and shot 42 dead", Estrada said with pride in an exclusive ENQUIRER interview. "Wimps criticized me for some of the slayings, saying we were hunting on my orders to my men are, 'Don't let them shoot first. If you're in danger, let them have it.' I won't mollycoddle these jerks."

Estrada has nearly wiped out kidnappings since he became top cop. Last year in the capital city of Manila, there were three kidnapping a week. That number's dropped 90 percent this year. "He's tough and he's mean, and the criminals are running scared", declared Capt. Reynaldo Jaylo, a Manila lawman. One kidnapper shot dead was Alfredo De Leon, the notorious leader of a vicious gang called the Red Scorpions. Estrada personally went to inspect the body and in Dirty Harry style, he slowly removed his ever-present movie star sunglasses as he bent over the dead gang leader- and smiled.

The former movie star used that same Hollywood flair in one widely publicized bust he personally made himself. Estrada first invited two senior police commanders to a press conference at his home near Manila. Then, as cameras rolled, Estrada arrested both lawmen on charges they were behind the kidnapping for ransom of major businessmen. Like Eastwood, who was mayor of Carmel, Calif., Estrada was mayor of

a small town 24 years ago while continuing his movie career. Six years ago, he was elected to the country's Senate and gave up acting only two years ago. The dark-haired lawman always packs a semiautomatic handgun tucked into his belt- and he needs it. Estrada has made enemies in his most challenging role ever, as the nation's top crime fighter.

When his men shot dead four drug traffickers in Manila recently, some local cops were outraged when it turned out two of the dead were police officers. But Estrada replied: "The cops were criminals who thought they were above justice". Polls show 87 percent of Filipinos favor Estrada's tough-guy ways. Joe Quirino, columnist for the Philippines Star newspaper, noted: "It's as if President Clinton hired Clint Eastwood to take his Dirty Harry role onto America's meanest streets". Said Estrada: "In my films, the good guy always wins. This time it's for real and the good guys are still winning".



GUNS AND VIOLENCE are the trademarks of Joseph Estrada's movies (above) and real life (left) where he examines the pistol of a bullet ridden kidnapper killed by the star's crimebusters.



From America:

LIVING ON TOKYO TIME

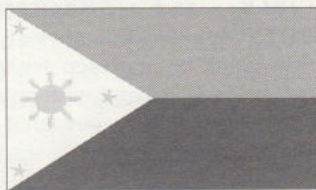
Produced by Lynn O'Donnell & Dennis Hayashi in 1986, Written by John McCormick & Steven Okazaki, A Film by Steven Okazaki, Starring: Minako Ohashi & Ken Nakagawa, Reviewed by DF

Some dickwad placed this timid soap opera in the Comedy section at a local videostore. Otherwise, I might never have sat through this dull, low key, movie; I've made it a point to never walk down the aisle of any videostore's Drama section. But because this Japanese-American movie accidentally ended up in the Comedy section, I was of the impression it would be funny. Okay, so maybe there are a couple vague chuckles, but I'd say this under acted, generally uninteresting movie is just a mellow, mellow drama, or perhaps a comedy/drama, drama comedy, or dramedy. The only time I laughed was at an in joke in a restaurant, a supposedly Japanese-American kid is wearing a Tetsuan Atom mask. So the end credits call him "Astro Boy", and he was played by Tito Santiago (Filipino).

I'm not saying this movie is terrible. It's just not my cup of tea. Actually, I guess it is my cup of tea, since I don't like tea either. So let me rephrase that: This movie just isn't my glass of Pepsi. No, scratch that! I'm trying to cut down on Pepsi too, because of all its sugar and caffeine. What I normally do now is mix my soft drinks together. So again, let me rephrase it: This movie just isn't my Diet

Caffeine-Free Pepsi mixed with Diet 7 Up and perhaps a slice of lemon on top. If you're into realistic dramas about actual situations people go through, check it out.

It's a story of some Japanese girl (Minako Ohashi) with poor English who comes to live in America to learn English and ends up marrying a Japanese-American (Ken Nakagawa) who plays in some garage band. Which reminds me, the one good thing about this movie is its music, and also a scene of Ken's nice looking ex-girlfriend (she dumps him before he meets Minako), and even a brief glimpse of Minako (side-tit) taking a bath. Otherwise, it's just a slowpaced drama of these two people from different cultures who are married only so she can stay in America, and set mainly around the Asian American community (only a few white characters in the film). Eventually, she leaves him because she only wanted to use him during her brief stay in America. By this time, he's gotten emotionally attached, so basically, what we got here is another case of some bitch tearing a guy's heart out and wiping her ass with it. It's a depressing ending, not that the film was exactly great to begin with. -DF



From the Philippines:

SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 2

Regal Intl.,; 1991, 1st Asst. Dir.: Domingo Molina, Production Manager: Jerry Lopez-Sineneng, Starring: Janice De Belen, Eric Quizon, Joey Marquez, Daisy Romualdez, Mantilyn reynes, Ana Rocas, Reviewed by DF

At the time of this typing,

I've not seen the first in this horror film series, but since they all seem to consist of independent shorts, I doubt it matters. **SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 2** is definitely above average for a Filipino movie, since average for a Filipino movie is complete & utter crap. While **SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 2** is no masterpiece, it's nowhere near crap. Oh sure, it's talky and has its dull moments to those of us who don't speak Filipino, but each of its three segments offer some cool special effects and eerie chills, the likes of which we don't normally see in Filipino movies. This generally gloomy flick is divided into three portions:

MULTO- Some newlywed couple checks into a haunted house, not knowing it's haunted of course, on what I believe is their honeymoon. The previous occupant was some alcoholic, psychotic abortion doctor who forcefully worked on a female patient against her will. Having given her an unauthorized abortion, she stabbed him with a scalpel so he hacked her to bits. These scenes have enough blood & gore to satisfy even the most degenerate, low life gorehounds. Afterwards, the doctor blew his brains out with a pistol, and not until now, when this newlywed couple arrives for the night does his ghost return. The bride just happens to be pregnant, so her new groom gets possessed by the ghost who attempts to abort her, resulting in a gripping struggle. But it turns out it's the groom's ring which holds the possession, so once she cuts his finger off, she's safe. But then the bitch tosses not only the ring, but the finger in the fire too! Doesn't she know they can sew appendages back on? Hell, that Bobbit guy has already done a porno film!

KULAM- Joey Marquez as a patient in a hospital who has an affair with a sexy nurse. The only problem is, that pisses off a doctor who also

happens to be a witch doctor! So an otherwise advanced, traditional hospital becomes a haven of voodoo and George Romero inspired zombies! The actors must have studied every American & Italian zombie movie ever made; they play their parts very well! There's even a funny frog zombie thought to have been dissected. Other equally hungry voodoo creatures are in the maternity ward; the babies becoming murderous monsters! These little rubber props aren't half bad, and kind of remind me of the Saurcer Men!

This episode is my favorite of the three, and seems to be the only one with any humor, Joey Marquez plays a bumbling hero. He's in a bodycast, so he can't get around much. Luckily, a resourceful heroine puts him on a skateboard to try and role him out of the dangerous hospital.

ASWANG- Filipino horror just wouldn't be Filipino horror without that most dreaded of Filipino vampires: Aswangs! So it's a simple tale of campers from the city who go camping (while listening to music by Cunts & Posers; I mean, Guns & Roses) in the countryside, next to suspiciously friendly (yet unpredictably moody) villagers. They all turn out to be bloodthirsty Aswangs, don't you hate when that happens?! A cunning heroine outsmarts the Aswangs, tricking them into killing one of their own kind. Eventually, the Aswangs show their true forms; the makeup jobs are creepy, but damn it, it's too dark to get a good look! Regardless, the ending chase is pretty exciting, and our heroine uses a crucifix to ward off the attacking Aswangs.

So although it's not the very best Filipino movie I've seen, **SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 2**, with its three decent horror stories was enjoyable, and recommended to any horror fan who can tolerate some-

thing not in English. **1/2 -
Damon Foster

SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 3

Presented by Good Harvest, Story: Peque Gallaga, Don Escudero & Lore Reyes, Editor: Danny Gloria, Production Design: Don Escudero, Art Dir.: Roy Lachica, Dir. of Phot.: Joe Tutanés F.S.C., Music: Toto Gentica, Produced by Joey Gasiengbias, Dir.: Peque Gallaga & Lore Reyes, Cast: Janice De Belen, Manilyn Reynes, Kris Aquino, Reviewed by DF of course

The third movie wasn't quite as amusing as the first, but portions of it were somewhat entertaining. The first chapter ("Yaya") was predictable & stupid, the 2nd ("Ate") is downright dull, and the 3rd ("Nanay") bordered on the ridiculous. But fans of low budget movies should get a kick out of **SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 3**, and as far as Filipino movies go, at least this one is watchable, while so very many others are not. I used my scan button frequently (especially during "Ate"), but far less than average for a Fil-flick. The three chapters are:

YAYA- Set around Xmas time, it's a dull, lackluster tale of Kris Aquino trying to protect her baby from some old lady, a witch-like ghost. The old hag is kind of creepy, and could possibly startle those who can still get scared of a movie.

ATE- Here's a complex one, it's almost all talk and of little use to non-Filipinos. I assume 'ate' is a Filipino word pronounced "ah-tay" (I guess), and not to be confused with our own past tense for eat. Something to do with a questionable cult and an insane girl who wants to be buried alive.

NANAY- Derivative farce with Manilyn Reynes as a nerdy, unattractive cook at some girls' dormitory. This chapter has babes and blood-

shed, yet it's more of a sci-fi/fantasy/comedy than a horror story. Some sexy babe finds "eggs of an unknown animal" (one of the film's only English lines) at the beach and they take them back for some sort of science project. But during a party where they dance to music by The Cars, a vengeful sea monster wants its eggs back and kills most of the partiers. These little creatures look kind of cute, and aren't bad for rubber puppets. Their best shots are of them swimming underwater. Though this miniature green humanoid causes serious gore, it's too small to offer a believable threat. But they spit out acid, allowing for some truly morbid FX!

Again, not quite as enjoyable as part 2, but at least it's watchable; somewhat rare in Filipino cinema. ** -DF



From America:

KING KUNG FU

Written & Dir.: Lance Hayes, Produced by Bob Walterscheid, Music: Michael Linn & Alan Oldfield, Associate Producer/Unit Manager: Pat Hayes, Released on video in 1987 by King Gementi Entertainment, Cast: John Balee, Maxine Gray, Tom Leahy, Tim McGill, Bill Schwartz, Jim Erickson, Trashed Ruthlessly by DF

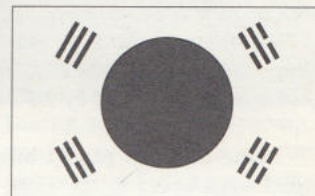
Normally I'm up for cross-genre hybrids, and since this godawful American cheapie sounded like a fusion between martial arts and a popular movie monster, it got the better of my foolish curiosity. Anybody else who thinks this no budget, no entertainment farce sounds interesting must know the truth! This worthless exercise in predictable, futile, incredibly childish slapstick is complete and utter



trash! A flick so bad it could only entertain fans so stupid they don't know the difference between O.J. Simpson and Jeffrey Dahmer (the difference, for the record, is that O.J. only ate one of his victims). Regardless, I've made my point; I've discovered yet another movie which could possibly qualify as the worst movie ever made.

KING KUNG FU tries unsuccessfully to tell the story of an ape versed in the martial arts. At first I was hoping for the same kind of simian/kung fu hilarity seen in 'invincible' Chinese flicks like **BRUCE LEE THE INVINCIBLE** and **SHAOLIN INVINCIBLES**. But no way, this quick-buck fiasco from the 1970s is a lame, unfunny comedy with some guy goofing off in a gorilla suit and who has flashbacks to his kung fu master; a lame attempt to satirize that old David Carradine show. The course of this foolish farce has this ape escape his cage at some circus sideshow, and is pursued by a couple annoying, geeky, bumbling reporters and a sheriff imitating John Wayne. Another supporting character is some sexy bimbo called Ray Faye (typical of this film's bad humor). Despite the title, there's very little kung fu in this wacky loser of a movie. What little

action we see is unbelievably poor, though it's evident that the poor sucker in the costume knows how to kick--which he does only once, possibly twice. The only worthwhile shots are some chinsy animation & miniatures toward the end when he's up on some sky scraper, and it's mildly amusing at best. After King Kung Fu's 'rampage', he hijacks a helicopter to fly back to China, his temple run by a caucasian monk trying to look & sound Chinese. -DF



From Korea:

DENG CHIRI AND SSANG RAITU

Produced by An Sung Production Co. Ltd., Released 9/19/90, Creators: Kim Wi Heng & Song Ji Fi, Starring: Kim Wi Heng, Jyu Hi Ab, Min Bo Eb, Kwok Jong Hi, Pak Chung Sar, Kim Hong Dong, Reviewed by DF

Much like the popularity of MURPHY BROWN, there's something besides Korean I don't understand: Why is 'Deng Chiri' mentioned in the title? I think it's a dog's name, leading me to think this action packed movie is a Korean variation of Rin Tin Tin or Lassie. There is a heroic german shepherd in the film, but his part is only small, he's only on screen a few minutes. So yet again, them Koreans have produced a rather nonsensical film, and they've got nuclear weapons?! That's pretty scary. Anyway, the main heroes of this movie are two bald, leotard-clad slightly overweight wrestlers. Their skills aren't bad, basically a combination of wrestling, boxing hooks and maybe an occasional karate chop. This fight-filled flick could almost

be considered a wrestling movie, except that we never see any matches in the ring. While the two heroic goons are okay and remotely charismatic, their skills look pretty weak compared to the villains! They're android-like space ladies skilled in acrobatics and high speed martial arts (courtesy of speeded-up film and obviously male stunt doubles)!

Being a Korean movie from Korea, it's understandably low budget to those of us reared on Japanese and HK films. But by inferior Korean standards, it's not bad at all, it's a lot of fun in fact. The hench-villains wear store bought gorilla masks, and one scene even makes use of a mask of what's his name-Yoga? Yowza? You know, the **STAR WARS** Jedi master who talked like **SESAME STREET**'s Grover? At least this time, the obvious mask is actually meant to be a mask, some kid uses it as a hoax. Other production values are typically Korean; its only outerspace scene is a cartoon, but there are great fights sprinkled throughout, and an absolutely explosive finale.

Here's a cool film about a couple outerspace superheroes, who, when in cartoon form during the opening credits, battle spaceships until a freak meteor storm sends them to Earth, where a tornado sends them to Korea in particular. That's when the movie abruptly switches to live action. They befriend little kids who are part of some military school and who use real machine guns! Also, some scientists are studying the twins' electric powers, one is positive, the other is negative. One experiment goes haywire and briefly turns the two heroes into rampaging mutants. Meanwhile, the space invaders are on Earth too, searching for our electric heroes. They see a Buddhist monk and because of his baldness, mistake him for one of the two fugitives they're after.



DENG CHIRI AND
SSANG RAITU

This brief subplot offers one of the weaker fights in the movie, as the Buddhist is obviously played by another wrestler, with poor kung fu. But there are plenty of better fights throughout, like after the electric twins recover from their mutating, they go with the gun-toting kids to rescue a kidnapped scientist the alien women & gorillas are holding for ransom in a cave. Plenty of excitement and amusing FX as the good guys kick ass! In one scene, a baddie keeps firing acid out of his artificial eye, so they rip half his face

off, ala **TERMINATOR**! The villains get slaughtered, and not a single good guy dies! Let's give them a round of applause, hurray for our side!
***1/2 -DF



From America:

THE ADVENTURES OF
EL FRENETICO & GO-

GIRL

[aka **THE CASE OF THE WAX TERROR**] Amusement Films; 1994, A Dancing Static Production, Producers: Pat Bisbow & Owen Cooper Production Designer: Charlie Kulszinski, Art Dir.: Lance Laurie, Written by Pat Bisbow, Owen Cooper, Jim McGurn & Jon Sanborne, Dir.: Pat Bisbow, Cast: Charlie Pellegrino, Frances Lee & Jon Sanborne, Reviewed by DF

As a producer of no budget, super cheap action/comedy videos myself, I was originally more excited than a sailor in a brothel, when I sat down to watch this 30 minute, amateur video! After all, its main influences would appear to be Mexico's **El Santo** movies, and obviously the 1960s **BATMAN** show, and star Frances Lee acknowledged Bruce Lee's Kato as one of her childhood role models. Being female, she looks sexy in a skintight outfit, and the other hero, **El Frenetico** wears a flashy, colorful, mostly purple costume. Toward the climax, they tackle ninja-like henchmen! So this dirt cheap video has got to be a lot of fun, right? Well, almost.

To be fair, **EL FRENETICO** etc. is one of the better nonprofessional productions I've seen, a great many independent videos I've tried sitting through are complete & utter garbage not worth the videotape they're shot on. Thankfully, this comic caper is better than that. Frances Lee steals the film, not only does she look good, but definitely has some martial arts skills, her cool Tae Kwon Do kicks were put to good use during the climactic fight on a stage somewhere.

But even excusing the low-to-no production values, this video should have been a lot more fun than it was. The only thing I really liked about it were Lee's two fights, and even those lack any sound FX! Goofy music failed to highlight these duels or add any



sense of thrill or adventure to them. The battles seem more exciting with the sound turned down, or better yet, play the soundtrack for a regular kung fu film at the same time. There's really only one thing about this farce I hated, and that one thing is Jon Sanborne, called a "Lower East Side poet" (whatever the hell that is) in the press release. I suppose his campy, over-acted portrayal of lead villain Heinrich Syphon was exactly how they wanted it, kind of like **BATMAN's** Riddler and Joker villains. But he annoyed the hell out of me, I wished his part had been a lot smaller, to give more time to the cool heroes. I'm also of the impression this movie is meant to be a comedy, yet there's nothing in it which made me laugh; that is, nothing intentional. Of course, I believe they're trying to keep it as clean as possible, like G-Rated material, so maybe the humor is only for kiddies.

Though I was somewhat disappointed, I had mixed reactions to this shot-on-video cheapie. You can decide for

yourself; to get a copy, write to: Amusement Films, c/o Just For Kids, 310 New York Ave., Huntington, NY 11743. Ask for price, and be sure to enclose a S.A.S.E. So although **THE ADVENTURES OF EL FRENETICO AND GO-GIRL** is not perfect, it did leave me wanting more! I'm hoping they'll make more videos of this superhero team, as they're a cool concept! I'd like to see these characters take on more villains and get in more fights!

Millionaire Heinrich Syphon (Jon Sanborne) uses Krazy Cakes (pastries with an amusing jingle & commercial) to turn people into wax figures for his museum. So roving reporter Christie Hardy (Dana Lyons) sets out to investigate, only to get kidnapped by Syphon's henchmen in the process. After Syphon makes an ass of himself some more while boring us to tears, Go Girl and alcoholic wrestler El Frenetico (Charlie Pellegrino) who's dubbed (intentionally obvious, everyone else uses their own voices) set out to get to the bot-

tom of things. In the villain's headquarters, Go-Girl gets attacked by these little slime-spitting demon/spiders made of paper mache. If the origin behind these low key things was ever explained, I missed it (to be honest, I did turn down the sound whenever Syphon spoke). After El Frenetico quite unspectacularly pulls their legs off, it's finally battle time! To rescue the reporter and other prisoners, our fairly-dynamic duo battles it out (silently) with a gang of henchmen wearing ski masks, and of course, the heroes win. * - DF



GO - GIRL

TEROR YAKI

THE HUMAN VAPOR

*["Gas Human Being #1"]
Dir.: Inoshiro Honda, Written
by Takeshi Kimura, Exec. Prod.:
Tomoyuki Tanaka, FX Dir.: Eiji
Tsuburaya, Released Dec. 11,
1960 in Japan, Released May
20, 1964 in U.S.A. on a double
bill with GORATH, Starring:
Yoshio Tsuchiya as Mizuno the
Vapor Man, and Tetsuya
Mibashi as Detective Okamoto,
Reviewed by John Marshall*

Okay, I admit it, I like pathos. Aside from being my favorite musketeer, pathos is what makes or breaks a movie for me. Pathos is a great word because it doesn't get a lot of use, so saying it makes you sound intelligent. Pathos is a quality of a story that arouses compassion in the viewers. **THE HUMAN VAPOR** is about a guy, a disaffected former test pilot who can no longer fly due to a lung condition (pathos!) who has taken a job in a library after a long stay in a sanitarium (pathos!). A mad scientist convinces him to submit to an experiment which gives him the power to transform into a mist, thus making him even more isolated, in the existential sense (pathos!). But the Vapor Man is driven by his obsessive love for a former classical dancer who is also an ex-resident of the sanitarium (pathos, pathos!). So the Vapor Man robs banks to raise money so that she can have a comeback. Eventually, this behavior arouses the suspicion of the police, who operate on the correct assumption that robbing banks is illegal and the Vapor Man must be apprehended.

A lot of people say this movie is boring, but really it's just excitement-impaired. Actually, it's a pretty gripping

story and fun to follow as a group of investigators (played by Toho's growing bullpen of male stars) try to figure out where and when the Vapor Man would strike next. But the tragic hero/villain/star/gas guy (Yoshio Tsuchiya) is too smart for them. In the end he is undone by the only weakness he has (again, pathos!). If you think you get gas pains, wait'll you see what happens to him! (And cut back on the sausage-and-parm sandwiches. Ahhh... sausage and parm sandwichesarglgllglll.) Yep, this movie has so much pathos, you'll shed a tear. If you don't, call me over, I'll kick your ass, THEN you'll shed a tear all right!

Yoshio Tsuchiya is a name Toho fans know well, as he played the Controller of Planet X in **MONSTER ZERO** and had vital roles in **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, SON OF GODZILLA, FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD, ATTACK OF THE MUSHROOM PEOPLE, YOG-MONSTER FROM SPACE, THE H-MAN, SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN, CITIZEN KANE, GONE WITH THE WIND, WEST SIDE STORY, SANTA CLAUSE CONQUERS THE MARTIANS**, and many other wellknown films. Okay, I'm just kidding about the last four. You really need **THE HUMAN VAPOR** in your collection. Fortunately, it's part of a package of films from Heritage Entertainment that includes **GORATH** and **THE LAST WAR**, that has been showing up lately on TV in my area. So, if you live in my area, you're in luck! And if you don't and you're a chick, send a photo to me at P.O. Box 283, Rancocas, NJ 08073, and



maybe I'll let you come live in my area! **** -John Marshall

KWAIDAN

*A Ninjin Club Production
from 1965, Produced by Shigeru
Wakatsuki, Screenplay: Yoko
Mizuki [from the book by
Lafcadio Hearn], Photographed
by Yoshio Miyajima, Music:
Tobru Takemitsu, Art Dir.:
Shigemasa Toda, Lighting
Supervisor: Akira Aomatsu, Star-
ring: Rentaro Mikuni, Michiyo
Aratama, Misako Watanabe,
Keiko Kishi, Tatsuya Nakadai,
Yuko Mochizuki, Katsup
Nakamura, Tetsuro Tanba,
Takashi Shimura, Kani-Emon
Nakamura, Reviewed by
Damon F.*

Though the subtitles were obviously generated on the theatrical print, they're still large and very legible, but that didn't make this dull, artsy

fartsy drama any more interesting. I've been aware of this movie's existence for many years, and knew one day I'd see it. I think it's a safe assumption I was somewhat disappointed. Despite it's often being labeled as a 'horror' (snicker) movie, it's really just a slowly paced series of soap operas, set in samurai times and involving occasional ghosts. Utter drabness aside, I wasn't exactly impressed by the constant red tint that accompanies the whole movie, after a while, this bizarre coloring can give you a headache. I really can't tell if this whole film was actually meant to be red for artistic, pretentious reasons, or if it's the result of a bad video transfer, made all the worse by multi-gen copying. Either way, this is one movie which definitely would look better on a B&W TV set.

Part if the reason this so-

called horror flick let me down is because I remember being terrified by the **KWAIDAN** TV show as a kiddie in the 1970s. It too had English subtitles, but the one episode I attempted to watch (something to do with a bald-headed lady with scary eyes) was too frightening and I didn't want to wear pants which smelled of urine. Of course, I was a tot back then, and was more easily frightened. Nowadays, movies and TV shows don't scare me. The only things which scare me are: The Super Bowl, Rush Limbaugh, slow romantic soul music, fans of Beavis & Butthead, my own shadow and the Home Shopping Network.

KWAIDAN consists of four atmospheric, moody tales which combine human morals and subtle, virtually FX-free subplots about the supernatural. Here's what we've got:

"The Black Hair"- A poor samurai deserts his wife and marries into money, in a tragic love story where the supernatural aspect doesn't creep in until the last few minutes.

"The Woman of Snow"- Intriguing, remotely eerie tale of some ghost lady haunting the snowy forests, and how a young wood cutter accidentally marries her.

"Hoichi the Fearless"- Based on the Genji vs. Heike battle of clans in 1158, this moody, atmospheric drama tells the story of a blind priest hired by Heike ghosts to sing and play his biwa (old Japanese guitar). This segment actually offers a little blood (a ghost tears the guy's ears off!) and is interesting for mentioning the legendary Heike crabs, but more on them later.

"In a Cup of Tea"- I don't know what to make of this one. Something about a writer who writes a story about ghosts who hide in cups of tea? Exactly why Shikibu Heinai and other ghosts haunt tea cups is never explained, much like why this nonsensi-

cal segment was produced.

Back to them Heike crabs! These little crustaceans are of interest to me because, like the opening battle scenes of "Hoichi the Fearless", they're factual, they really exist. I remember this from a PBS documentary: Seems the

Heike clan didn't want to die at the hands of their tough enemies so they (including the young prince) drowned themselves in the ocean. Coincidentally, there was a species of crab in these waters which has a face-like design on its shell. People therefore believed the crabs to be reincarnated samurai warriors who'd drowned there! So the more the shell looked like a face, the more likely the fishermen and crab hunters would spare their lives and toss them back into the sea.

As a result, the crabs' shells began to look more and more human over the centuries, as the generations of crabs evolved. I'm not making this up! It was on something like NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, not HARD COPY!

Anyway, **KWAIDAN** isn't

a bad movie, I mean the acting is okay and the sets are alright. But all the stories seem to end just when they're getting interesting. I suppose it's an intelligent, well written movie that intellectuals and art fags would get off on. I'm not and did not.

** -DF



BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE



**BATTLE
IN
OUTER
SPACE**

Presented

by Columbia Pictures Corp.,
Produced by Yuko Tanaka,
Original Story: Jotaro Okami,
Screenplay: Shinichi Sekizawa,
Dir. of Photography: Hajime
Koizumi, Art Dir.: Teruaki
Ando, Lighting: Rokuro

*Ishevikawa, English Version:
Bellucci Productions Inc., Mu-
sic: Akira Ifukube, Asst. Dir.:
Koji Kajita, Editing: Kazuji
Taira, Development: Toyo Labo-
ratory, Production Manager:
Yasuaki Sakamoto, Special Ef-
fects: Eiji Tsuburaya, Dir.:
Inoshiro Honda, Cast: Ryo
Ikebe, Kyoko Anzai, Minoru
Takada, Koreya Senda, Len
Stanford, Harold Conway,
George Whitman, Elise Richter,
Hisaya Ito, Yoshio Tsuchiya,
Reviewed by D. Foster*

Only a complete idiot, like those who don't know what Michael Jackson & K Mart have in common (for the record, what they both have in common is that they both have Boy's Pants, half off!), hasn't seen this classic Toho sci-fi saga from 1960. It was probably one of the very first Japanese movies I saw when I was a twerp. This doesn't make it one of my favorite Japanese science fiction capers, but compared to the utter dullness of **MYSTERIANS** and **GORATH**, this oldie is at least watchable at times. Sure, it's not overly exciting, and tends to be slow paced. But it has its moments, and its excellent special effects hold up even today. The only weak FX are some obvious matte paintings, like those used as part of a news cast, meant to be photos. Another unconvincing matte painting introduces some building called the "Space Science Center", which looks like what it is, a painting.

Yet on the whole, the only worthwhile thing in this tale is its FX. From the opening destruction of a space station, to the raygun shootout, to the anti-gravity effect (aliens eliminate gravity to make bridges & buildings go flying up into the air), the Eiji Tsuburaya's FX deserve praise only. Unfortunately, it's the other elements I thought were weak. The old man who over acts on the train tracks when he see's the bridge fly up, and

the naive, romantic subplot between Katsumiya (Ryo Ikebe) and his girlfriend Etsuko aren't especially well written. There's a brief fist fight or two, but the punches have no sound effects, and seem to miss intended targets by miles.

Interesting to note that the beginning has a subtitle which says "1995". As is always the case, their predictions of the future weren't especially accurate.

Too bad Nostradamus isn't around to write scripts. Oh well, at least **BATTLE IN OUTERSPACE** is a little more like the 1990s than **THE JETSONS** were. When I was a kid, I was looking forward to owning my own little spaceship, and flying in freeways in the sky. Hey, what about **SPACE: 1999**? I'm typing this up in 1995! That leaves us with just four more years to put that Alpha Base on the moon! Get with it, NASA (which, in the 1980s, stood for, "Need Another Seven Astronauts")!

As is so often the case in the dimension of Japanese space operas, alien invaders are planning to conquer the Earth, especially Japan. In this case, it's the villains from Planet Natall. Their leader has a sinister, threatening voice, yet the rest of his kind sound like guinea pigs with asthma. Anyway, the Natall guinea pig men can take possession of earthlings. This gave Toho a chance to actually predict the future, because near the beginning of **BATTLE IN OUTERSPACE**, some Iranian goes crazy and attempts sabotage! You think maybe this character became a role model for Ayatollah Komeni?! This whole fanatical, Islamic Revolution may have gotten its ideas from this movie! But the Iranian isn't the only human to get used by Natall's guinea pigs. It happens to astronaut Iwamura too, who tries to sabotage a rocket on the way to the moon to destroy the aliens' new secret base. Our

heroes succeed in destroying the Natall arsenal, but at the loss of one of their own rockets, several crewman and Iwamura, who, being Japanese, sacrificed himself. But the battle isn't over! There's a cool, FX-filled spaceship dogfight over Japan, with plenty of awesome laser beams and exploding buildings. The good guys win because they're good guys, but the bad guys don't and aren't.

**1/2 -DF

DEATHQUAKE

Presented by Toho Co., Exec. Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Screenplay: Kaneto Shindo, Cinematographer: Rokuro Nishigaki, Music: Toshiaki Tsushima, FX: Takeshi Yamamoto, Mitsubiro Hasegawa, Teruyoshi Nakano, Starring: Hiroshi Katsuno, Toshiyuki Nagashima, Yumi Tanigawa, Kayo Matsuo, Shuji Ohtaki, Shin Saburi, and a cameo by Daigo Kusano (GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA/COSMIC MONSTER, KOSEIDON), Reviewed by DF

While I must confess, my love of disaster movies is at a close tie with my love of job interviews, this gripping drama was almost worth my time. The story is decently written, and the characters are well defined. I actually started to care about the characters despite sappy music, and the unlikely combination of it being both over dramatized and under acted, if you can believe that! It is pretty damn boring at times though; the only reason I watched it was because I'll view any Japanese movie dubbed in English, and this one offers the mandatory "but still"s (four of them at least).

Being a Toho sci-fi flick, the special effects are great, good, nice, cool, etc. Teruyoshi Nakano and the boys really outdid themselves on the excellent miniatures. Or did they? Japanese mov-

ies have always had great miniature buildings to destroy, but in this case, there's no rubber monster bashing them down! I suspect that any miniature set in a Toho film has the potential to look flawlessly convincing; it's the giant creatures which make it a dead give-away. Hell, there was even an 'earthquake episode' of **SPECTREMAN** which, lacking a giant behemoth to stomp on a city at one point, offered realistic crumbling buildings. Other than miniatures, there are pyrotechnics and cool, full size crumbling sets for the actors, and it wouldn't surprise me if a couple of our stars got a scratch or two.

Hiroshi Katsuno plays scientist Yoichi Kawazu, who, while studying a volcano and other natural disasters all over Japan, comes to the healthy conclusion things aren't good. But poor Yoichi, not only do no scientists or politicians have faith in his predictions, but his wife Yuko wants a divorce because of his seemingly mad prophecy. Fortunately, that stud Yoichi is getting a little on the side, via a cute lady called Tamiko, who also seems to be dating some reporter. This soap opera goes on for a while, and we learn more of Yoichi's dysfunctional family, until it's all of Japan which suddenly becomes dysfunctional. True to Yoichi's words, there are suddenly earthquakes, floods, fires, explosions, and people trapped in buildings and subways. In one eerie scene, our hero swims under water among fresh corpses, before becoming a corpse himself in order to rescue trapped comrades. It seems to end happily ever after, but not for Koichi, and insurance companies. Let's say it's happily ever after for out-of-work contractors. * -DF

DEVIL HUNTER
YOHKO

(MOMONO

HANTA

YOHKO/ Toho; 1990, Original Concept: Masao Maruyama, Producers: Keiichi Onoki & Haruo Sai, Original Story: Juzo Mitsui, Original Character: Takashi Miyao, Script/Scenario: Yoshibiko Tomita, Reviewed by DF

More one-dimensional fun for horny male cartoon freaks! This animated movie is a must for fans of the old **CUTEY HONEY** TV series, as it too deals with sexy babes with super powers who occasionally fight each other. So it's fairly entertaining, even to me, and I'm not particularly fond of cartoons. Witty little action/comedies like this are okay to check out once in a while, though I can't recommend a steady diet of this stuff. But if, for some pathetic reason you're absolutely dying for a Japanese cartoon to watch, this one is a likely candidate. It's not great or even good, but somewhat worthwhile. But it's at suburban videostores, has English subtitles and I have an hour or two to kill before I have to go clean my bathroom, so let's get on with this review. Hell, if nothing else, by reviewing this average, somewhat dull cartoon, I can now write "Inside: Japanese Anime!" on this issue's cover and make a few bucks!

Though there's some nudity and sappy romance, I was relieved it doesn't go overboard with the utter tastelessness that recent anime videos are known for. Despite an erotic scene or two, the emphasis is on comedy and a little action, not one-dimensional, X-rated trash. This movie isn't exactly well written though; some scenes seem far-fetched and out-of-place, making me suspect it has a lot of dream sequences. And the action scenes are as over dramatized as ever, with freeze frames, changing colors, etc.

The story seems more than similar to **BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER** (which it predates), except that the

heroine (Yohko Mano) wears Chinese attire, and her family is known for subduing the demons with Taoist talismans. Yohko is Devil Hunter #108, the latest in a long line of virgin warriors who kill demons, vampires, witches or whatever. Her boyfriend, Hideki Kando has been captured by Reiko, the Black Queen of the demons. It seems to be a time of year (or time of decade? Time of century?) when all the planets in the constellation are lined up in such a way that the demons can run amok. But strangely, we don't actually see a whole lot of them, and Yohko's climactic swordfight with the Black Queen is anything but climactic. * -DF

TIME OF THE APES

Presented by Sandy Frank in 1987, Produced by Mataichi Takahashi & Masashi Tadakuma for Tsuburaya Co., Orig. Story: Sakyo Komatsu, Kouji Tanaka, Aritsune Toyoda, Written by Keiichi Abe, Music: Toshiaki Tsushima, Feature Concept & Editing: William L. Cooper Jr., Creative Consultant: Jessie Vogel of Cinemedia Ltd., Camera: Yoshihiro Mori, Dir.: Atsuo Okunaka & Kiyosumi Fukazawa, Cast: Reiko Tokunaga, Hirooko Saito, Masaaki Kaji, Hitoshi Omai, Tetsuya Ushido, Baku Hatakeyama, Kazue Takita, Noboru Nakaya, Reviewed by DF

Finally, a movie so bad it actually makes me agree with those stupid, talking vacuum cleaners on **MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER**, a series I generally assume only geeks could find funny. But indeed, **TIME OF THE APES** is one stupid, nonsensical, badly written piece of garbage! Of course, part of the problem is that it's edited together from a few episodes of Tsuburaya's **THE APES CORPS TV** show, which no doubt caused its illogical fragmentation, I'd say something was definitely lost in the translation & dubbing, and the plot has more holes than swiss cheese.

But I assume even in its Japanese TV version, as it was

originally broadcast (weekly, in the 1970s), it must have sucked too, as I hear it was a pathetic failure in the Nielsen Ratings. Oops, I forgot, I'm talking about Japan, where they probably don't have Nielsen ratings! Okay, so it bombed in the Yoshihiro Ratings (or whatever). I just can't understand what kind of drugs them Tsuburaya dudes were taking which made them produce this lame ripoff of the **PLANET OF THE APES** series. The program serves no purpose other than unintended humor. For a Tsuburaya series, the costumes are pretty poor, the ape masks suck and some don't even have movable jaws for when they talk!

A few interesting FX fail to highlight this childish tale of Japanese people (with names like Johnny, Uncle Charlie, Carolyn & Catherine) who accidentally get put into suspended animation and awaken to a simian-dominated future. Endless chases, captures and escapes, maybe an occasional shoot-out or fight. They also befriend some cute little 'girl' ape called Pepe. They befriend Godo, apparently the last surviving human on Earth. I assume all these stupid shenanigans take place in the same future as in **PLANET OF THE APES**. For example, just as Catherine says to Godo, "Are you human?", I bet Charlton Heston is on the other side of the world saying, "Get your stinking paws off me, you damn dirty ape!" Eventually, the apes stop chasing our human heroes when it's discovered it was all a terrible misunderstanding, and an ape general tells us all races should live together in peace and harmony. Meanwhile, there's some flying saucer flying around taking pictures of everybody, and they decide to name it 'Yukon'. At the long overdue end, it's revealed Yukon is a manmade device that flies around trying to find any hu-

mans among the apes (scientists invented it before the human race became extinct, just in case gorillas take over and turn mankind into a minority). The Yukon thing gives our infantile humans two options: 1. Go live on an alien planet. 2. Go even further ahead into the future of Earth. Well, Godo freaks out and ends up on some alien planet I guess, and the other three opt for the Earth's future. I don't know what happens after that, because either my tape or the film itself ends too abruptly. The print I have ends with them stepping into the time capsules, but I hear what actually happens is they awaken to discover it was all a dream. 1/2 -DF

SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN

(Japanese title: "The Electrically-Transmitted Man") Dir.: Jun Fukuda, Written by Shinichi Sekizawa, Exec. Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Special Effects Directed by some guy (Itchy Susbi-Barrio something). Released April 10, 1960 in the Emperor's Golden Domain, Released in 1961 to TV in B&W in the Land of Fast Food & Weight Loss Programs. Starring: Koji Tsuruta (Kirioka), Tadao Nakamura (Corporal Sudo), Akibiko Hirata (Detective Kobayashi) and Yumi Shirakawa (Akiko), Reviewed by John Marshall

SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN is a film with a sordid release history. Originally made in color by Toho, it was

released to American TV by Hertz-Lion in glorious black and white. A couple of years ago, someone was selling copies of it in color, through ads in magazines. Anyway, the copy I saw (unfortunately) was in black & white. Of course, I could get a copy of a Toho laserdisk in color and dub the English soundtrack onto it. That is, I would if it were worth it.

SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN is a very boring movie about a Japanese soldier seeking revenge on his (Japanese) enemies by projecting himself into their homes and killing them. He does this by means of a matter transmitter that broadcasts him much like a three-dimensional TV signal. It sounds more interesting than it actually is. A lot more interesting. In structure, it's kind of like **THE HUMAN VAPOR** but the characters aren't as interesting. Even so, you have to see it for the cast. The hero and villain (Koji Tsuruta and Tadao Nakamura, not respectively) make very little impression. But **TELEGIAN**'s female lead is the Toho starlet Yumi Shirakawa, who acted her little heart out in **GORATH** and was a super-sexy lounge singer in **THE H-MAN**. Co-stars include the usual suspects such as Yoshio Tsuchiya, Yoshibumi Tajima, and of course Dr. Serizawa himself, Akibiko Hirata, who must have had a clause in his contract that says if it's a Toho sci-fi movie, he has to at least make a cameo appearance! See it once for the all-star cast. * -John Marshall

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LETTERS...

and so forth.

The tongs originated in America. They were formed by the early Chinese immigrants as self-protection societies which later became involved in controlling the vices and rackets within all the Chinatowns. Modern day tongs are mostly merchant and/or benevolent associations and the majority of their members run legitimate businesses. Though on occasion, certain members (who may or may not be triad-affiliated) may be involved in criminal enterprises. As a whole, the tongs are not an underworld type criminal organization.

Triads, on the other hand, were patriotic, paramilitary secret societies that were founded (in Southern China) for the purpose of driving out foreign invaders and combatting corrupt, despotic and all-around fucked-up government officials (shit, like there's such things as a benevolent government-- Central authority, for the most part, sucks; always will. The only thing lower than a career bureaucrat is a fuckin' child molester!!). Anyway, legend has it that the Hung Mun (as most triad societies are known in Chinese) were started by five of the Shaolin monks who escaped the massacre when Manchu troops plundered their monastery after a protracted siege. These founders are referred to as "The Five Ancestors" by most modern day triads. *Amazing! So I guess that means FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH, aka FIVE SHAOLIN MASTERS, is a gangster movie after all!! -DF/* As for the term 'triads', it was the name Europeans gave to the secret societies because of their belief in the mystical properties of the number three, which denotes the balance between Heaven, Earth and man.

Another big misconception is that the triads are automatically synonymous with Chinese organized crime syndicates when, in reality, many societies are mostly legitimate in nature and still retain their original patriotic purposes and are politically oriented. Hell, most triad societies didn't even get involved in 'criminal activities' (i.e. gambling, extortion, prostitution, money laundering, and drug smuggling/trafficking--which originated with the European colonial powers!) till the late nineteenth century and it wasn't until the early part of the 20th century (following the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty) that a substantial number of the societies turned to crime (it's just that

only the outlaw societies ever get mentioned in the media.... Goddamned journalistic sensationalism strikes again). Finally, there exists Chinese organized crime groups which are operationally independent of the triads. While there may be triad members among their numbers, they aren't structured along triad hierarchy lines and the rituals normally associated with the Hung Mun (i.e. initiation ceremonies, swearing the 36 oaths, etc.) are absent.

As for your inquiries about how powerful Ng Sik Ho was... Well, he was pretty goddamned powerful. I mean, not only did he have plenty of narcs on his payroll, but: 1. He commanded a fleet of smuggling vessels that were armed with heavy machine guns. 2. He was an honorary member of both the 14k and Wo Shing Wo triads. 3. He had arranged deals in which he was supplying both the overseas-based triads (i.e. the Amsterdam 14k) and the American mafia, who served as importers and distributors, which in effect, made his operations global in nature. 4. He was reaping in between twenty to forty million dollars a year before he finally got nailed.

Though there are many accounts as to how 'Limpy Ho's' downfall came about. The most accepted version is that his main rivals, The Ma Brothers were responsible for engineering his arrest and conviction. Possibly, they had arranged a behind-the-scenes deal with the police to arrest him. Supposedly, they later outbided Ho in paying off a judge (who Ho himself was apparently trying to bribe into acquitting him!!!) into convicting and sentencing him to a lengthy sentence. To the Ma's, it was simply the most economical way to rid themselves of their biggest competitor. It certainly would have been more costly to become drawn into the bloody street-fights and gangland shootouts that would have inevitably occurred had they decided to dispose of "Limpy" Ho by force. Of course, the Royal HK Police, being the unassuming, modest fellows that they are, would like the public to believe that it was they and they alone who was responsible for taking down the Chui Chao Godfather (right, and birds don't fly and fish can't swim).

Anyway, Ng Sik Ho is dead now (I believe), I spotted an article in a Chinese newspaper about a year ago that said he had

died of natural causes in prison. Of course, then again my knowledge of written Chinese is somewhat sketchy. In any case, after his conviction, the Ma Brothers (Ma-Sik Yu and Ma Sik Chun) became the undisputed drug lords of Asia and have remained ever since. They both belonged to the Chui Chao Sun Yee On triad (which, along with the Wo groups and 14k Confederation, ranks as something of a super power among international crime groups) and they had developed a heroin trafficking network that dwarfed even Ng Sik Ho's operations by comparison. In addition to supplying European & Australian based triads, the Mas also formed partnerships with non-Chinese gangsters such as Miami crime boss Santos Trafficante Jr. (who was Meyer Lansky's successor), Auguste Ricord, the former cosican chief of the "French Connection" and NY mobster Antonio Turano (Turano was later killed--allegedly by the triads when they suspected he was planning to double cross them). The Sun Yee On, under the Mas, also attempted to establish links with the Japanese yakuza and during the Vietnam war, they were the main suppliers of No. 3 heroin to the numerous Saigon Street Syndicates whose main customers were American G.I.s.

Okay, enough of this bullshit already. I've wasted enough space in OC. I feel like I've just written a damned dissertation for college finals and you're probably cursing my very existence as you're being forced to typed in all this shit. Oh well, just wanted to right some errors and clarify some of the points you were uncertain about. If any of your readers want to know more real-life stuff about Asian gangsters, they can either go fucking pester some FBI agents from their organized crimes division or they can befriend some Chinese mobsters.

Marvin Quan, California

I read the latest copy of your magazine, ORIENTAL CINEMA. Would you please write a filmography over Amy Yip (so I can locate her films in the nearest HK video shop). Her silicone implants are very well done indeed.

Now, about who's getting laid or not. A grown man like you writing (90% of the material) about shitty, unwatchable, Japanese films intended for children and (maybe) infantile grownups is obviously not getting laid.

But an attractive reader like me with a healthy interest in Chinese quality films, thrillers, horror films and sleazy films with attractive starlets (like Amy Yip) is obviously of great interest for any healthy young woman.

So please reduce the NERD section of your magazine and increase the interesting ones; horror films, thrillers, sleaze and turkeys from various strange countries. In this you can prove you're not a nerd and maybe even get a girlfriend (an ugly one, but so what).

Your sincerely,
Gunnar Wombat, Sweden

Exactly what unrealistic fantasy world do you live in, Muskrat? I'm sorry, I mean, Wombat. Seems to me any guy who gets laid wouldn't be begging for more shots of Amy Yip to beat off to. Anybody who's seen my videos knows I've never had a major problem getting laid (I often cast girlfriends and ex-girlfriends I still talk to to play supporting roles), and your complaints about OC's subject matter are quite ignorant. Basically what you're saying is that you want OC to be just like all the HK sleaze rags out there! You're a onedimensional, typical trendy, and it's narrowminded people like you that I generally avoid. You follow the same non-original tastes as do so many, and therefore in my definition, that makes YOU a nerd.

Perhaps if by some miracle you got laid, you wouldn't be so obsessed with sleazy films you're stuck beating off to. OC will continue to expose new genres, childish or not. If you're so obsessed with trash/exploitation films, you should read ASIAN TRASH CINEMA. Notice the main difference between OC's title and that of ATC? The key word is 'trash'. They concentrate on exactly the type of films you wack off to, OC has a little cross-over subject matter in that direction, but covers enough other genres to even everything out. So take your hand away from your scrotum for one moment and read the title of any magazine you happen to buy, you stupid Swede. One more thing, you sex-starved moron. Your letter arrived at Draculina's office! I don't live in Hugh Gallgher's computer, and never have. If you'd spend more time actually reading OC and not just using it as an excuse to pull your pud, I think you'd be a much better person. Work on it, we know you'll improve. -DF

Just a quick note of appreciation for the latest issue of OC.

Continued next page

GAMERA...

Shunsuke Kikuchi, Starring: Koji Fujiyama, Eiko Yamani, Shin Minatsu, Reviewed by Frank Strom

I never understood how people could slag **GODZILLA'S REVENGE** and yet enjoy infantile Gamera movies like **GAMERA VS. ZIGRA**. At least **REVENGE** is a fast-paced & entertaining kiddie film, where these Gamera pictures would be hard pressed to entertain a braindead three year old. When I was 7 or 8 years old, these films were refreshing because they were new (they hadn't been run on TV to death), but that quickly wore off as I (a film snob at age 7) grew tired of the stupid plots and sub-standard SFX that made them a pale shadow of the superior Toho monster films. Then there are all those annoying children in these films. You ever notice how much smarter the kids are than the adults in Gamera-land? I know that's how it is in real life, too, so maybe the film makers are, like, making a statement.

Gamera is such a pussy. He always sits on the sidelines during the bulk of his films. Put to sleep in Zigma, knocked on his back in **GUIRON**, made pregnant (!!!) by Monster X, etc. Hell, even I coulda' beat the fuck outta' that wimp! The only thing weaker than Gamera is this crummy movie, **GAMERA VS. ZIGRA**. You've got your unimaginative plot, your unconvincing villain (if Zigma is all that serious about conquering Earth, why does he waste his time trying to kill the two brats?), your lifeless heroes, your obnoxious kids, and your poor special effects (you know the list: Monsters with no working eyelids, miniature cities that look like card-

board boxes, etc.). This was thankfully the last Gamera film for a good long while...until they had a 'spoiled' it with 1980's even lousier entry, **GAMERA SUPER MONSTER**.

In this seventh (!) entry of the atomic turtle saga, the evil Zigma, a monster fish from space comes to conquer the Earth. Zigma's planet (also called "Zigma", oddly enough) supported aquatic lifeforms until pollution set in, thus leaving Zigma no choice other than take over Earth. This is a pro-ecological film after a fashion, but by no means is it comparable to that pro-ecological masterpiece **GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER**. Using his super space powers, Zigma causes massive earthquakes to threaten mankind. Two little kids (pretty **DUMB** ones, surprisingly) know what Zigma is up to, so the monster has to send a mind-controlled lady slave to kill them. Doesn't happen of course, so be prepared to be disappointed. The heroic Gamera battles Zigma underwater, but Zigma puts him to sleep (much like me). Gamera sleeps through the rest of the picture, while the Earthfolk try to wake him up. Eventually, Gamera comes to, drags Zigma out of the water (where he can't fight back-- very heroic!), and kills him in seconds. The friend of all children has once again made the world safe for you and me. 1/2 -Frank Strom

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KAIZO NINGEN...

mick, but it did add a little more excitement to the show, even if it did eliminate most of **MIRRORMAN's** uniqueness by turning it into another Ultra-clone. In the first 25 episodes, our heroic SGM guys wore these cool leather jackets, until Science Patrol-like uniforms became trendy. Another ridiculous move was that the Invaders (literal name of the villains) captured Mirrorman, and to weaken him, installed a time bomb in his heart, plus a 'warning light' (!) in his belt buckle! So now if Mirrorman stays in his hero form for too long, or uses too much energy (i.e. use assorted beams which could normally kill any monster), he'll explode! So now suddenly, he's got this Ultraman-ish alarm which goes off when he's been in his Mirrorman form for too long! Amazingly, things never changed were Mirrorman's not being to fly and Kyotaro (Mirrorman's human form) never officially joining the SGM (he's always around them, but Kyotaro's job is as photographer for some daily newspaper).

Mirrorman himself cannot fly (even after episode 26, amazingly!), but is capable of the usual acrobatic jumps, assorted rays and shields, and martial arts-inspired fighting. To make up for his lack of flight capability, he can travel

at incredible speeds from his 'reflection dimension', basically jumping into a reflective surface (mirror, sunlit water, glass, etc.) and 'running' in this dimension then re-emerging anywhere on Earth, so long as there's a reflective 'doorway' (i.e. a mirror).

The Invaders come from a land of darkness, which I guess is never officially identified in the series, but the Earthlings call it 'Planet X.' We never really get to know much about these aliens, there's always a lot of mystique about them; all we know is that they want to conquer the Earth too. When on Earth, their agents look like typical men-in-black, wearing suits and dark sun-glasses (their eyes are very sensitive to light). It's also suspected that, like Mirrorman, the Invaders might be from alternate dimensions (they can do ghost-like things, such as walking through solid walls and change their forms into gas or liquid), though it's never explained, which might be part of the appeal of the series. There are only a few episodes (like #10, and maybe the last couple) where we see what the invaders really look like; basically they're little green men, except for their leader, played by Daigo Kusano (**KOSEIDON, DEATHQUAKE, GODZILLA VS. COSMIC MONSTER**).

***1/2 -DF

LETTERS...

Your Gangster movies guide is essential reading for my occasional excursions into Chinatown's video shops. You've given me quite a few films to look for. One thing I really enjoy about OC is all the detailed background info on the actors, producers, and directors of the Hong Kong films. There is more to life than just John Woo, Ringo Lam, and Tsui Hark! Although in my opinion (limited as it may be), no one comes close to Chow Yun Fat.

About your reported efforts to tone down the humorous (anti-PC) content of OC, please don't. I think that (along with the incred-

ible depth of information) is what makes OC unique. Fuck the over sensitive fanboys, and fuck the PC idiots too. The only thing you should alter about OC is the occasionally too skinny nature of the word wraps. Prime examples are on page 12, 31, and, well-- gee. I guess it isn't that big a deal. Forget I mentioned it.

I saw the review of OC's Godzilla issue in PROJECT X, did that piss you off? It was a good plug for OC, but to be compared to a STAR TREK nerd? Dan Reed, New York

I get so many insults and attacks these days nothing really pisses me

off any more. Hell, just look at the letter on page 51 (that guy considers me a nerd too) yours. I find these ignorant attitudes to be the inevitable reflection of my own ignorant attitude in OC, only I'm a lot funnier.

The bottom line is I'm just trying to inform & entertain, and everyone interprets my style differently. Since everyone defines the word 'nerd' differently, we're all nerds to somebody else. -DF

C O R R E C T I O N S :

Last issue I said the English title for **SKINNY DRAGON AND FATTY TIGER** was "Karate Cops", but I think it might really be called something like "Nutty Kickbox Cops". On page 4, Eric Tsang was accidentally spelled 'Eris Tsang' in the caption of the bottom of the page. But by far, the biggest, most stupid mistake in the issue was my misuse of the Chinese word 'Tongs'. Contrary to what I foolishly reported, Tong is not the word for gang, but refers to specific Chinese American gangs. In the V.R. TROOPERS review, I stated the program aired at 5:00 P.M. in my area. That changed by the time the issue came out, they moved it to a much earlier time-slot. My apologies for the abnormally blurry photos which appeared throughout the issue, it's the result of a graphics experiment which failed.

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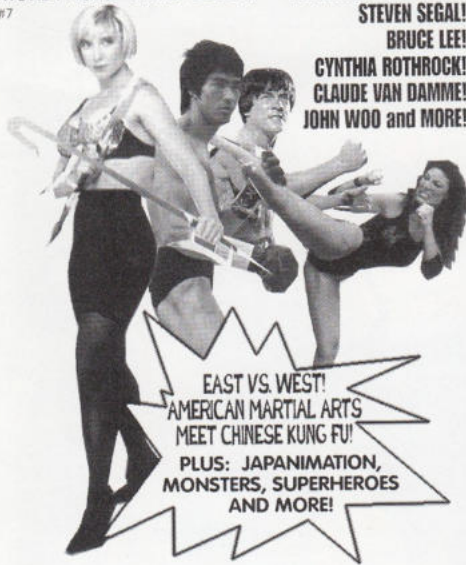
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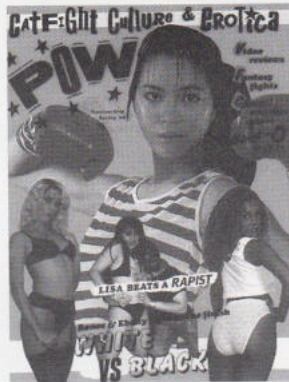
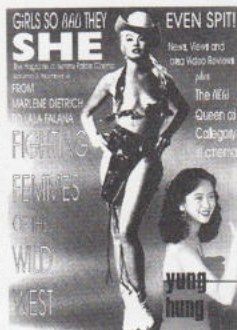


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