

Damon Foster presents:

ORIENTAL CINEMA NUMBER 9

THE SUPERHERO ISSUE!

featuring:

Ultraman, Kamen Riders!

Johnny Sokko's Flying Robot!

Inframant, Spectreman!

Starman, Dynaman!

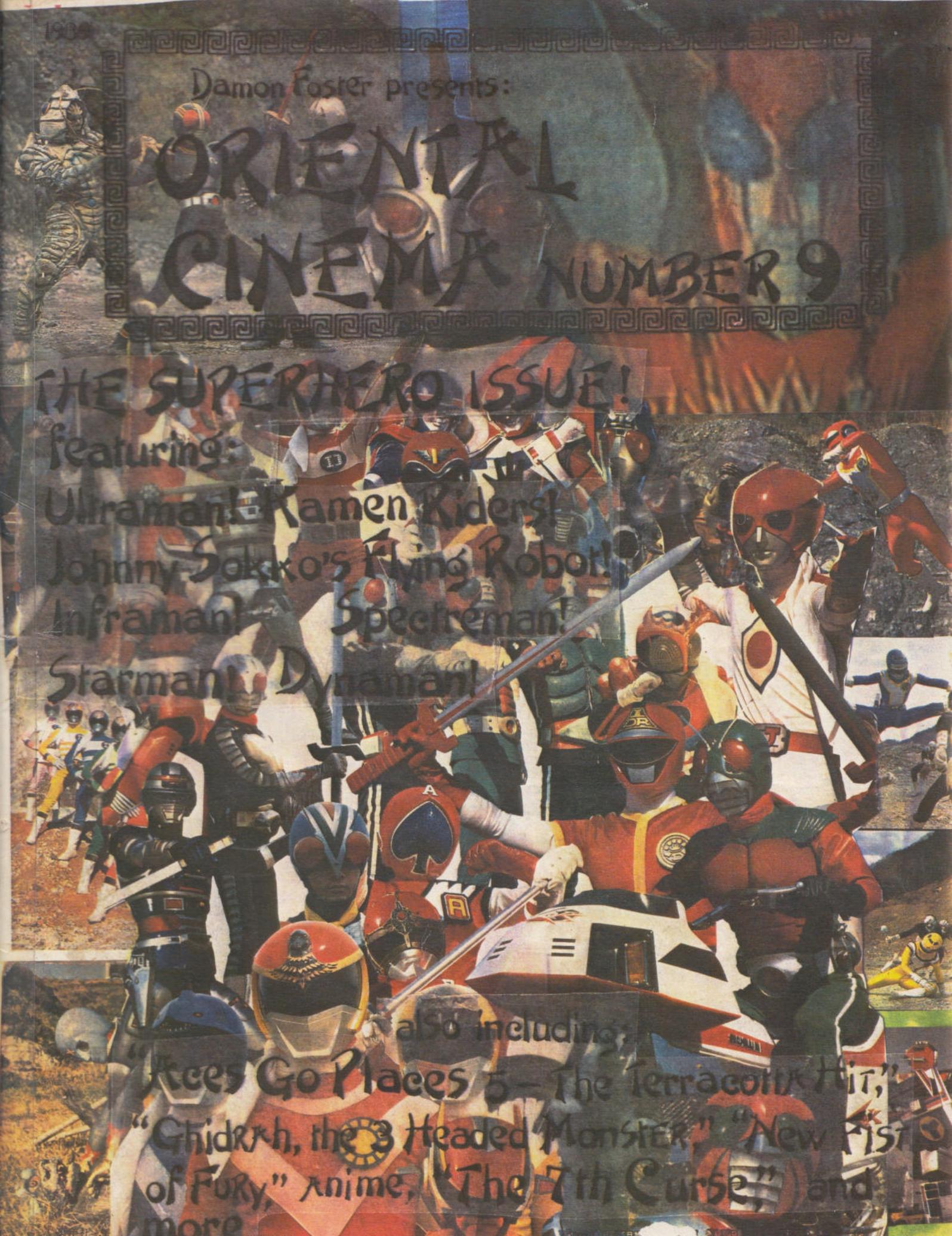
also including:

"Kees Go Places 5 - The Terracotta Hit,"

"Ghidra, the 3 Headed Monster," "New Fist

of Fury," anime, "The 7th Curse," and

more

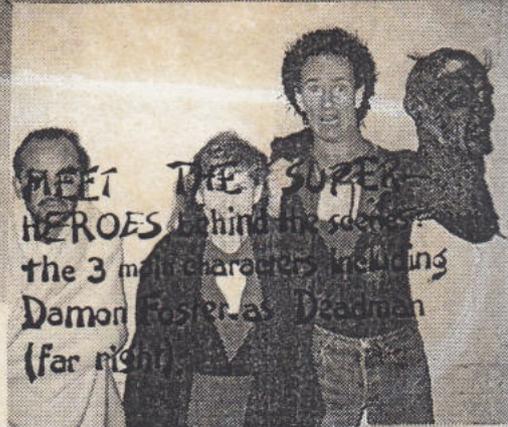


EDITORIAL part 1

This is going to be an exciting issue! Japanese superheroes are funner to me than gyoons, the Monkey King, giant monsters, pizza, alcohol and safe sex. For me, it all started out in the 1960s, as a result of watching programs like BATMAN, ULTRAMAN, and THE GREEN HORNET. That is what got me started. In the early 1970s, I encountered superheroes from Japan like Space Chief (Ironsharp in Japanese), Prince of Space, and of course, Starman (Super Giant) not to be confused with that American rip off of the same name. These early B&W films encouraged my love of the genre all the more. In the middle 1970s, a local Japanese station on UHF introduced me to the outstanding works of Toei and the Japan Action Club by airing JINZO MINGEN KIKAIDA and HIMITSU SENTAI GO RANGERS, and that was the last straw. I was hooked, addicted, a superhero junkie! In the late 1970s, I got to see English dubbed versions of SPECTREMAN, SPACE GIANTS, and JOHNNY SOKKO & HIS FLYING ROBOT on a local syndicated TV station. In the early 1980s, the VHS revolution offered a popular means of increasing the underground superhero trade; American fans could get videotapes from penpals in Japan! The adventure was just beginning! As last, I was able to see ULTRASEVEN, ULTRAMAN ACE, RETURN OF ULTRAMAN, ULTRAMAN TARO, ULTRAMAN LEO, ULTRAMAN 80, MIRROR MAN, JUMBORG ACE, ZONE FIGHTER, TYAN KING, SILVER KAMEN, THUNDER MASK, DIAMOND

EYE, KAI KETSU ZUBATO, and at least a hundred other Japanese superhero programs which were previously nonexistent in America. In more recent years, there has been an even easier means of access. Certain Japanese owned videostores (like San Francisco's own VCR) have tapes sent to them from Japan, so that Japanese customers in America can keep in touch with whatever new TV shows are currently airing in their home country. They record the shows off the air in Japan, and send the tapes over here, but with commercials intact. I take it the companies who made these shows and the Japanese TV stations who broadcast them (TV Asahi, Fuji TV, NHK, etc.) must take a piece of the profits to make this legal. Ironically, now that we've got this convenient access, the current superhero programs almost aren't worth renting. Indeed, ratings have gone downhill since about 1984.

In 1989, I was given a chance to fulfill a lifelong dream, or so it seemed. In the summer of that year, I was given a chance to actually play a superhero in a low budget movie, made for videotape release only. The tentative title for this as yet unfinished video is MEET THE SUPERHEROES. I play a heroic zombie called Deadman (possibly spelled 'Dedman' to avoid copyright problems with some old comic book of the name



DEADMAN). My undead character is one of three superheroes in this poor excuse for entertainment. There is no real action or excitement in MEET THE SUPERHEROES, it is basically just a sitcom. In it, I'm entirely unrecognizable, since I'm under a thick rubber mask. Playing a zombie is not new to me, I was also a zombie (an evil one) in a horror film called THE DEAD PIT, which should end up on videotape sometime in 1990. I have also played superheroes in other films, although they were all amateur, immature, nonprofessional. I played title heroes in my own videos ULTRA CYBORG (1984), and ANDROIDMAN (1985) which was videotaped partially on location in Japan, and I played Kamen Rider 2 in an American Kamen Rider video called KAMEN RIDER VS GENERAL DARK made by Barrie Evans and August Ragone. Other superhero projects we've been involved in include live stageplays performed at science fiction conventions as part of otherwise typical costume contests. Our action packed performances combine drama with choreographed fights, and are basically re-creations from the Japanese superhero programs



themselves. We were greatly inspired by the superhero stage shows performed live at Korakuen Amusement Park in Japan, by the Japan Action Club. Our own performances have included characters like Kamen Rider 1, Kamen Rider V3, Kamen Rider Super 1, Infranman, and the Green Hornet & Kato. It's a lot of fun to do these shows in front of a live audience, and we're always looking for extra helpers to take part playing heroes and villains. Actors, gymnasts, martial artists, superhero fans and costume makers are especially encouraged to take

part! So if you live in the bay area (in or near San Francisco) of Northern California and would like to participate in these wild & crazy projects, by all means, contact me!

But getting back to the subject of superheroes in this issue, let me just say that I'll try to include as many live action Japanese superheroes as possible. I have no conscious intention to exclude any particular series, but there are so damn many of them that it would be impossible to include each and every one in just a single issue.

For diversity, I will include the usual non-superhero col-

umns like CHINESE CHILLERS, SWORD & TAOISM, CHOP SOCKEY REPORT, and a brand new column never featured before focusing on Japanese science fiction (a genre I neglected until I made ORIENTAL CINEMA #8), called TERROR-YAKI. And if you know me, you know what a big fan I am of Cinema City's Samuel Hui actor. As always, this issue will include yet another obligatory article on yet another Samuel Hui flick!

Later dudes,

Damon Foster

Damon Foster.

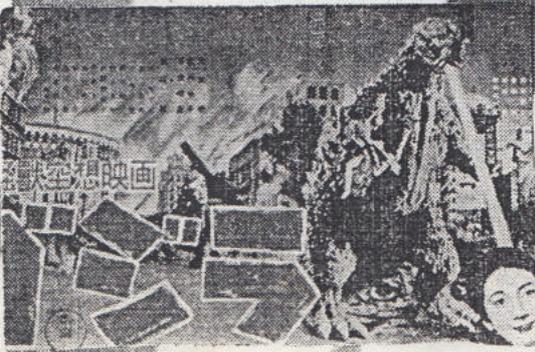


Back Issues:

ORIENTAL CINEMA #5 (1983)
"Godzilla, King of the Monsters, the movies of Bruce Lee, "Inakape Taisho" (anime), "Hawk of Justice" (samurai), "Infranman," "The Killing Machine," and "Saiguki."

ORIENTAL CINEMA #6 (1987)
The gyonst (hopping vampire) issue, featuring definitive movies on that genre, like the "Mr. Vampire" trilogy, "Curse of the Living Corpse," "Kung Fu Vampire Buster," "Rai Rai Kiyonshi," and much more on the Taoist legends. Also are the usual columns on fantasy, kung fu flicks, "Aces Go Places," and superheroes. NOTE: This issue contains a negative, hateful, sickening satire on Japan-

ese anime fanzines in America which may offend, featuring sexually suggestive artwork.



ORIENTAL CINEMA # (1988)
 The Monkey King is the main topic of this issue which includes Monkey King films like "Monkey War," "Alakazam the Great," the "Saiyuki" TV show, and other Monkey King material. For variety, diverse columns include kung fu movies, horror movies, superheroes "King Kong VS Godzilla," "Batman" meets "Green Hornet," "Mad Mission," and another hard hitting satire of cartoons & their fans.



ORIENTAL CINEMA # (1989)
 Japan's giant monsters are what this issue specializes in. Aside from "Godzilla," "Gamera," "Majin," "Rodan" and the like, there are non related topics like the usual kung fu, horror, fantasy and superhero updates.

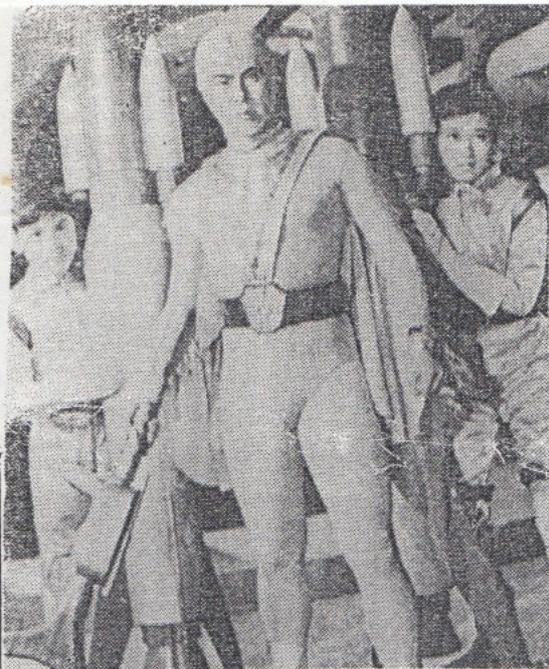
JAPANESE SUPERHEROES: Remembering the early days (somebody has to)

If it had never been for Toho's union policy, the rebellious Shintoho (meaning 'New Toho') branch never would have been formed in 1947 by actors and technicians on strike. During its 14 years of existence, this small film company never became wellknown, nor did their films. However, during their final four years of producing, Shintoho had the distinction of creating Japan's first live action, 3 dimensional superhero. This made a star out of the character's portrayer, actor Ken Utsui. Shintoho introduced the superhero concept to

Japan in 1956. Shintoho created nine 20-minute (approx.) shorts not unlike America's BUCK ROGERS and FLASH GORDON serials. For American release, the nine B&W mini features were combined to form four feature-length movies featuring the superhero Starman (inaccurately named 'Super Giant' in the Japanese versions, even though he is no giant). The English language versions of these dramas were titled THE EVIL BRAIN FROM OUTER SPACE (1956), ATTACK FROM SPACE (1957), ATOMIC RULERS OF THE WORLD (1958), and INVADERS FROM SPACE (1959). Granted, the four Starman movies were crude, basic, bland and low budget. But this is to be expected from Japan's first attempt at superhero adventure. However, I am a big fan of the Starman films. If my memory serves me correctly, there was a

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26. Kamen Riders!
35. Chinese Chillers
39. Sentai (that means superhero teams, probably)
53. Swords & Taoism
55. Chinese Superheroes (no, really!)



him much of his powers. We also see the other denizens of this friendly world, the Emerald Council. These elders are more automated and robotic than Starman himself, a humanoid. Anyway, the narrator explains how evil villains (cosmic invaders in three films, but a corrupt mythical country on Earth in ATOMIC RULERS OF THE WORLD) are planning on conquering the Earth, and that such destruction will contaminate their own atmosphere as well. So they send Starman to Earth to



oho branch of Toho went bankrupt in 1961, a rival company decided to cash-in on the success of the Shintoho Starman films. It's hard to believe that today's superhero perfectionists Toei got their big break by ripping off someone else! GEKKO KAMEN (which means 'Moonlight Mask') was produced by Senkosha Productions and started off as a comic book character who was originally featured in the comic book SHONEN KURABU. The Gekko Kamen character was created by Yasumori Kawachi & drawn by Jiro Kuwata in 1958. The TV series from Senkosha aired on KRI (now TBS) and at first consisted of 71 10-minute episodes. GEKKO KAMEN's popularity increased, so the program grew into 21 30-minute episodes and lasted from Feb. 24, 1958 until July 7, 1959. This program was directed by Sadao Funatoko and starred Koichi Ose. The reason for its cancellation was because of the influence it had on children, who mimicked the hero by jumping off high places (i.e. roofs & trees), and there were reports of kids suffocating from wearing the toy mask of the hero which was part

lot of two-fisted action in the Starman movies. This was even before 1966, the year that martial arts in film finally gained popularity. Yet the battles in the Starman movies were long and drawn-out. This choreography consisted largely of judo moves, a few punches and very few kicks, if any. These early battles were not very violent, nor were they realistic, and they made occasional use of acrobatic flips like most other Asian films dealing with martial arts (be it kung fu film, samurai film, or superhero film). Starman was played by Ken Utsui, who fit the part well, and seemed athletic enough to perform his battles efficiently.

The story of the four B&W Starman films always starts off on our hero's home world, the Emerald Planet. We see Starman and his fancy watch called a globe meter, and it's explained how this small wristband gives



take on the badguys. The rest of each of the four movies generally takes place on Earth as our Japanese superhero investigates the whereabouts of the villains. The stories are slow-paced, but allow for chases, gun fire, occasional spaceship battles and the obligatory fights.

Before the creative Shint-

全日本ヒーローアクションの歴史をたどる大冒険の大作映画 星山正太郎

ビデオコレクターズ

(お申し込み先) 〒114 東京都目黒区目黒4-1-1 アポロプラザ東館401
 株式会社 アポロプラザ 03-3493-6511
 営業時間: 日曜・祝日を除く 10:00-17:00 (受付は18:00まで)
 * 送料は別途です。電話・手紙でもお申し込み下さい。

of merchandise. Produced

by Shunichi Nishimura, the

series was cancelled, so

Toei entered the scene, and

between 1958 and 1961

they made six B&W movies

about the baroic motorcycle

fighter played by Fumitake

Omura, though none ever

reached America, unlike the

well distributed Starman

films. The Gekko Kamen

character also had a full color

cartoon TV series, which

was shown in my area on a

Mexican TV station, dubbed

in Spanish, shown on a Sat-

urday morning time slot, and

called CAPTAIN TOEI.

There was even a live action

remake from Nippon Her-

old Inc. in 1981 called THE

MOON MASK RIDER. The old

six feature length adventures

lacked the relentless

Judo fights of the Starman

films, but were more well

made, bigger budgetted. A

few of the movies occasion-

ally featured flying saucers

and outerspace, although,

like America's BATMAN TV

show from a few years later,

the hero usually battled

fellow Earthlings. The vill-

ains generally wore masks

and exotic costumes, much

like the hero, actually dete-

ctive Juro Iwai, when not

wearing his superhero cos-

tume which concealed his

secret identity. The flicks

often involved elaborate

chases and gunfire. The he-

roic Gekko Kamen character

was much loved and in dem-

and by the Japanese. And

you know what materialistic

money grubbers Japanese

chases and gunfire. The he-

roic Gekko Kamen character

was much loved and in dem-

and by the Japanese. And

you know what materialistic

money grubbers Japanese

corporations are, when there

is a big demand, manufactur-

ers increase the supply. If it

makes money for greed, Jap-

anese businessmen, they

create more of it. From

11/11/58 to 9/30/59, there

was the 48-part superhero

TV series from Nihon TV

called YUSEI OUII. There was

also a theatrical remake

called PRINCE OF SPACE in

America. The hero in this

they had a technical diffic-

ulty with sound, it was

apparently hard to audio dub

a character when there was a

musical score in the back-

ground. The results are a

number of short, quickly cut

songs which occur between

the characters' lines, yet the

music starts up again once

the line has been delivered.

Another American flaw is

the attempt at making it

look as though the film takes

place in America, by calling

the Space Prince's human

name Wally, and trying to

make it take place near Bea-

ver Falls!

B&W movie looked nothing
like the one in the original
TV show. For its time, Toei's
PRINCE OF SPACE movie
seemed well made, with excel-
lent production values.
PRINCE OF SPACE was well
paced, had decent FX, and cop-
ied the positive elements of
both its predecessors (Starm-
an's films, and Gekko Kamen's
films). However, the English
version was badly dubbed;



遊星王子かまぼくろし大使か

はう原子攻防戦

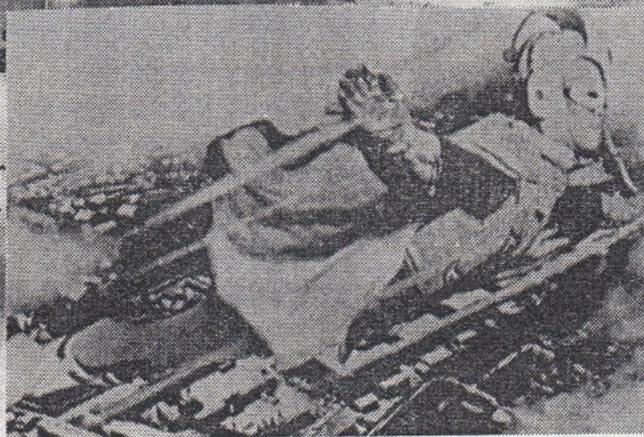
an higher production values. Next up was Toei's **KOTARO KAMEN** ("Rainbow Mask") series (56 episodes, 6/3/60 to 6/30/61). Sonny (then only known as Shinichi) Chiba made his debut here as the heroic Kotaro, and Milton (Masashi) Ishibashi played a villain. The program involv-



ing the golden masked Nanairo Kamen was never released to America. Neither were the adventures depicting **JAGUAR NO NU** (TBS, 38 episodes, 7/12/59 to 3/27/60), or **KAITE JIN** 8823 (Fuji TV, 26 episodes, from 1/3/60 to 2/28/60), or even the live action versions of **GIGANTOR** (TESTUJIN 28 GOU, Nihon TV, 13 episodes, from 2/1/60 to 4/25/60), or **ASTROBOY** (TETSUAN ATOM, Fuji TV, 65 episodes, from 3/7/59 to 5/28/60). In **ARA NO SHISHYA** (Toei, 26 episodes, from 7/7/61 to 12/27/61) which means **MESSSENGER OF ALLAH**, again Chiba played the hero, this time a masked character inspired by Middle Eastern styles, what with turban, scimitar & all.

I close this article with a movie review from one of the only Japanese superhero movies of the early 1960s to be released to America. **INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN** was one of the many

early 1960s dramas to feature Shinichi Chiba as the hero and was made right after **ARA NO SHISHYA**. The next heroic successor to come from Toei after **INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN** was National Kid, who continued to fight evil in his own Toei TV show (39 episodes; 8/4/61 to 4/27/62). Like all the superhero films and shows in this article, the **NATIONAL KID** series was crude, and in B&W, and seems like a combination of the old **SUPERMAN** TV show and the even older **FLASH GORDON** serials.



INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN

Presented by Walter Manly Enterprises Inc., A Toei Company Ltd. Production, American Version by Propixing, Produced by Hiroshi Okawa, Directed by Koji Ota

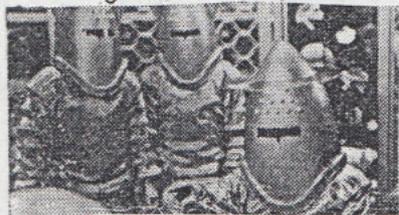
Before Jubel Yagyu, even before Terry Tsurugi, Sonny Chiba played parts in 1960s superhero movies and TV shows from Toei. Chiba had begun working in Toei productions after having one a new faces contest in 1961. In this drama, he plays the superhero Space Chief (called Iron Sharp in the Japanese version). **INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN** is probably Chi-

ba's first film. Being a fan of the karate master's later work, it's hard to imagine that it really is he who does the martial arts in the picture's only fight. The fight is lame, crude, even for 1961. The sole battle occurs early on, almost at the very beginning of the movie. Obviously, they didn't think much of martial arts duels back then, putting this fight (or so to speak) at the start, rather than the grand finale.

As an early superhero movie, we can't expect it to be one of the best. After all, if it weren't for innovators like this, later classics like **KAMEN RIDER** wouldn't have been possible. This early on in the genre, this movie is understandably under developed. Seen today, now that we're used to the high-tech stuff like **DYNAMAN**, this one comes off as slow and boring. However, it is intriguing for its historical value.

Special effects are the one thing done well in **INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN**. At the time of the flick's creation, sci-fi effects were decent in Japan, since general sci-fi was something the Japanese film makers were already familiar with making. The miniature spaceships are adequate, as are the superimpositions, and alien costumes. All these FX elements are sufficient, though plain & bland (like the over all movie). Many of the spectacular destruction scenes (buildings which realistically explode and crumble) is stock footage from an earlier Toei film, **WORLD WAR 3 BREAKS OUT**.

Script is a bit hard to follow, mainly because it's so dull it's hard to pay attention. Its main characters are a group of badly dubbed young



boys who get attacked by

robots from an alien spaceship which has landed on Earth. The automated invaders who never speak attempt to capture the kiddies when Space Chief arrives in his car-size spaceship. He single handedly defeats them. Space Chief's secret identity is that of Tabana, a scientist, teacher and part-time astronaut. The world is suffering from unidentified ultra micro electric waves which have made electronic brains inactive, made electric clocks turn back by themselves, made trains run in reverse, and exploded atomic reactors.

Although the boys tell of the spaceship and their rescue by



Space Chief, nobody believes them. However, Tabana analyzes the metal that the kids brought back from the spot where they encountered the alien spaceship and learns that it is an alloy of regium and panium. From this he guesses that the spaceship had to have come from Neptune. The alien UFO attacks the Space Science Institute of Dr. Tanikawa which is guarded by electrowalls called the Elequi Barrier, but missiles sent

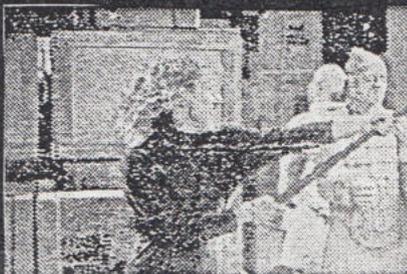


to destroy the mysterious ship have their guidance systems messed up by the barrier, and the Neptune craft narrowly escapes. However, men from the distant planet land on Earth and explode the generator of the Elequi Barrier. The disturbance causes the temperature of the Earth to drop. Neptune plans to destroy mankind by freezing the planet. But the generator is soon repaired by Mr. Yanagida, and the temperature starts to rise. Suddenly, Space Chief arrives in his spaceship and battles in the air with the alien spacecraft. A small landing craft which is part of the Neptune invasion forces draws near the institute, but Yanagida is also to direct several missiles toward the mother ship which is destroyed along with the smaller crafts. □

ACES GO PLACES 5: THE TERRACOTA HIT

From Cinema City in 1989, Producer: Karl Maka (Carl Mak), Directed by Lau Kar Leung, Leading Artists: Har Chi Chun, Deborah Grant, Music: Richard Lo and Teddy Rob, Editor: Wong Ming Lam, Costumes: Thomas Chong, Stunts: Dare Devil Stunt Unlimited, Cinematography: Paul Chan, Art Director: Vincent Wai, Production Manager: Eddie Chan, Directors: Chu Yat Hung and Mon Kin, Script designer: Tsang Kwok Chi, Post Production Manager: Tony Chow, Producer: Catherine J.K. Chang, Action Director: Lau Kar Wing, Starring: Samuel Hui, Carl Mak, Conan Lee, and Leslie Cheung, Nina Li Chi, Conaan Lee, Melvin Wong, Danny Lee, Roy Cheung, Willy Doxan, Deborah Grant

Having reviewed the first four films in this amusing series in recent issues only a couple movies at a time, it has taken me a while to get this far. It seems that the fifth film was being released just as I first discovered the original ACES GO PLACES movie! Anyway, now I'm finally caught up, that is, until they make a sixth chapter.



ACES Go Places:
the conclusion(s)

Unlike the other four ACES flicks, I haven't found an English dubb of this one yet, probably to be called MAD MISSION 5: THE TERRACOTTA HIT. I first saw this one at a Chinatown theatre in San Francisco (my girlfriend and I were the only caucasians in the entire packed theatre), and eventually got a copy on video when it was released about four months later. This flick looks a hell of a lot better at the Pagoda Theatre than it does when it's all crammed onto a TV screen. The Chinese never take into consideration that you must be careful when transferring a widescreen film onto a videotape. As usual, the far left & right words on the subtitles are cut off, but so is a video-produced superimposition in the upper left corner. This is meant to be a copyright trademark, but unlike those horrendous ones on some tapes of older Golden Harvest movies, this one is less than halfway visible! Hah!!!

So long as the third film ACES GO PLACES 3: OUR MAN FROM BOND STREET exists, I can't condemn this 5th entree as my least favorite. THE TERRACOTTA HIT ties with ACES GO PLACES 1 as my second least favorite(s). Numbers 1 and 4 are the two that I prefer. It's strange that this one isn't my favorite, since it has got more martial arts than the other four. I never classified any ACES film as a kung fu film until this one came out. Despite massive doses of fight scenes, THE TERRACOTTA HIT has its moments of stupidity and boredom as well, and that ruins much of the story. Yet much to my amazement, there were many people laughing at the most stupid things. These Chinese will laugh at anything. My guess is that their humor is sometimes less advanced than ours, as they were laughing at things I may have only laughed at 20 years ago (I.E. somebody receives an electric charge, causing one's hair to stand on end, Hardy har har.) I also didn't care much for the music,

since I miss the electric guitars of that spectacular post-James Bond theme not heard since the third ACES film. The best songs in ACES GO PLACES 5 are the two ballads (one during a training scene, the other is at the end credits) where Sam Hui sings. The guy is a talented musician. The story isn't all that great, as it's awkwardly paced, fast-paced & exciting at times, draggily dull in others. These situations are boring, always trailing off into inconsistencies and vague endings, and comedic skits lacking snappy punchlines. It's like this during the film's center portion, but the beginning half hour (approx.) and ending half hour or more are very very very very very enjoyable.

After at least 15 years in show business, Sam Hui still plays his parts well, as always. He gets more of a chance to perform martial arts (with occasional help from stuntmen doubling for him obviously), and he still manages to act funny, despite the film's inferior attempts at humor. Speaking of acting, there is a terrible American actor playing the main villain who over acts in the most ridiculous manner, with painfully simple English dialogue.

The style of much of the fist and kick action is very much inspired by the Jackie Chan action films of the 1980s, but there's no comparison (I think everyone agrees that Jackie's type of stuntwork is unsurpassed). But ACES films have better comedy in their favor, and Sam Hui's King Kong character is not as 'goody two shoes' as all of Jackie's characters. I prefer Sam's anti-hero over Jackie's Mr. Cleanman.

The story starts off with Albert (Baldy) Au (Carl Mak) and King Kong (Samuel Hui) fowling up a mission in Changmai, Thailand. Albert is no longer a cop. After he and Kong screw up their plans involving rescuing a reluctant bride which backfires, the two end up on bad terms with each other. Later, Kong and Albert are framed by a brother and

sister duo who've stolen a valuable antique sword from some evil Americans who've stolen the Terracotta statues (ancient Chinese stone warriors). The conman and his sister wore masks of Kong and Albert (Baldy) when they stole the sword. Then King Kong and Baldy are reunited by an army general played by Conan Lee, who is one of the many characters in a Chinese movie to be called Rambo, but specifically called Chinese Rambo ('Chungo Lambo,' as they say it). But before he hires them to do their next mission, there's a wierd element of filler that makes the middle of the movie quite long and boring. Both our heroes end up locked in a Peking prison along with the two who framed them. It is here in jail that the brother & sister feel guilty about having been responsible for having put Baldy and Kong through harsh conditions. So all four team up and are released from the communist prison in time to get training in swordfighting techniques from Chinese Rambo and his fellow martial artists. The interrupted mission involves the group of Chinese statues stolen by Americans. Upon our heroes' arrival at the villains' base, it turns out that many of these statues of staff carrying soldiers are actually more villains in disguise. The result is a lengthy, exciting series of swordfights.

LUCKY STARS GO PLACES

Produced by Golden Harvest & Boho Films, 1986, Starring: Samo Hung, Lau Tak Wah, Chen Fen, Kent Chang, Lau Nam Wok, Carl Mak and Sylvia Chang

LUCKY STARS GO PLACES is the title that appears on the movie itself. But on the video rental box, it's called THE HAPPIEST STARS. One film, two titles. And that is not including its original Chinese title, whatever the Hell that is. LUCKY STARS GO PLACES is not available in an English dubb and probably never will be. It's not the kind of movie that most Americans would enjoy

(except for cultural intellectuals like me and you).

This disappointing comedy is a real let down! Like I mentioned a few issues ago, team-ups in movies are rarely executed well. This example was meant to combine the stars and characters from two popular Hong Kong film serieses; the ACES GO PLACES romps (Cinema City), and the LUCKY STARS romps (Golden Harvest), usually starring the one and only Jackie Chan. Unfortunately, Jackie Chan never appears in this addition, nor does Samuel Hui, star of all the other ACES GO PLACES movies. The idea of Jackie and Samuel starring side-by-side in the same movie seemed too good to be true. However, Jackie's longtime co-star Samo Hung is featured, as well as Samuel's partner in ACES, Carl Mak.



Being a Golden Harvest production, this picture is understandably much more like the LUCKY STARS films than Cinema City's ACES films, despite cameos by Carl Mak and Silvia Chiang of ACES fame. One advantage in all this is the great fights. There are only about four fights in this picture, but they're generally done better than most of the fights in the ACES flicks, which never really relied heavily on martial arts. But in comparison with the superior battles in the LUCKY STARS adventures, the duels in this one seem mildly disappointing. However, this one does feature a few of those mo-



dern, state of the art, back-breaking stunts. But in one scene during a climactic confrontation, the wire which suspends an actor in mid-air (for an extended jumping effect) is clearly visible. Some of these fights are highlighted by a breathtaking score, consisting of electric guitars, sounding kind of like heavy metal.

The script has something to do with criminals who smuggle jewels and guns and run a department store. They brutally kill a spy who photographed them, so the vengeful police decide once again to hire Kidstuff (Samo Hung) and his fellow orphans to retrieve the jewels and defeat the villains. As kidstuff (called 'Fastback' in the English dubb of MY LUCKY STARS) negotiates with police, we discover that the married couple of cops from ACES GO PLACES (Albert Au and his wife Quito) now work at the same police station trying to hire Kidstuff. It seems that many years ago, Kidstuff and Quito (Silvia Chiang) used to date each other. This makes Albert (Baldy) Au jealous, so he and Kidstuff become rivals. Regardless, Kidstuff agrees to help out, and tries to re-hire his old friends from the orphanage. This is the only scene where we see Richard Ng, Eric Tsang, and the old cast from the other LUCKY STARS mov-

ies. They all refuse, claiming they are all rich now, and they don't want to risk their lives again. So Kidstuff is forced to hire a new group of heroes, including a martial artist called Rambo (a common, trendy name in China), who has studied assassination techniques like ninjutsu. Also hired is Libbogen (one of two cowardly cops), Fat Cat, Long Leggs and Top Dog. Then they hire a female secret agent accurately named Ms. Yum Yum. This hot babe trains them in martial arts, yet the horny misfits continually hassle her, trying to sneak feels to her anatomy (which I also would attempt) and get her to give them mouth to mouth resuscitation. These scenes are strikingly similar to the scenes in MY LUCKY STARS, also involving sexually frustrated misfits trying to coddle a feel from a lady in charge. Anyway, getting back to the plot, our heroes disguise themselves as Arabs and pose as gun smugglers who negotiate with the bad guys. This helps them to locate the base of the villains. So later, they infiltrate. It's a department store, and they sneak in to retrieve stolen jewels. But the villains catch them in the act. Much of this time, the heroes are locked in a room nearly suffocating, Kidstuff is at a theatre watching HEART OF THE DRAGON, and he later has a hilarious fight with Albert Au in a padded cell. But after all this mumbo jumbo, the heroes escape their captivity and battle the baddies. Kidstuff arrives late and only has a small part in the climactic showdown. □

**JAPANESE
SUPERHEROES**
that reached

America (not including all those
goddamn cartoons)

ULTRAMAN

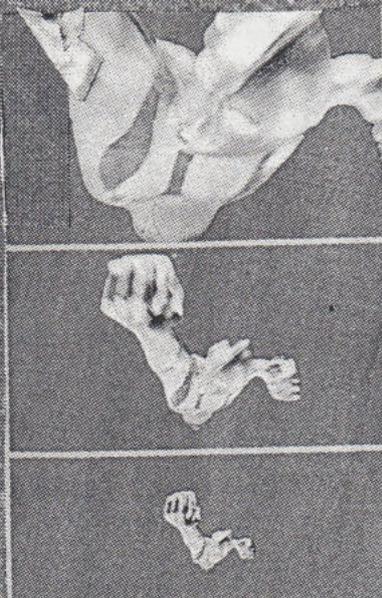
Special Effects by Eiji Tsuburaya and his crew. Directed by Noriko Shishikura, Produced by Noburo Tsuburaya, Broadcast on the Tokyo Broadcasting Service from 7/10/66 to 4/9/67 for a total of 39 episodes. Released to America by United Artists TV, featuring Susumu Kurobe as Hayata, Shoji Kobayashi as Capt. Mura, Mitsuo Dozumashi as Arashi, Akihiko Hirata as Dr. Iwamoto, Hiroko Sakurai as Fuji, Masaya Nikame as Ito, Akihide Tsuya as Hoshino, Toshi Furuya as Ultraman, Haruo Nakajima as many of the monsters.

You all remember this one, don't you? Not only is this Japan's most well-known superhero program, but one of the most influential ones as well. This series made me what I am today, for better or worse. Those of us in our 20s are currently the ones who remember ULTRAMAN the best, since we're of the generation that was young and impressionable at the time of ULTRAMAN's American release. I'm proud, and glad I'm not a kid now, growing up on GHOST BUSTERS cartoons!

Watching ULTRAMAN is almost like watching many Toho monster movies with the usual monsters, miniatures, superimpositions, pyrotechnics, English dubbing and music, except that each episode is only 30 minutes long. Another difference is that since each story in ULTRAMAN is rushed and fast-paced (unlike the feature length movies where they can take their time), it tends to make ULTRAMAN more comical, far-fetched and childish at times.

The fights in ULTRAMAN aren't especially good, since 1966 was

when this type of action was still being perfected. Our hero's duels with his Godzillian opponents are slow-paced & crude, reminiscent of the Frankenstein fighting against Baragon duel from FRANKENSTIEN CONQUERS THE WORLD (1965). In ULTRAMAN, both giant fighters are played by actors in rubber costumes. Ultraman is rather fast when compared to his bulky, slow moving foes. The content of their fights is very much wrestling inspired, with an occasional judo technique thrown in (pardon the pun) for good measure. In later years, sequels (programs featuring Ultraman's brothers) would have fights which gradually became more violent, slightly more karate-like.



Eiji Tsuburaya from Toho not only created theatrical giants like Godzilla & Rodan, but was also special effects director for ULTRAMAN. FX in ULTRAMAN are standard, although the late Tsuburaya's best work was in the theatrical movies, and not all these weekly episodes (the Tsuburaya company's other works include ULTRASEVEN, MIGHTY JACK, ULTRA Q, and MIRRORMAN among others). But I think any fan of Godzilla FX can be a fan of ULTRAMAN FX. Interesting to note that the Godzilla costume was used in episode #10 of ULTRAMAN, though altered to make it look like a different monster, called Kira (Jiras in the Japanese version). One of Eiji Tsuburaya's FX assistants was the late Ryosaku Takayama. When I lived in Japan (1985), I visited his house with my friend Takahiko Mamiya and met his wife, Mrs. Takayama was friendly, and enthusiastic to have a foreign guest who was a fan of her deceased husband's work. After dinner, I was given a chance to explore the workshop & storage rooms, discovering all sorts of rare props from ULTRAMAN and other superhero programs. Mrs. Takayama even gave me a unique souvenir. They're plastic beads that appeared in ULTRAMAN episode 14, used as small protruding scales on the skin of Gamakultra, a monster that eats pearls.

For its time, ULTRAMAN was unique, individual, inspirational and one of a kind. But once ULTRAMAN

This newspaper article was meant to promote a movie which was never completed.

Wednesday, October 10, 1979 — Santa Cruz Sentinel — 27

Japan's Latest Cinematic Superhero

ULTRAMAN

By RICHARD BILL

TOKYO (AP) — Japan, the birthplace of Godzilla, Rodan and a host of other rubber monsters, is preparing a new thrill for the American moviegoer. But not to worry, he's one of the good guys.

A familiar figure on Japanese television since the 1960s, Ultraman will make his U.S. screen debut as the star of a \$10 million science fiction epic scheduled for release in 1981.

Along with his 12 similarly ugly brothers and sisters, the bug-eyed superhero with a face like the front end of a bullet train will do battle with other space creatures for control of earth and survival of the human race.

Sound familiar?

"It will be a serious film, not a comedy," insists the creator of Ultraman, Hideo Tsuburaya, 43. "We hope to make lots of money from it."

Tsuburaya's father, special effects wizard Eiji Tsuburaya, brought the giant, lizard-like Godzilla to the

screen 25 years ago. The family has been producing pneumatic, plastic horrors for films ever since — more than 700 in all.

Most of them have been wicked characters. It took Godzilla several movies to get on the side of justice. What makes Ultraman different is that he started out that way, a sort of Japanese version of Superman.

In fact, the parallels are more than coincidental. Like Superman, Ultraman is basically human in shape, and arrives on earth from a distant star called M-78. Once on earth, he assumes the identity of astronaut Scott Craig, a name that sounds as if it might have been lifted from the NASA telephone book.

Having battled various evil forces on Japan's TV screens for more than a decade, Ultraman and his family have spun off toys and other products that earned millions of dollars for the makers, and for Tsuburaya, who holds the copyright.

There is even an "ultra shampoo," a success despite the fact that Ultraman and his siblings all are as bald as bowling balls.

"Japan," agrees Tsuburaya, "has gone Ultraman-crazy."

The film, "Ultraman: The Jupiter Effect," is to be shot entirely in the United States except for special effects which Tsuburaya will handle at his studio in a Tokyo suburb.

The script is by Jeff Segal, who worked on "Star Wars" and "Capricorn One," and the cast is to be mixed American and European. But the director refuses to say who he has in mind for lead roles.

The plot revolves around an astronomical phenomenon that Tsuburaya says actually will occur in 1982 — the alignment of all the planets in the solar system. In the film, this "Jupiter effect" brings on earthquakes and other cataclysms that render Earth helpless against the invasion of a robot army led by Brax, Ultraman's arch-nemesis.

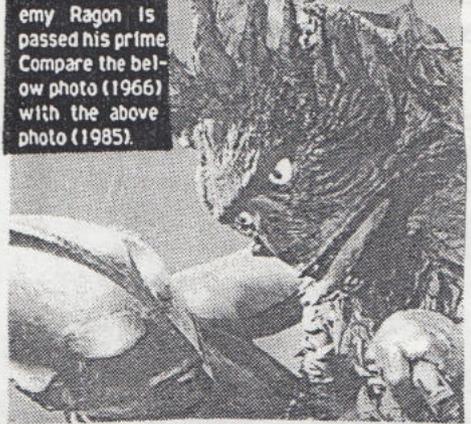
Never mind who wins. If the film succeeds, says Tsuburaya, his next project will be "Ultraman II."

"After all," he says, "the world can't have too many heroes."

ray guns, space ships, submarines and the like. During the run of the series, the patrol use these generally ineffective weapons against giant monsters until Hayata finally presses a button on his Beta Capsul and transforms into the enormous cyborg, Ultraman, who stands 40 meters high. After a brief battle, Ultraman crosses his arms, producing a death ray which usually kills the destructive villain, and often making the creature explode as well. But Ultraman can only spend a little time on Earth, since a warning button on his chest blinks indicating he will die if he remains in the Earth's atmosphere too long. Each episode's guest monster is individual from the others, they all come from a separate source. Some are ressurected dinosaur mutants, others are cosmic invaders.



Here I am at the home of an FX technician in Japan. As you can see, Ultraman's enemy Ragon is passed his prime. Compare the below photo (1966) with the above photo (1985).



ended, the Ultra legacy continued in following seasons featuring the adventures of the metallic hero's brothers. However, none of them were ever released to America.

The script behind this groundbreaking series deals with a friendly alien from Nebula M78 who came to Earth to battle giant monsters. Ultraman's human form is a soldier called Hayata (played by Susumu Kurobe), of the futuristic army called the Science Patrol. Lead by Capt. Mura (Shoji Kobayashi), the other members are Arashi (Mitao Dokumimashi), a sole female called Fuji, and a bumbling fool called Ito. The Science Patrol's weapons include



However, Aboras from ULTRAMAN #19 is still holding up quite well and doesn't look a day over nineteen!



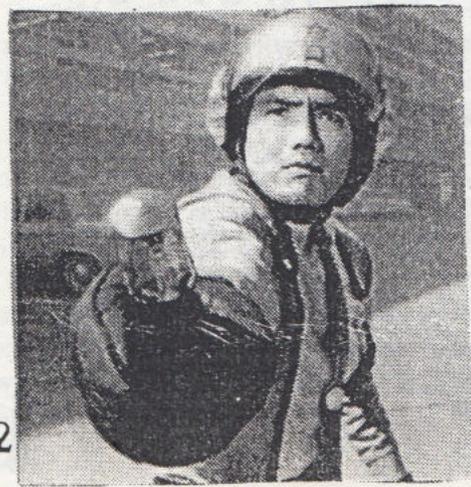
- ULTRAMAN EPISODE GUIDE
(EPISODE NUMBER, NAME OF MONSTER, AND ORIGINAL BROADCAST DATE):
1. BELLAR (7/17/66)
 2. BALTANS (7/24)
 3. NELONGA (7/31)
 4. PAGON (8/7)
 5. GREEN MONSE (8/14)
 6. GUEZRA (8/21)
 7. ANTLER (8/28)
 8. RED KING (9/4)
 9. GABORA (9/11)
 10. KIRA (9/18)
 11. GYANGU (9/25)
 12. DODONGO (10/2)
 13. PESTA (10/9)
 14. GAMAKUJIRA (10/16)
 15. GABABON (10/23)
 16. BALTANS (10/30)
 17. BULLTON (11/6)
 18. ZORAB (11/13)

19. ABORAS (11/20)
20. HYDRA (11/27)
21. KEMLAR (12/4)
22. TERESUDON (12/11)
23. JAMILA (12/18)
24. GUBIRA (12/25)
25. GIGAS (1/1/67)
26. GOHORA pt. 1 (1/8)
27. GOHORA pt. 2 (1/15)
28. DA DA (1/22)
29. GOLDON (1/29)
30. DO (2/5)
31. KERONIA (2/12)
32. ZANBORA (2/19)
33. MEFILAS (2/26)
34. SKYDON (3/5)
35. SHIBU (3/12)
36. ZARAGAS (3/19)
37. JIRONINGON (3/26)
38. HEYLLA (4/2)
39. ZETON (4/9)

THE SPACE GIANTS

Produced by P Productions, broadcast on Fuji TV, 52 episodes lasting from 7/4/66 to 6/26/67, called Starring Masumi Okada as Tom Ito Mura

This childish yet amusing series is a bit hard for me to remember, since it has been about ten years since I last saw it. From memory, SPACE GIANTS seems rather bland, almost boring. But I can recall that the subdued FX were well done, perhaps flawless, though non flashy. I know this isn't saying much about the show, but it's as much as I can recall.





The original Japanese title is **MAGUMA DAISHI**, which I believe means **AMBASSADOR MAGMA**. The character is the film's main hero, known as Goldar in the English dub.

The plot is about a robot from outerspace called Goldar who stands 50 feet high in the American version, and seven meters (roughly equivalent to 27 feet) in the Japanese version. Goldar was created by Metheuzam, an alien wizard who also came from outerspace. The elderly magician also created Goldar's son Gam and wife Silvar (Maru in Japanese), though neither are giant, nor are they even very robotic. What all three family members have in common is their ability to change into rockets. Back in 1966 when this program was made, there were no Transformers or Gobots, so **SPACE GIANTS** was ahead of its time. Earthling heroes who've befriended the cosmic robots include a kid named Miko and his father Tom Ito Mura (played by Masumi Okada of **LATTITUDE ZERO** and later appeared in **SHOGUN** and **KAMEN NORIDA**). Miko can summon anyone of the three robots to his aid by blowing his magic, rocket-shaped whistle. If he blows it once, Gam the rocketboy arrives, blowing it twice attracts Silvar, and three times summons Goldar the space avenger. But it isn't all fun and games, because unfortunately, an evil monster from outerspace called Rodack (Goa) wants to conquer the Earth. It's up to Goldar and friends to protect Japan from the assorted spaceships, monsters and Lugo Men sent by the corrupt Rodack.



JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT

Produced by Toei in 1969, Broadcast on TV Asahi from 10/11/67 to 4/1/68, 26 episodes, Starring Akjo Ito

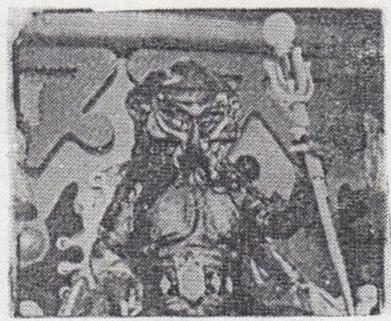
This was quite an undertaking for a staff with such a low budget! There is nothing wrong with making a cheap program, but to flaunt it! Everything looks fake, not to mention overdone. Giant Robot himself is a decent costume, although most of the monsters he fights look pretty stupid. The whole series is pretty stupid, but one thing is for sure; **JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT** is anything but boring. It is entertaining, and that is all that really counts.

JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT is meant for kids only. The whole show looks like it should be a cartoon, but then it would have looked like **GIGANTOR** (see **ANIRAG #1** for info). I last saw this series when I was about 14 years old, and even then I found it infantile yet amusing. At around 16 years old, I saw its feature-length movie version called **VOYAGE INTO SPACE** and my opinion of it sunk even lower. This movie consists of four episodes edited together, starting with episodes 1 & 2, then 13, and ending with 26, the one where the heroic robot dies as he kills the villain. Try not to cry too hard.

The story of this series from Toei seems more than similar to **THE SPACE GIANTS**. Only this time, the giant robot (called Giant Robot) has no personality, unlike Goldar. Johnny Sokko is a young kid who



works for a defensive group called The Unicorn, sort of a rip-off of UL-TRAMAN's Science Patrol. With the help of another Unicorn agent called Jerry Mano they are protecting the Earth from alien invaders called Gargoyles, lead by a monster called Guillotine, even meaner than Rodack! Guillotine's various monsters, agents and spaceships are no match for Giant Robot, under the control of little Johnny Sokko.

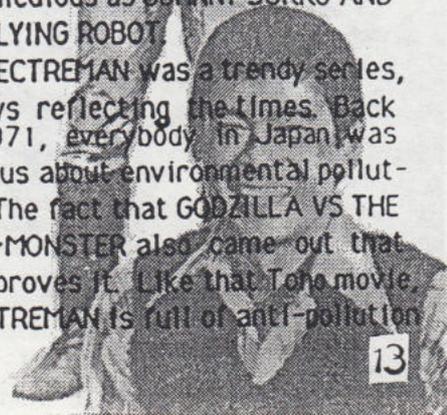


SPECTREMAN

Japanese title: "Spectoraruman," which means 'Spectralman'; Produced by P Productions for Fuji TV, 63 episodes lasting from 1/2/71 to 3/25/72, American credits: Presented by Richard L. Rosenfield, Associate Producer: Mel Welles, Special Effects by Tomio Sagisu, Edited by Alan Geik, Assistant to the Producer: Morley L. Rosenfield, Produced by Richard L. Rosenfield in Association with Fuji Telecasting Co., Ltd., English version Directed by Mel Welles

Now here's a show I can get into. Like **JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT**, its production values are dirt cheap. And although **SPECTREMAN** also has more than its share of unintentional humor, it's not quite as ridiculous as **JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT**.

SPECTREMAN was a trendy series, always reflecting the times. Back in 1971, everybody in Japan was nervous about environmental pollution. The fact that **GODZILLA VS THE SMOG-MONSTER** also came out that year proves it. Like that Toho movie **SPECTREMAN** is full of anti-pollution



warnings. As a superhero show, SPECTREMAN started off as an imitation of other programs reviewed in this article. Like ULTRAMAN, SPECTREMAN also involves a human who is a member of an organization and can change into a metallic superhero. From THE SPACE GIANTS and JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT comes the idea that an alien invader is supplying evil monsters for the hero to fight (unlike ULTRAMAN, where each episodic monster came from a separate source). The heroic Spectreman was capable of being both human size and giant (he grows and shrinks, depending on the size of the monster he's fighting). The giant-against-giant duels were very much ULTRAMAN inspired, though perhaps a bit more violent (more punches & chops, less wrestling). His human-sized battles are a little faster, occasionally having him and his friends taking on numerous henchmen, much like in Toei's KAMEN RIDER, which was fierce competition for SPECTREMAN. SPECTREMAN debuted in January of 1971, and KAMEN RIDER first appeared three months later.



Part of my enjoyment of this show comes from the 14 year old kid in me. That's how old I was when SPECTREMAN first graced my TV. I had a severe hunger for karate like violence I wasn't getting from other shows. And although the martial arts in SPECTREMAN are slow and weak, these battles can still send shivers up my spine.

The American releasers did a pretty good job at releasing this to America. My only complaint is that they removed the original theme song from the opening credits and replaced it with their own "Spectreman theme." The singing and acoustic guitaring sounds very much like hippy rock & roll, and the tunes bring to mind peace beads, long hair, dope, and things from the 1970s that many fans of cartoons still wear, like bellbottom pants,

sideburns and mustaches. Far out, man! Like groovy. Hey, what's your sign?

Plotwise, the main character is George (Jiyoji in Japanese), an alien from space who can change into a gold and brown superhero called Spectreman. George takes his orders from alien authorities called Overlords, and is a member of the Anti Pollution Patrol. The three main members are Capt. Karada, Ato and Rita. Those are the good guys. And now, the bad guys: Two alien apes called Dr. Gori and Karis ('Ra,' in Japanese). These two simian invaders are using the Earth's own pollution to create and mutate giant monsters to destroy the Earth. Then they can conquer it, but not if Spectreman has any say so in the matter!

DYNAMAN

English credits, I mean blame: Executive in Charge of Production: Mark Philips, Producers: Cynthia Friedland and Ernie Trigg, Script Consultant: Lianne Klapper, Audio Post Production Facility: Hammer Music, Audio Supervisor: Chuck Hammer, Dialogue Recording and Mixing: Charles Burgee, Sound FX: Mick Gomaley & Paul Soucek, Released by ATI Video Enterprises, Inc.

Contrary to popular opinion, there was already a Dynaman cult in America five years before it ever reached American shores with English dubbing. 1983 was the year this exciting series from Toei first appeared in Japan. At that time, I was an avid fan of the series, but as the years went by, I found none of its remakes (BIOMAN, CHANGEMAN, FLASHMAN, MASKMAN, LIVEMAN, etc.) to be as enjoyable. So I didn't simply like all the Sentais (superhero teams), just DYNAMAN and its predecessors. Then during the year 1987 (MASKMAN year), an April TV Guide presented tragic news: DYNAMAN was coming to America in a very dishonorable form. Me and my fell-



ow DYNAMAN fans were worried!!!!!! If this new English adaptation were to succeed, the series (and maybe the whole genre) would lose its underground chicness and cult appeal. It could become as commercial, trendy, nerdy, and pathetic as the ridiculous Japanese cartoon scene!! Us American fans of DYNAMAN were a minority, and we wanted it kept that way. So we waited, and sweated it out while keeping our fingers crossed. This agonizing suspense lasted a year, until DYNAMAN came to American TV in 1988.

The English version of DYNAMAN is the worst example of Americans releasing a Japanese TV show ever! The assholes responsible obviously didn't know what the hell they were doing. With the exception of the title, all the characters names were changed, as were the stories. The biggest flaw of all was their eliminating the Japanese soundtrack, something which was so important. Now all the original sound FX are gone, making the English version unbelievable and artificial. And it's bad enough that all the music was removed, yet

these idiots carried this atrocity one step further by dubbing in rock & roll songs from bands like Franky Goes to Hollywood (bad!), Huey Lewis and the News (terrible!), and the otherwise enjoyable Billy Idol (fair). So in other words, America's adaptation of DYNAMAN is a mess.

The idea of humorous audio dubbing has always appealed to me if done right. Woody Allen's WHAT'S UP TIGER LILLY is a classic, and many have praised my own homemade re-dubs of LEAVE IT TO BEAVER, DAVEY & GOLIATH and ALF. But as for the dubbing in the English DYNAMAN, only portions of it are funny. Generally, it comes off as stupid, especially stupid (and on occasion racist) to longtime fans of the infinitely superior Japanese version. DYNAMAN, even in Japanese was always intentionally comical, though in a campy, BATMAN-like way. Their attempts at making it even funnier for the American release failed miserably. The best way to enjoy the English DYNAMAN is to turn down the sound and just watch the visual portion, undoubtedly the best part.

Regardless, the shining talents of Junichi Haruta (as Juba) still show. Haruta's skills in martial arts and acrobats never fail to impress American and Japanese audiences alike. Obviously, the only real talent behind DYNAMAN comes from the Japanese, not the American version.

The bastards responsible for the Americanization of DYNAMAN only released five or six episodes to America, fortunately. Their final episode wasn't another whole new episode, but a series of clips re-edited together as flashbacks presented in documentary form. I suppose that their reason for doing this in place of a full episode had to do with money, combined with the fact that the series was far from successful (thank God!) in America. This 60-minute documentary was placed after the American episodes had run their course. Like the English DYNAMAN series, the FIFTH ANNUAL DYNAMAN CONVENTION is full of stupidity and pathetic humor. This horrible satire presents DYNAMAN as a national phenomenon which supposedly caught America by storm. Among other things, this parody features interviews with fictional characters, like a scholar who's dedicated his life to researching the DYNAMAN series and its incredible (so they say) impact on society, rivaled only by the Beatles and Christianity. Other characters interviewed include Dyna Beige (a former Dynamian who bears a grudge against his former colleagues), a rock star who made an MTV-like rock video based on the DYNAMAN series, and a secretary who guards a vault containing the prized DYNAMAN videotapes. Although the actors playing these characters as well as host Tom Quinley are semi-decent actors, the documentary is so incredibly bad, it staggers the imagination. This documentary can not be watched, only sat through.

Now What?

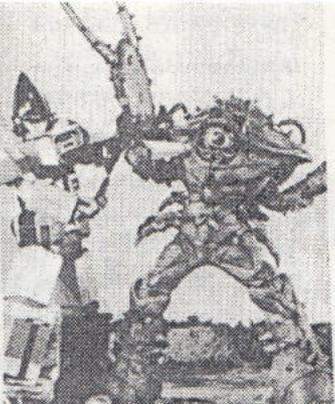
Pictured below is a breathtaking moment from *Dynaman*, an upcoming syndicated series first seen in Japan. Sort of. "We saw this incredibly nutso footage—real vegetable television—at a syndicators' convention," says former SCTV producer Patrick Whitley, "and we decided

to do something interesting." They saved the pictures, threw away the Japanese sound track, and added all-new comedy dialogue. Now, "every week, the villains try to take over the world," and the show's young heroes try to stop them. "The kids are pretty simple-minded. We haven't given them a big IQ."

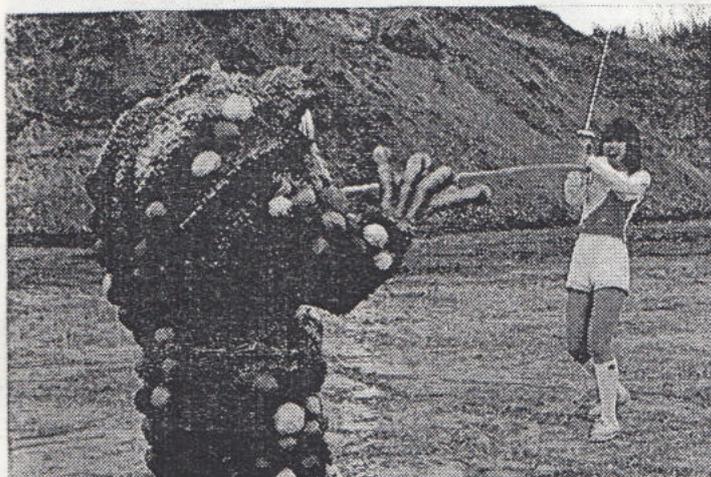
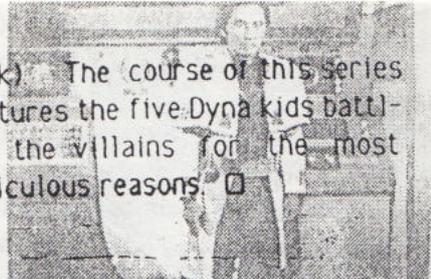


TV GUIDE APRIL 11, 1987

Once again, I say that the Japanese qualities are excellent. The FX are sensational, as are the fight scenes. Yet no credit is given to the Japanese crew or cast!!! They are the ones who put all the hard work into the show, yet the only ones given credit are the disrespectful American morons who ruined it. This is an unforgivable crime, considering how much more hard work Toei and the Japan Action Club put into the series than the American gag writers and voice dubbers are capable of.



Pink) The course of this series features the five Dyna kids battling the villains for the most ridiculous reasons. □



Tanaka (actually Aton in Japanese), Mel Fujitsu (Ka Shogun), Nigel (Megido), and Lucy (Kimi-mira). They worked in a laboratory with Dr. Ho (Professor Hisataro Yumeno), until a freak lab accident disfigured them, so they took on heavy metal attire and descended to the middle of the Earth (they're actually alien invaders

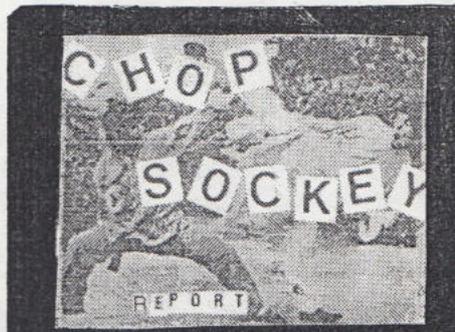
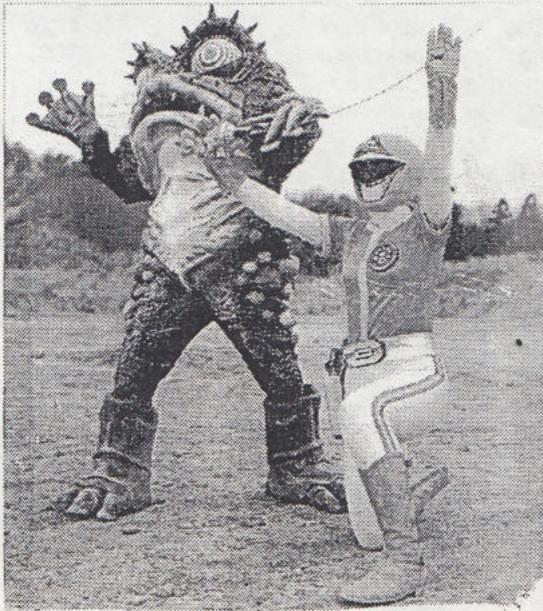
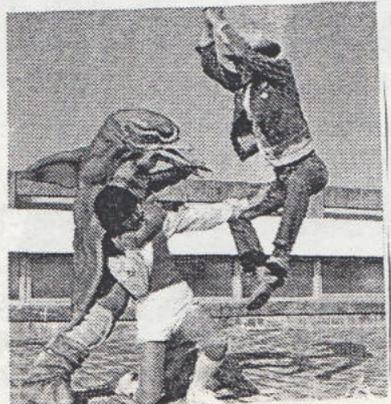


Indeed, attempting to tolerate this whole show is a painful challenge. The humor is so bad that it generates unbelievable boredom that is hard to view. In all honesty, I never could watch the whole thing, since I was distracted by the slightest interruption (i.e. nearby fly, a draft, bright sunny day outside, or suddenly remembering that my toilet could probably use another scrub), and couldn't continue viewing this unbelievably poor, worthless waste of videotape.

from the subterranean empire Jiyashinka). These vengeful mutants still blame Dr. Ho for the accident, and are occasionally doing other nasty things like filming illegal rock videos (this is meant to be funny). The heroes who work for Dr. Ho are Wushi (Dyna-Red), Juba (Dyna-Black), Frankie (Dyna-Blue), Cowboy (Dyna-Yellow), and Slojin (Dyna-

MAKE ROOM FOR DADDY (TV)
NIGHT FLIGHT (TV)—60 min.
 An episode of Dynaman; and a trip to Mexico.
 12:05 **NIGHTFLING (CC)**—Ted Koppel
TOP OF THE POPS—Music; 60 min.
 Performers: Sting, David Bowie, Roy Orbison

For what it's worth, the plot of this English ruining of a once enjoyable series deals with Bernie



CHALLENGE OF THE NINJA
 (Chinese title: "Heroes of the East")
 Produced by Run Run Shaw, Screenplay by I Kuang, Photography by Arthur Wong, Cinematography by Ao Chih Chun, Costumes by LI Chi Yu, Make-up by Wu Hau Ching, Lighting by Chen Feng and Yuen Ting Pang, Music by Chen Yung Yu, Fighting Instructor: Liu Chia Liang, Assistant Instructor: Tang Wei Cheng, Starr-

ing... Liu Chia Hui, Yasuaki Kurata, Yuka Mizuno, Chia Lang, Abbuo Yana, Tetsu Sumi, Manabu Shimada, Naozo Kato.

My first exposure to this entertaining motion picture was in 1981. While in a Chinese theatre to see LOST SOULS and AVENGING EAGLES, I saw posters for two coming attractions; HEROES OF THE EAST, and MAD MONKEY KUNG FU. Both posters looked so exciting that I had to come back the following week to see the two movies. As I expected, the movies were fantastic, with lots of fun action.

In 1983, I saw HEROES OF THE EAST again, much to my surprise (since I thought I'd never encounter this delightful movie again). It was shown on a local syndicated TV station, dubbed in English as CHALLENGE OF THE NINJA, to cash in on the success of mediocre American ninja flicks.



between the bride and groom. If that's not bad enough, they later begin using spears, swords and tonfas. During one of their daily fights, Ah Tao criticizes Kura for using ninjutsu in a duel. She gets pissed off at him so she moves back to Japan. Eager to make her return to China, Ah Tao sends her a letter of challenge, claiming that karate is inferior to kung fu. The trick works, and she returns to China. Also arriving in China are a gang of Japanese who were offended by the letter. Ah Tao must single handedly defeat each Japanese villain, in various duels featuring all sorts of weapons. In the end, Ah Tao wins, but nobody is seriously hurt or killed, and they all become friends.

THE EXECUTIONER (Original Japanese title: "Jigoku Ken," which means "Hell Fist") Produced by Toei in around 1974, starring: Shinichi (Sonny) Chiba, Makoto Sato, Ryo Ikebe, Yasuaki Kurata & Hiroyuki Sanada

Long before Golden Harvest's LUCKY STARS films, and even before Cinema City's ACES GO PLACES films, there was

the early 1970s. Like the two latter Chinese movies mentioned above, this movie is a comedic adventure starting off with the traditional meeting (for the first time) of the film's heroes. As for the humorous content of THE EXECUTIONER, it tends to be more chic and subtle, and not slapstick, unlike those two Chinese flicks I keep comparing it to.

THE EXECUTIONER is an unfortunate title for English release only. Regrettably, there are at least two other movies with that name, and probably more. I prefer the Japanese title JIGOKU! KEN, which is roughly, "Hell Fist."

It is proved in THE EXECUTIONER that any rumors of Sonny Chiba being an inferior fighter are fake. I vote this as being his best film, since it features Chiba in many martial arts duels, demonstrating his superb karate abilities. There's no gun fire in the movie, no samurai swords, no James Bond-like gadgetry, it's two brief 'fast car' scenes are added for humor only, and all the confrontations between the good guys and villains are all karate fights, and decent lengthed ones as well. Chiba is involved in most of the fights. His character is that of Ryoshi Koga, an apprentice to the ninja art of his family clan. In his old-fashioned home at the Japanese countryside (possibly Kyoto or Hokaido), he learned ninjutsu from his father since he was a child. The training scenes involve a few judo tosses over the tatami mats and thru white screen doors, and a traditional ninja house of traps.

Makoto Sato (THE KILLING MACHINE, LOST WORLD OF SINBAD, WHAT'S UP TIGER LILLY, WHIRLWIND and WARING CLANS) appears as co-star, playing a brutal, merciless assassin who teams up with Chiba. Ryo Ikebe (BATTLE IN OUTERSPACE, WAR IN SPACE) portrays the old man who hires our heroes to attack and defeat the local villains. Hiroyuki Sanada's (ROARING FIRE, MESSAGE FROM SPACE, SWORDS OF THE SPACE ARK, SHOGUN'S NINJA, ROYAL WARRIORS, NINJA IN THE DRAGON'S DEN etc.) is only featured for about 3 or 4 minutes in flashbacks. In this early film, Sanada looks to be about 12 or 13 years old, and he plays Chiba's character as a youngster, learning the art



Although action packed, this is not an especially violent movie. There is very little (if any) bloodshed, and no deaths at all. Although the Japanese and Chinese end up as friends at the end of the story, this flick seems a bit anti Japanese, saying that Chinese customs are better than Japanese. Aside from this prejudice, this is an excellent production. It is an intriguing comparison between the two cultures.

CHALLENGE OF THE NINJA's plot involved a mix-married couple. The husband, Ah Tao is a Chinese gung fu master. His wife is Kura, a Japanese martial artist. There's bound to be some arguments in any marriage. But these arguments turn into fist fights



Yasuaki Kurata and Liu Chia Hui.



...in jitsu. The sequence involves Chiba doing a summersault jump over a bush, and swinging a nunchaku in a Lee-like style, which Chiba himself also does later in the picture. Yasuaki Kurata makes a memorable appearance toward the end, as a hero you are all familiar with Yasuaki Kurata. Though Japanese, he's best known for his work in Chinese movies like THE NINJA WARLORD, MILLIONAIRE'S EXPRESS, A GATHERING OF HEROES, ACES GO PLACES 2, and CHALLENGE OF THE NINJA. No doubt you all remember him, if not just for all the times I've mentioned him in this fanzine. For once Yasuaki Kurata plays a hero, in fact the only righteous hero in the movie, since all the other heroic characters are just in it for the money. He plays a karate instructor who agrees to help the heroes for the sake of justice. All the other 'heroes' are more corrupt and make it quite clear that the only reason they're out to battle the local mafia is for the rewards. And as a pure of heart hero, Kurata dies in his classic battle with the mafia's henchmen. Those Japanese always did have a masochistic streak, considering dying in the line of duty to be a way of deserving honor.

I liked hearing the actual voices of the actors as they do their traditional Japanese samurai yells as they do battle. These war cries are left in the English version, not dubbed (only dialogue is dubbed in English). The voice dubbing is decent, and is not by those British who've been saying "But still" for the past ten years. Voices for this flick are the same as those in INFRAMAN, SPEED RACER, SON OF GODZILLA, and ALAKAZAM THE GREAT. Yasuaki Kurata is dubbed by Jack Grimes.

It's always interesting to compare filming techniques of China and Japan's chop sockey flicks. Just as karate is more simple and basic than kung fu, the same is applied to the fights in films. These Japanese fights are more brutal than those in Chinese movies made at that time, and are less artistic than the Chinese ones, largely based on ear-



ly opera dances. THE EXECUTIONER has a better, more even plot structure than most Chinese chop sockey films as well. And, unlike many 1970s Chinese films, no stock music here. The tunes this time were made exclusively for this movie. These songs are fast, lively, amusing and fit the film well. Although the English version (I have both the English and Japanese versions) has its musical score fouled up at the end, sounding as though somebody has poured water on the audio soundtrack tape.

THE EXECUTIONER features some nudity (four scenes of female breasts) and some gore, both of which are handled tastefully and with relevance to the plot. My favorite gore shot happens when Makoto Sato punches the eyeball's out of a former client's head. In another, a man's ear is bitten off, and at the end, Chiba climbs up a cliff using a rope which is hooked into a white villain's leg! Yeeeeeow!

The story:

An old man and his niece Emi have decided to hire three fighters who will destroy a local yakuza and his mob.

...who's detective agency has just gone bankrupt, and a horny, escaped convict called Sakurai (name of actor unknown). The character of Sakurai is treated badly through out the movie by the other heroes. And the third hero is a violent, ruthless hitman played by Makoto Sato. And so all three get involved in numerous battles with the villains, many of which are foreign. Like a Chinese kung fu master who has high-pitched yells (which Chiba himself also does during the opening credits) not unlike Bruce Lee's. The mobsters have a member who is the mute caucasian daughter of a foreign ambassador, so the mobsters are able to smuggle drugs into Japan. The semi-attractive girl is taken advantage of by the villains and is sometimes the victim of perverted S&M practices by the lead villain. During the heroes' raid on the yakuza's headquarters, Chiba is briefly captured and knocked out. As the various international baddies take turns punching Chiba to see who can send him furthest across the room, one villain takes pity on him and becomes a hero. By the time this traitor to the mafia gets defeated by his former clients, Chiba has revived and both Makoto Sato and Yasuaki Kurata arrive to save the day. Regrettably, we never do see both Chiba & Kurata in the same shot.

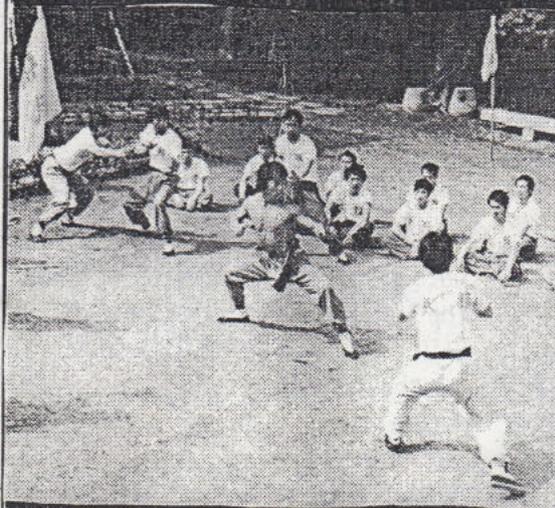


NEW FIST OF FURY
 Executive Producer: Lo Wei, Producer: Hsu Hua, Starring Jacky Chan, Nora Miao, Chen Sing

Last issue at about this point, I reviewed one of Jackie Chan's very first kung fu romps, SNAKEFIST FIGHTER.

This time, I'm continuing with this film, probably his second or third. Whatever it is, it's obvious that it is very early in his career. He looks young, possibly his late teens. **NEW FIST OF FURY** hints at what his later works of the 1970s will showcase, featuring some of his first attempts at comedy, and early examples of his various animal techniques of traditional, somewhat artificial looking kung fu (not at all unlike that in his later 1970s films). As an early attempt, naturally this is not one of his better works.

As you can tell by the title, **NEW FIST OF FURY** is another sequel to Bruce Lee's **FIST OF FURY**. Depending on your preference, you can consider this a legitimate follow up to **FIST OF FURY**, or you can choose Bruce Li's **FIST**

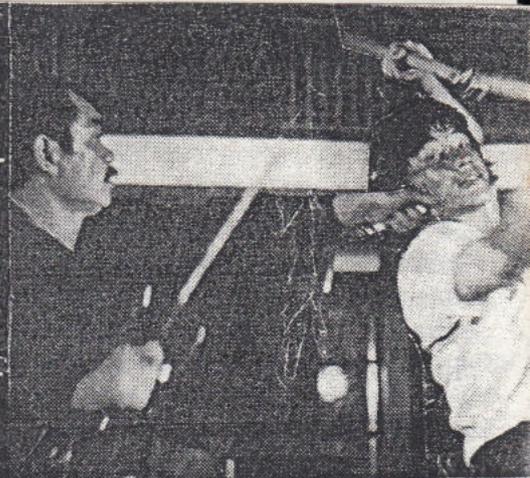


FURY 2 (A.K.A. CHINESE CONNECTION 2) where Li played Chen's (Bruce Lee's character in **FIST OF FURY**) brother and duelled with a Japanese villain played by Lo Lieh. Personally, I'll stick to Bruce Li's version, as I consider it a lot funner than **NEW FIST OF FURY**. It's interesting to see Chan's career just beginning in this Bruce Lee imitation. Contrary to popular opinion, Chan does NOT mimick Bruce Lee moves in this movie, with the exception of maybe one or two kicks. Like I mentioned in the previous paragraph, Chan's techniques in this film are his own style, not much different than his styles in films like **FEARLESS HYENA** or **EAGLE'S SHADOW**.

On the whole, this is a standard mid-1970s chop sockey, if not perhaps a touch on the inferior side. **NEW FIST**

OF FURY is dreadfully boring at first, especially as scene today. I never saw this early stinker until after I'd seen Chan's later, superior movies like **PROJECT A**. So watching the old fashioned **NEW FIST OF FURY** had me saying 'not this old stuff again,' referring to revenge, Japanese villains, and those out of date training scenes. I was quite annoyed that Chan's character knew no kung fu until after the film's middle, and then quite suddenly seems to learn it over night. Another irritant is to see them remake the ending of **FIST OF FURY**, only this time it's Chan's death by bullet instead of Lee's. The quality of Chan's fights in **NEW FIST OF FURY** is nothing when compared to his later films, though better than that in many other kung fu films of its time. But in one fight where Chan is beaten early on, he reacts before the blow actually is meant to have come in contact.

The tale begins with Low Wei and Nora Miao reprising their roles as the same characters they played in **FIST OF FURY**. The Ching Wu School has been wiped out by the Japanese, so Mau Li Erh (Nora Miao) decides to relocate the Ching Wu School in Taiwan and live with her uncle Su Ang Lai. It is in Taiwan where we meet a streetwise pickpocket (a common chop sockey stereotype) called Hah Lung (Jackie Chan), but then, most Chinese film heroes are also called Lung (Dragon). But Okamoto (Chen Sing) and his daughter Chandasu are commanding more corrupt Japanese martial artists who want control of all the Chinese kung fu schools in Taiwan. Chan ends up joining the new Ching Wu school after stealing Chen's old nunchaku from Mau Li Erh. After the Japanese shatter the new Ching Wu sign, Chan repairs it and proudly carries it in an anti-Japanese march. It is here that it's implied that Chan is the new Bruce Lee as Mau Li Erh looks at Chan and has a flashback. We see still shots of Lee from **ENTER THE DRAGON**. Later, the Ching Wu school takes on Okamoto's fighters in a tournament, where Hah Lung eventually fights & defeats Okamoto.



* this symbol (*) means movie

ULTRA Q was a B&W, 27 part TV series from early 1966. It involved three main characters who were always up against some new monster(s). All 3 heroes are mere mortal humans, so in this way, **ULTRA Q** was like Britain's **DR. WHO** series and even has slight si-



milarities to America's own FRIDAY THE 13TH TV show. So ULTRA Q is classifiable as science fiction, but not a superhero program. After this intriguing series was cancelled, it was replaced by ULTRAMAN, which merely carried the idea one step further by adding a giant superhero to the program. This and the addition of the Science Patrol were the only major differences between the two programs, since the monstrous villains from both shows are basically of the same style (typical Tsuburaya creations), and sometimes, even the same characters and species are in both shows. Examples: The monster Ragon appears in both shows, ULTRA Q's Garamon costume was later used in ULTRAMAN as Pigmon, ULTRA Q's Kanegon appears in the Japanese version of ULTRAMAN's credits, Pegira has appeared in both programs, Pita was modified into Guezra, and altered versions of the Godzilla costume appeared in both. Another interesting bit of trivia though having nothing to do with ULTRAMAN is that the giant walrus Maguma from the Japanese version of the Toho movie GORATH also appears in ULTRA Q as Todoru. Nobody can say special effects wizard Eiji Tsuburaya didn't put his monsters to working overtime! The script behind ULTRA Q dealt with an aviation pilot and part-time science fiction writer Jun Manjome (Kenji Sahara) who travels through assorted adventures investigating bizarre phenomena depicting aliens, monsters, and ghosts, while trying to obtain answers to these Ultra Questions (hence the title). Other supporting characters include Yuriko Edogawa (a Daily News Photographer), Ipei Togawa (obligatory goofy guy), Dr. Ichinotani (a professor), and Desuku Seki (Yuriko's boss and news editor).

ULTRAMAN was basically a full color remake of ULTRA Q. Exactly what inspired the creation of this unique character is anyone's guess. The design

of our hero is basically cybernetic, so I tend to think they looked at earlier robot like characters for inspiration. I think maybe the men of the Emerald Planet (from Starman's movies) and other characters from early B&W superhero films and shows were influential. The climactic duels in ULTRAMAN are not unlike that in FRANKENSTIEN CONQUERS THE WORLD, which also added some influence. I already reviewed ULTRAMAN on page 11 as part of a section geared toward Japanese superheroes that have reached America, so there is not much point in rehashing the whole thing (again) here. Anyway, the final episode of ULTRAMAN introduced his older brother Zofy. The concept that there were other relatives of the metallic hero turned out to be too good to pass up.

ULTRASEVEN

49 full color episodes, Broadcast from 10/1/67 to 9/8/67, Produced by the Tsuburaya Company for Tokyo Broadcasting Service



The (first sequel) to ULTRAMAN is beyond a doubt the most serious of the Ultra serieses. Like ULTRA Q, ULTRASEVEN was popular with adults, where as ULTRAMAN had more kiddie appeal. To me, ULTRASEVEN comes off as dreadfully boring, since it's only available in Japanese, and much of each episode is taken up by excessive dial-

ogue scenes that go on forever. Making up for this unfortunate tendency are Eiji Tsuburaya's nearly flawless special effects.

Just as Hayata became Ultraman by using his beta capsule, Dan Moroboshi becomes Ultraseven by using magical sunglasses called the Ultra Eye. Dan is a member of the Ultra Garrison, a team of scientists and soldiers even more efficient than ULTRAMAN's Science Patrol. Other members of the Ultra Garrison include Furuhashi (played by Mitao Dokumimashi who formerly played Arashi), Captain Kiriyama, and Anne Yuri. Dan Moroboshi owns useful devices which are monster capsules. When he's not in the mood to change into Ultraseven, he can make his monster capsules change into giant, helpful monsters who battle the villains. Most of the villains in ULTRASEVEN are alien invaders, where as most of the ones in ULTRAMAN were Earthlings.

RETURN OF ULTRAMAN

51 episodes, running from 4/2/71 until 1/7/72, on TBS

Not as serious as ULTRASEVEN, but not as silly as ULTRAMAN. As always, the special effects were quite good. Eiji Tsuburaya himself died in 1970, but the Tsuburaya crew continued the



job of supplying monster costumes and miniatures. The heroic character in this show bears a striking resemblance to the original, the differences between them are minor. To avoid confusion with the first one, this Ultraman had a number of titles, such as Ultraman Jr., Home Coming Ultraman, Ultraman 2 and New Ultraman. But for a theatrical movie in the 1980s, this third Ultra Brother would be called Ultraman Jack.

Ultraman Jack came to Earth and assumed the form of Hideki Go, a car repairman who died in the destruction caused by giant monsters. By merging with Hideki, both he and Ultraman Jack are now one. They are members of MAT, which stands for Monster Attack Team. Members include Kisida, Katoh, Minami, Ueno and a female called Oka. These futuristic soldiers have the usual fancy weapons and vehicles.

Ultra Brothers make guest appearances as they team up with their young brother. Ultraman Ace couldn't decide upon a single human to be his alter ego, so he chose two. A guy called Seiji Hokuto (Hokuto means North) and a girl called Yuko Minami (Minami is South) must jump way up in the air and touch their Ultra Rings together. Then they merge and become the latest superhero from Nebula M78. Seiji and Yuko are of course, members of the latest Science Patrol clone, Terrible monster Attacking Crew. TAC is defending Japan from aliens, monsters and the like.

ULTRAMAN TARO

53 episodes, Broadcast from 4/6/73 to 4/5/74, Created by Tsuburaya, etc.



I guess them Tsuburaya boys wanted this to be as childish as ULTRAMAN TARO, but they failed. On occasion, this program can descend down to the level of TARO, but on the whole, it's not so bad.

Ultraman Leo is not from Nebula M78 nor is he related to the other Ultra Brothers, he is just a good friend of the family, and maybe an old classmate of Ultraman Taro's. Ultraman Leo came from an area of space called Leo 77, and so did his brother and parttime sidekick Astora. Another supporting Ultra hero who helps out from time to time is Ultraman King. In his human form, Ultraman Leo is Gen Otori of the Monster Attacking Crew, MAC for short.

Boo, hiss! I guess it's pretty much agreed that this childish program is the most infantile of the bunch. But I like the design of Ultraman Taro's costume. So does one of my best friends, Barrie Evans, who got to wear the costume when he was in Japan, the lucky bastard.

Once on Earth, Ultraman Taro becomes a human called Kotaro Higashi, of some wierd organisation called ZAT, standing for Zariba of All Territory, whatever the hell that means.

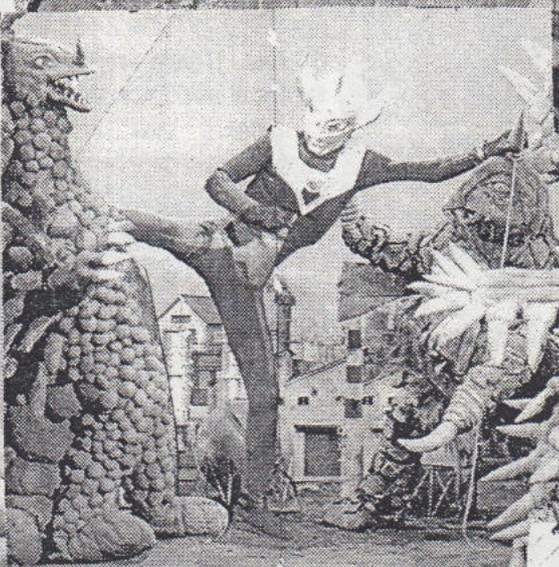
ULTRAMAN LEO

51 more episodes which lasted from 4/12/74 'til 3/38/75

ULTRAMAN ACE

Produced by Tsuburaya for TBS, consisting of 52 episodes, running from 4/7/72 until 3/30/73.

Decent FX, a fun series, but it is here that the programs begin to get more childish. On occasion, the other Ultra



* SIX ULTRA BROTHERS VS. MONSTER ARMY (Urutora roku kyodai Tai Kaijigundan, Chinese title: "Fei T'ien Ch'ax Jen," which means "The High Flying Supermen") CREDITS: Produced by Shalyo Film (Thailand) and Tsuburaya Productions (Japan), Production manager: Hideyo Kawaguchi, Directed by Shohei Tojo, Special effects: Kazuo Sagawa, Lighting: Yasuo Kamada, Produced by Sompot Saengduenchai, Nobor Tsuburaya and Hisao Ito, Screenplay by Bunzo Wakatsuki, Toyoki Awa & Sompot Saengduenchai, Director of Photography: Toshiyuki Machida, Lighting by Goro Sayama, Sound by Yoshiko



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**ウルトラ兄弟
 VS 怪獣軍団**

Hofu, Art Director: Takashi Shimazaki, made in Thailand in 1974, released to Japan on April 28, 1979, color by Fuji-color, running time: 82 minutes. Cast: Ko Koeoduendee as Ko Chan, Anan Pritchana as Ananda, Yodchal Maksuwan as Burushito, Pawana Chanachit as Marisa, Sri Pouk as Shikuaku, Srisu Riya as Shisuri, and Kan Booncho Chan Wangperni, Somn Ouk

When it comes to making Japanese superhero movies, leave it to the Japanese. This is a mostly Chinese movie, filmed in Thailand. About the only things in this movie that are Japanese are its special effects, music, and the Ultra characters. But the rest is done by a Chinese crew in Thailand; editing, acting, and story are all Chinese contributions. Therefore, the only worthwhile things in this picture are its FX, though they would have to be much better in order to save this fiasco. As for the music, it too could be better. I think the theme song (sung by little kids or ladies trying to sound like little kids) is childish and annoying, and their inappropriate use of the old ULTRASEVEN theme song puts this music out of

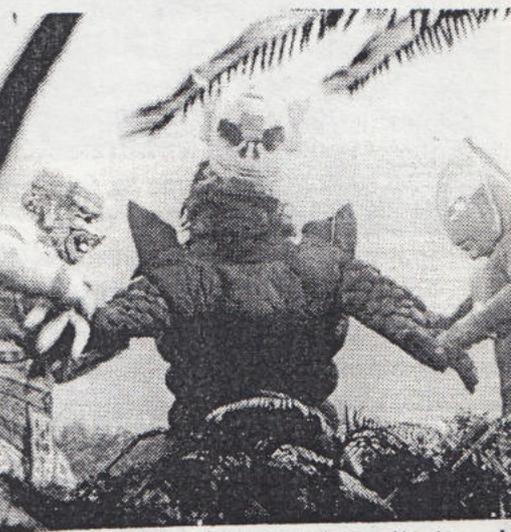
place. My version of this kiddie film is the Japanese dub, which is bad enough. I don't want to see the Chinese version, probably even worse, if that's possible!

This movie is pointless, badly written. Everything before the final battle is filler. They came up with a vague script, hired terrible actors to play parts (including the most ugly, annoying kids in existence) and even made a few pathetic attempts at comedy, making the stupidity of PEE WEE'S PLAYHOUSE look like the excellence of MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS. There are inconsistencies with the original TV shows that inspired the movie. The Ultra Brothers remain on Earth a long time for this production, longer than the average duel in their TV shows. Yet nowhere in this film do their warning buttons

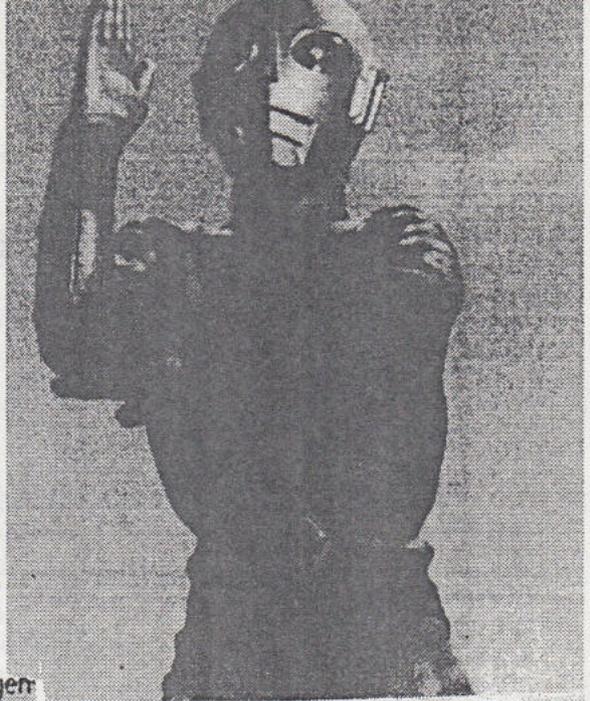
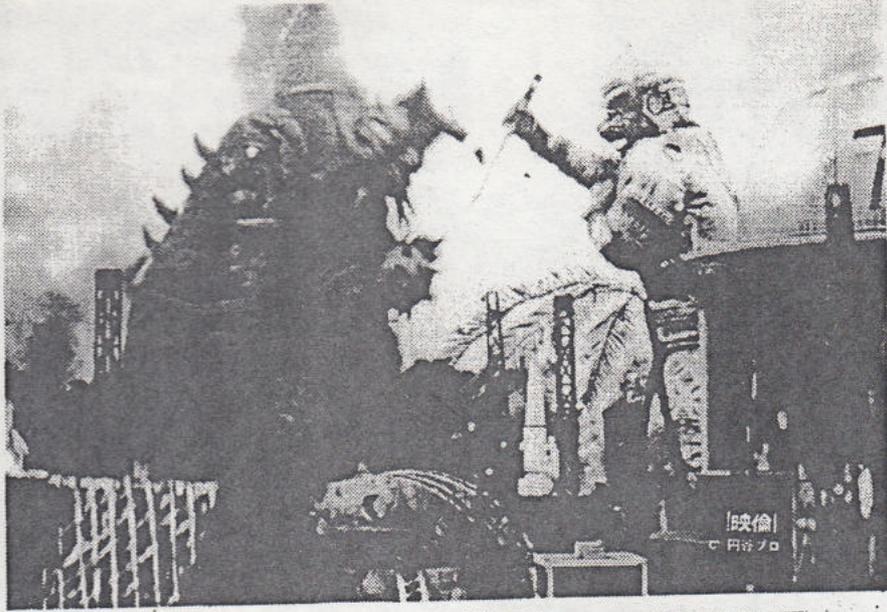
light up! The monster Gohora ('Gomora' in Japanese) from ULTRAMAN is featured, yet he has at least a couple of new powers he never used in the series. Also different is the creature's roar, now that of Rodan (there are familiar Tono sound effects through out). Another flaw that screws up continuity is that two handsome uniforms from the ZAT group from ULTRAMAN TARO appear on two bumbling fools added to the story for comic relief (but the only relief comes at the flick's end). These two stupid characters aren't members of ZAT, they work at some rocket launching pad in Thailand. The idea that none of us fans and experts would recognize these unaltered costumes is insulting.

One positive thing I can say for this one is that it's got a little culture. One hero is called Hanuman, meant to be an ape, though he does not look like one. This Hindu god was probably inspired by the Monkey King in some way, perhaps a derivative off-shoot of those early Buddhist legends from China and India (see ORIENTAL CINEMA No. 7 for

details). The script deals with a bunch of silly kids who always perform the most ridiculous ethnic dances imaginable, while celebrating their ape-like god, Hanuman. Hanuman actually has some



telekinetic communication with the alien superheroes from Nebula M78 called the Ultra Brothers, who you may have heard of. But near Hanuman's holy grounds, a group of greedy men have stolen a head off a Buddha statue and are escaping with it. One of those dancing boys tries to retrieve the stone head, but ends up shot in the head to the accompaniment of a lot of fake looking blood. The death seems a bit gory for a kiddie film, but the little brat comes back to life later, so I guess that make it okay. The dead boy is called, I mean was called Ko Chan. Hanuman is upset that one of his followers is dead, and that part of a valuable statue has been stolen. So with the help of energy sent from Nebula M78, Hanuman appears in the land of the mortals, combining his own body with Ko Chan, now revived. Both are now one, and they get revenge on the greedy men responsible for this mess. The sequence is mildly amusing, since it's strange to see a hero so brutal, squashing tiny, helpless humans. Meanwhile, some scientists are conducting experiments with weather, and using a rocket ship to do it. But something goes wrong, and an explosion unleashes a gang of subterranean monsters who already attacked Japan years ago (their original TV costumes were much better than the clumsy ones used



here). One is Gohora from ULTRAMAN, and there is Chitokureron from ULTRAMAN TARO, and also Kanedoras who was in ULTRAMAN LEO, though the title hero of that series isn't in this flick. I also spotted Dastopan, who is not even an Ultra Villain, but one from MIRRORMAN! These playful monsters go on a destructive rampage full of fiery explosions until Hanuman arrives. Perhaps he could have won if he would quit dancing around like a fool, and done some real fighting. Whatever the case, the monsters are never defeated until the arrival of the Ultra Brothers. Ultraman, Zofy, Jack, Ace, Taro and Seven. This climactic battle is okay, but some of the acrobats are clumsy (stumbling not editing out), there's high speed photography meant to be funny but is agonizingly stupid, and all the heroes are so cruel to their foes! The heroes tease and torture the unfortunate villains, a characteristic usually not in the TV shows, where the heroes generally only fight when they have to, and just want to get the job done. After the nonmerciful deaths of the dinosaur gang, the Ultra Brothers just stand there (perhaps confused or embarrassed) as Hanuman performs another laughable dance. And if that's not silly enough, the little homo kisses each of his fellow heroes goodbye! Hello, sailor!

ULTRAMAN (1979)
 With the exception of ANIRAG, I generally try to avoid SCIENTIFIC CINEMA since I am annoyed by cartoons, since numerous other magazines and clubs have given that overrated genre more exposure than it deserves. But after all, this is a fun story, though a one dimensional one.

The original title was THE ULTRAMAN, but at some point in the series they changed it to ULTRAMAN JOE. Ultraman Joe comes from the planet Chochiro Hikari, a member of the Science Defense Troop. By using the Beam Flasher, Chochiro changes into Ultraman Joe and fights the monster's threatening life, the only thing.

ULTRAMAN 80
 made in 1980 (obviously), and running from 4/2/80 until about 3/25/81, lasting for 50 episodes.
 Now more like the live action, this is the only time when the series was created, though it is from the popular Ultraman series, mainly because of the plot of innocent of the Ultraman series supporting the Action Club.

ULTRAMAN 80 is a really great series, definitely my favorite of the Ultra programs.
 The most valuable member of UGM (Utility Government Members) is Takeshi Yamato, who was a school teacher before he joined the latest incarnation of the Science Patrol. Takeshi is the secret human form of Ultraman 80.

*ULTRAMAN STORY
 would have been a much better title, since the Ultraman series began with theatrical shorts. It is unfortunately the most well-known of the Ultraman series, though I find it childish that all the kiddies in Japan preferred that particular series over any of the other Ultra programs. Taro is even more annoying as a child, which is why he is featured in about the first 20 minutes of this infantile movie. These irritating scenes of young Taro are so cute they are disgusting. What saves these scenes are occasional flashbacks from the older programs, depicting the other Ultraman in action. The movie is set in the year 178, and see a lot of characters, no humans at all. But even though the Ultra Brothers are featured through



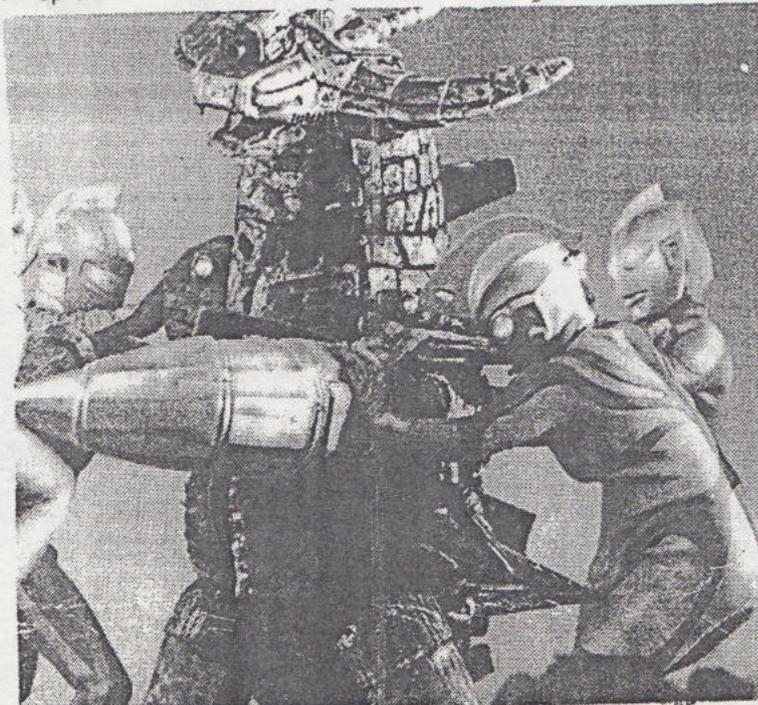
out, boredom is boredom. There's a lot of talking, and these conversations are dull, even if it is among Ultra Brothers. With no Science Patrol and no miniature buildings, it's easy to forget that the Ultra Brothers are giants.

The FX are excellent, and of course, plentiful. I guess every scene has FX, since every scene has a set, plus the costumes of the Ultra characters. But FX alone don't save the movie. What saves it are its battles, some are stock footage, some filmed especially for ULTRAMAN STORY.

The saga begins with baby Taro practicing his ineffective fighting and equally ineffective ray, so he can be like his older brothers, monster killers. Then we see a quick glimpse of Zofy fighting a monster. I think this is stock footage, but I don't know what from. Then it cuts to Ultraman battling Antoras from episode #7 of ULTRAMAN, and

next it's Ultraseven against Vogue from ULTRASEVEN, episode #27. Then Taro gets advance practice by fighting a cute lizard called Dokun, who appears to be the family pet. The intimidated, Minya-like Dokun corners Taro, so Ultra Mother arrives and makes Taro apologize to the vengeful young dinosaur. Then there's a flashback to ULTRASEVEN #3, showing Ultraseven's helper, Icarus fighting Ireking, Ultraman Jack VS Gudon & Sinteru (from RETURN OF ULTRAMAN), and Ultraman Ace VS Hiporito (from ULTRAMAN ACE #48). By now Taro is an adult, and enjoys watching repeats of ULTRASEVEN on a large, futuristic TV screen. He learns new fighting techniques from watching Seven (short for, UltraSeven) VS. Icarus (ULTRASEVEN #10), and Jack VS. Kingzaurus (RETURN OF ULTRAMAN). Then, Ultra Father gives Taro some harsh, strenuous training in superheroism. After more flashbacks (Seven VS.

Ireking from ULTRASEVEN #3 and Ultra-man VS Mefilas from #33 of his series), Ultra Father reminds Taro that both Mefilas & Ireking are still at large, and may strike at any moment. So Taro flies to Earth and chronologically in relation to the other programs, this is where Taro's TV show takes place. To see him destroy Mefilas (stock footage from ULTRAMAN TARO #2) and Ireking (ULTRAMAN TARO #2). I must say, it's pathetic to see Mefilas & Ireking in action in ULTRAMAN & ULTRASEVEN, and then to see them look so poor in ULTRAMAN TARO. It is painfully obvious that different costumes were re-made for use ULTRAMAN TARO. The original costumes from the first two shows were excellent, well designed. But the newer ones used in TARO look like shit. Getting back to this story that skips around (sometimes contradicting the original sequence of the shows), Taro returns to M78 after the run of his series, and undergoes more training. Sometime around here, he watches what appears to be a live broadcast of Ultraman Leo fighting a giant jellyfish in stock footage from ULTRAMAN LEC and later Ultraman 80 VS. Red King (ULTRAMAN 80 #46, and Ultraman 80 VS. Baltan from ULTRAMAN 80 #45). Strangely, both of these important Ultra characters (Leo & 80) don't appear anywhere else in the film besides these flashbacks. By this time, there's a main villain at large. A silver space viking called Jyuda has showed his ugly head. This metallic demon reveals he's responsible for old monsters like Hiporito (ULTRAMAN ACE #48) and Enmago (ULTRAMAN TARO). Then we get to see stock footage of the battle where Hiporito nearly kills Ace, Seven, Ultraman, Zofy, Jack and Ultra Father. Now Jyuda has a marvelous new creation; a spectacular robot-monster called Grand King. This mechanical Gohora (that's what it looks like) proves to be the most unstoppable foe for the Ultra Brothers. Grand King stands up to Ultraman, Zofy, Seven, Ace, Jack and Taro, being their match though outnumbered. Finally, Ultra Mother suggests that her sons combine to form one, all mighty Ultra Being. So Taro absorbs his brothers, so their strength is all within him. The idea works, Grand King is beaten up and he (as usual) explodes. Then the



Ultra Brothers all separate back into their original forms.

So far, that's the whole Ultra series. But there may be additional movies I am not familiar with. However, rumor has it that a new Ultra show is in the works, and another rumor claims the show will even receive American release (I've heard THAT one before). By the time you read this, the new series may already be released in Japan. Because there are so many Ultra programs, I could not go heavily in-depth on any one series, but maybe I'll eventually give each of them that kind of coverage in a future issues' JINZO NINGEN UPDATE column. Inbetween the Ultra programs, Tsuburaya and TBS cranked out a number of other similar superheroes which at least deserve honorable mention, such as MIRRORMAN (1971-'72), TRIPLE FIGHTER (1972), FIREMAN (1973), JANBOG ACE (1978), and ANDRO MELOS (1981), which was actually a sequel to the Ultra programs in its own weird way, though not considered a main part to the saga.



Kishida, Music by Akira Irukabe, Song "Call of Happiness" words by Tokiko Iwata and music by Yasushi Miyagawa, Sound FX by Hisashi Shimonaga, Additional music and sound FX by Filmsounds, Inc., Special FX by Eiji Tsuburaya, Special FX photography by Sadamasa Arikawa and Mototaka Tomioka, Optical photography by Yukio Manoda and Yoshiyuki Takumasa, Running time: 92 minutes, CAST..... Yosuke Natsuke as Shindo, Yuriko Hoshi as Junko, Hiroshi Koizumi as Professor Murai, Takashi Shimura as Dr. Tsukamoto, Emi & Yumi Ito as the twin fairies, Akiko Wakabayashi as Princess Selina, Hisaya Ito as Malness, Aikihiko Hirata as Chief Okita, Kenji Sahara as Chief Editor Kanamaki, and Haruo Nakajima as Godzilla

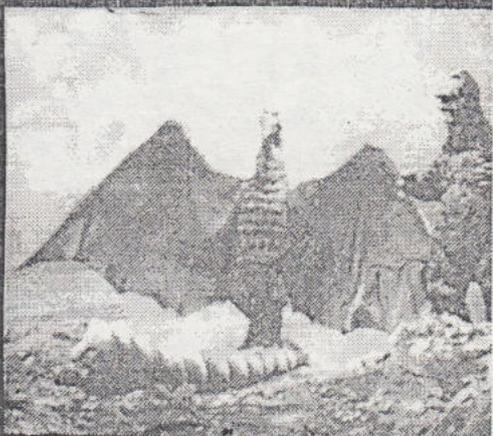
In comparison to the Godzilla movies which came out before this one, GHIDRAH THE 3 HEADED MONSTER is the best to date, or rather, it is my favorite one so far. For its time, it was quite original and unique. The fifth movie in the Godzilla series was not only the first to portray the monsters in a humorous manner, but was the first to show these former villains as heroes. I must say, I don't entirely appreciate all of the silly antics Godzilla goes through during the final battles, but much of the time, this goofing around is fairly amusing. As for his becoming a hero, it's done ingeniously. Older fans have often complained about this shift in personality, preferring no innovation from film to film. But unlike those oldtimers, I dislike repetition and stagnation. In Godzilla's new mental outlook on things was a refreshing alternative, in my opinion. After all, a monster can stomp on buildings for only so long before it gets dull.

GHIDRAH offers the first team up of monsters ever to appear in a Japanese monster movie. Toho's brilliant staff came up with the outstanding idea of bringing together 3 wellknown movie monsters, each from separate films, of course there's Godzilla, who's previous flicks are in each earlier issue of ORIENTAL CINEMA, but also Rodan (from RODAN, see O.C.#8), and Mothra (MOTHPA, see O.C.

#8 again) who has already encountered the big G in the previous movie. The team ups between these three monsters pleased me and are heartwarming. In fact, GHIDRAH THE 3 HEADED MONSTER brought tears of happiness to my eyes more than once.

However, this picture is not perfect, since perfect is a myth, not-existent. We do not see a whole lot of monster stuff until the later half. The majority of the script is a weird, crime drama involving cops and assassins. Nothing wrong with that, although it's like watching two different movies, since both stories (monster story and espionage story) have

very little relation to one another. Regardless, both stories are intercut well and flow smoothly. My only complaint about the monster scenes is that once or twice Rodan accidentally emits Godzilla's



roar! Otherwise, all monster scenes are marvelous, with fine special effects.

The space dragon Ghidrah destroyed Mars long ago, and some of the Martians survived and they fled to Earth. Now, in the 20th century, a Martian descendent has had a relaps of her Martian ancestor's tendencies. As a human in our society, she is an princess from a mythical country called Selina, near the Himalayas. She was on a goodwill tour of Japan when an assassin's bomb aboard her plane exploded, thus giving her amnesia and letting her inherit all Martian characteristics take over. She's now a psychic, and accompanied by an obligatory reporter dubbed Junko during the film's first half, but then for some reason re-named Nayoko Shindo later on. Whatever her name is, her brother is an inept cop called Detective Shindo, assigned to protect the princess from the assassins. Junko/Nayoko's friend is Murai, a scientist from the Geological Institute who is researching a crashed meteor that landed in the Japanese countryside. Meenwhile, the Martian princess's psychic powers prove to be accurate, as Godzilla and Rodan return and meet each other for the first time ever and don't like each other at first, so they battle each other. At about the same time, Ghidrah makes his debut on Earth when he emerges from the crashed meteor he's been dormant in. So Mothra comes all the way from his island at the request of the twin fairies, who seem very forgiving to civilization, despite all the trouble they were given by the modern world in their first two films. Godzilla and Rodan cease fighting each other at the advice of Mothra, and together, all three Earth monsters gang up on Ghidrah. During the magnificent battle, the monsters cause landslides, and the rocks crush all

GHIDRAH: THE THREE HEADED MONSTER

(Japanese title: SANDAN ALUICHIO JAI DANI KESSEN) credits: Release dates: 1964 (Japan), 1965 (USA). Produced by Toho, Exec. Producer: Tomoyuki Tadaka, Directed by Inoshiro Honda, Screenplay by Shinichi Sekizawa, English dialogue by Joe Bellucci, Director of photography: Hajime Koizumi, Art Director: Takeo Kita, Set decoration by Akira Watanabe, Sound recordist: Fumio Yanoguchi, Sound technician: Osamu Chiku, Lighting supervisor: Shoshichi Kojima, Lighting by Kutchiro

the assassins who kept trying to kill the princess, who has regained her memory and no longer thinks she's a martian. By this time, the alien dragon has suffered defeat, and he flies back into outer space with his tail- I mean both his tails between his legs.

GORATH

Executive Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Screenplay: Takashi Kimura, Director: Shiroh Honda, Photography: Maaki Oizumi, Music by Yuko Miyauchi, Special Effects by Eiji Tsuburaya, and Starring: Akira Kubo, Ryo Ikebe, Kumi Mizuno, Masaya Nikame, Takashi Shimura, Akihiko Hirata, Kenji Sahara (no thanks to the flick's limited opening credits for these names, I had to recognize & list these actors myself)

Hard to believe I grew up watching this stuff. ATRAGON was the first Japanese sci-fi flick I ever saw and I later became familiar with the likes of BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE. But the illusive GORATH from the late 1950s avoided me until the early 1980s. When I finally got a chance to see it in around 1982 I felt I had not been missing out on much. GORATH is so boring it made me want to cry. It falls under sci-fi's outer sub-genre, the disaster film. And if that's not bad enough, the disaster, even that many disasters in this one, although that's what I consider the flick itself to be, a disaster. Excessive dialogue, too much talking. Much of these conversations are excessively technical, too scientific for my limited vocabulary, not to mention cranial capacity.

It's quite an extraordinary coincidence to see that Masaya Nikame plays a character called Ito early in his career. The comedian would later play another Ito in

the TV series ULTRAMAN. Both Ito's are funny characters. Unfortunately, this Ito is only featured briefly, as a partner to Akira Kubo's character. For the most part, both characters are amusing, and lighten an otherwise dull movie.

Half the dubbed male voices are dubbed by one man who tries to sound different for each character. But this is such a distinguished voice, sounding kind of like Orson Wells's voice. This eerie voice also dubbed characters in HORROR OF THE BLOOD MONSTERS and did the ending narration for BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES.

FX-wise, Effi tried his best. I must admit: Nice model of the planet Gorath; the spaceships are decent, but many other miniatures like boats are as convincing as Leggos. How unfortunate that the giant walrus Maguma was cut from the English version. This costume looked great. As far as the English version goes, my favorite FX work is in the sets.

Scriptwise, the whole thing supposedly takes place in 1979, since way back when the flick was made, 1979 was considered the future. It starts off with Sanada, Minabi and other astronauts being destroyed when their spaceship Hawk kamikazied into a runaway planet (codename: Gorath)

on a collision course with Earth. Meanwhile in Japan, one of the late astronaut's finance Ari (Kumi Mizuno) is being followed and bugged by Tatsu Kanai (Akira Kubo), one of two happy-go-lucky astronauts from among the crew of the Eagle, another spaceship. As this futile courting continues, two scientists called Dr. Kona and Dr. Tazawa try to figure out how the Hell they're going to protect the Earth from the approaching sphere of death. The crew of the Eagle sets out into space in hopes of blasting Gorath to oblivion while scientists on Earth create a large rocket force which will move the Earth out of Gorath's path. This idea actually seems better than the one involving the Eagle spaceship, since a meteor crash causes Tatsu to lose his memory. That's right, lost in space, so I ask: "Where was the last place you saw it?" Shortly after this interplanetary accident, my phone rang so I answered it. I was involved in a 10-minute conversation with the current chick I was bonin that week, and my attention toward the film was distracted (no, I didn't press the 'Pause' button on my VCR). But although I couldn't concentrate in GORATH's dialogue, I still caught the visual portion despite my talking on the phone ("Are you still sore from last night?", etc.). There was a lot more Japanese people talking, and I recall scientists in the same toy jet later used in ULTRAMAN, and they fired a ray down at a hill for no particular reason.

in the Japanese version, they had a target, they were shooting at an overgrown walrus, but in the English version, no target. My phone conversation ended shortly before Tatsu overcame his amnesia and then the scientists successfully moved the Earth out of the way so that Gorath could continue on its cruise.



* this symbol (*) means movie

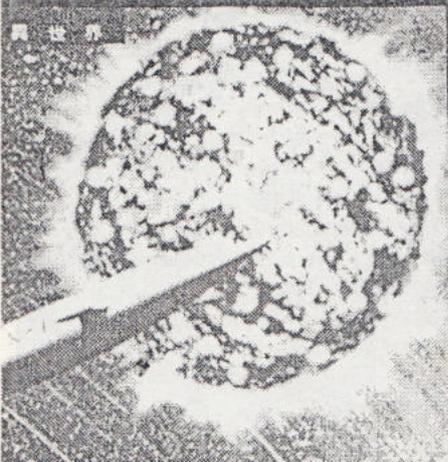
KAMEN RIDER

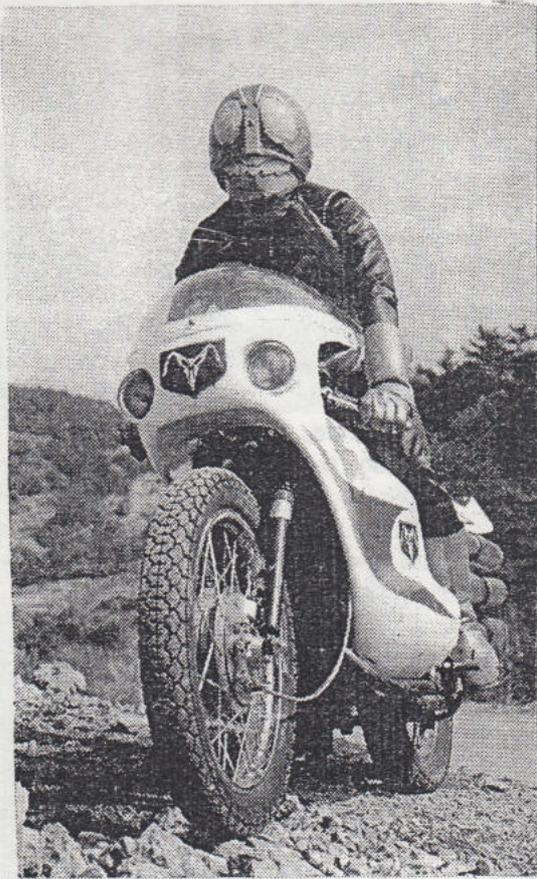
98 episodes lasting from 4/3/71 to 2/10/72, Produced by Toei, Created and Planned by Tohru Hiriyama, costume designs by artist Shotaro Ishimori, action choreography by the group Ono Ken-Yukai, stuntmen supplied by the Japan Action Club Action Club. Cast:

Kamen Rider 1.....	Hiroshi Fujioka
Kamen Rider 2.....	Takeshi Sasaki
Schocker.....	Goro Naya
Black Shogun.....	Matsuburo Tamba
Jigoku Taish.....	Kenji Mizumi
Prof. Shingami.....	Eisai Amamoto
Zora Daishi.....	Jiro Miyamuchi
Mitsuru.....	Yoshikazu Yamada
Naoki.....	Machiko Nakajima
Yoko.....	Yoshiko Nagata
Yuri.....	Wagako Oki
Emi.....	Emiri Takami
Mika.....	Yoko Sugibayashi
Goro.....	Yasuharu Miura
Shiro.....	Joe Honda
Hiromi.....	Yoko Shimada
Prof. Midorikawa.....	Chieko Maki
Kazuya Taki.....	Jiro Chiba
Tobei Tachibana.....	Shoji Kobayashi

In my book, there are only two Japanese superhero programs that I would consider groundbreaking, trend setting and ahead of their times. The first is of course, the SF series ULTRAMAN. The second is this artificial yet exciting classic TV series.

While TBS and the Tsuburaya Company seemed content with creating more ULTRAMAN imitations, Toei decided it was





time for a new kind of superhero. Ideas were borrowed from the Ultra Programs like: mutant monsters, full color filming, bug-eyed superheroes, and entertaining violence. But most of KAMEN RIDER was an extension of ideas first seen in earlier Toei efforts (see pages 4 through 8). Ideas like: The title hero is human size (180 centimeters tall), there's not a whole lot of emphasis on special effects, the hero is always battling members of a single organization, and the kind of traditional fights where a hero takes on up to ten henchmen at once. The 3rd possible inspiration may have been the two 1960s American superheroes: BATMAN and most definitely THE GREEN HORNET. As for the program's villains, the henchmen often wear wrestling masks, so I tend to think KAMEN RIDER was partially influenced by Mexican wrestling movies, like those featuring the character Santo.

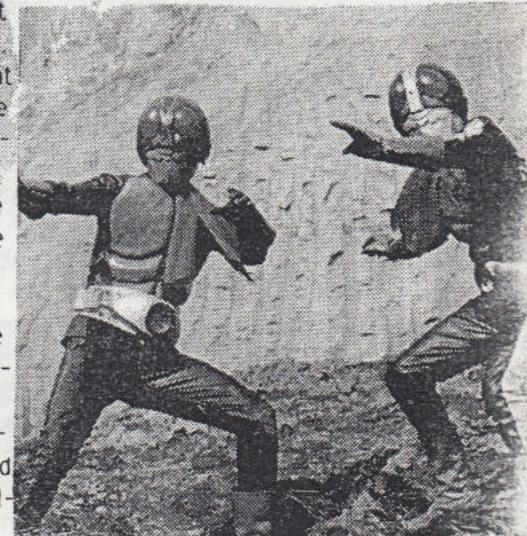
KAMEN RIDER came out the exact same month and year as RETURN OF ULTRAMAN, which was three months after SPECTREMAN's debut. Three rival superheroes, three rival companies, and three rival TV stations. Competition was fierce, although KAMEN RIDER outlasted all of them, prod-

ucing a bewildering 98 episodes! RETURN OF ULTRAMAN's style was much different than that of KAMEN RIDER, although there are minor similarities between SPECTREMAN and KAMEN RIDER. The character of Spectreman was usually giant like Ultraman, though could shrink down to human size, like Kamen Rider. Although SPECTREMAN pre-dates KAMEN RIDER by three months, the later episodes of SPECTREMAN had begun to mimmick KAMEN RIDER ideas. The idea of a human sized cybernetic hero using kicks, punches and chops to defeat a surrounding gang of villains was featured not only in KAMEN RIDER and SPECTREMAN, but nearly every following superhero series as well. KAMEN RIDER was just the beginning.

Getting into specifics, this martial arts choreography is quite simple when compared to later, more advanced programs. Most of the punches more-or-less resembled boxing hooks, and the kicks, though plentiful were rather slow by current standards, and sometimes lacked form. Often, the battles involved swordplay, but not of an Asian style, more European, like fencing. The names of our hero's techniques include appropriate titles like 'Rider Kick' (accomplished by using the same trampolines used for many of the program's acrobatic jumps) and 'Rider Punch.' These same fighting moves not only are used in this series, but all the sequels as well. Before the climactic karate duel, the hero would appear (usually up on a mountain or building, so he's elevated above the villains), say his name, and do a fancy pose. This dramatic, yet unrealistic climax would later be included in nearly every superhero series.



Hiroshi Fujioka was cast as the title hero, pronounced 'Kamen Rider' in Japanese, meaning 'Masked Rider'. Hiroshi Fujioka was not necessarily a spectacular martial artist, though his commitment to the character is undeniable. Fujioka was one of the few actors who played a hero not only in the character's human form, but on occasion actually played the cyborg form, wearing the helmet and costume. Fujioka even sang the theme song on the beginning credits for the first 13 episodes. Fujioka would later appear in movies like HIGH SEAS HIJACK, ESPY, TIDAL WAVE, IN THE LINE OF DUTY 3, and GHOST WARRIOR. Other actors in KAMEN RIDER include Shoji Kobayashi (of ULTRAMAN as Capt. Mura), Yoko Shimada (later of SHOGUN), Takeshi Sasaki (later of KYODINE), and even Jiro Chiba. Being the brother of Sonny Chiba is helpful. Jiro plays a regular character in KAMEN RIDER, and proves to be a great



martial artist. Speaking of martial artists, this was the first superhero series that Sonny Chiba's Japan Action Club worked on. Both Sonny and Jiro Chiba would later appear in ROBOT KEIJI K.

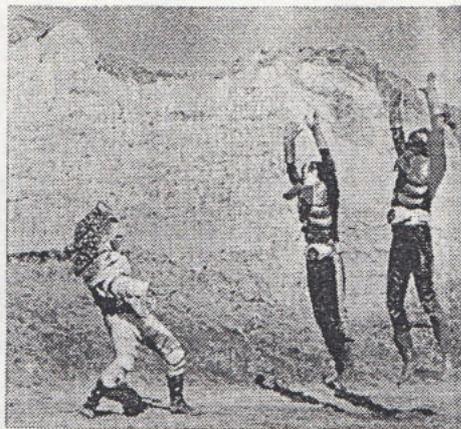
In 1988, I played Kamen Rider 1 in an amateur video called KAMEN RIDERS VS. GENERAL DARK (Produced by Barrie Evans, and Directed by August Ragone), and a few months later wore the Kamen Rider 1 costume (made by Barrie Evans) again as part of an eight minute stage show (a choreographed, dramatic fight and re-creation of the TV series) that was an imitation of JAC's superhero plays performed at Korakuen Amusement Park in Tokyo.

The story behind this classic TV series deals with a motorcycle racer called Takeshi Hongo. Against his will, he was transformed into the robotic Kamen Rider

by a gang of mad scientists called Schocker. But before they could alter his brain to make him obey, he was rescued by a kind scientist who defected from Schocker. The course of the series depicted the heroic grasshopper battling it out with the forces of Schocker. Hayato's transformation from human into Kamen Rider is accomplished in the same way as every other later Kamen Rider, doing a fancy series of karate-like arm gestures while yelling the Japanese word for change, which is 'Henshin'. Around the middle of the series, Hiroshi Fujioaka sustained an injury doing some sort of stunt which put him out of commission for a few months. At around this time, a new hero appeared in the series as a replacement, called Kamen Rider 2, alias Hayato Ichimonji (Takeshi Sasaki). Upon recovery, Fujioaka returned to the series as Takeshi Hongo, alias Kamen Rider 1. Together, both robotic bikers eventually wasted Schocker

***KAMEN RIDER VS. SCHOCKER**
(actual Japanese title: "Kamen Ralda Tai Shoka") Filmed in Cinemascope, in Eastman Color, 32 min., Theatrical debut: 3/18/72

Perhaps my opinion of this theatrical movie are a bit prejudiced, since I'm a complete fanatic for all the early Kamen Rider stuff. The KAMEN RIDER TV show is great, but this 32-minute film is excellent. One reason I think the movie is better than most episodes of the TV show is because as a lengthier production, the elements of excitement are higher in abundance. The breathtaking battles are longer, and there are a lot more monsters. Each 30 minute episode of the TV version only averages one guest monster per episode, yet in this massive production, I



counted at least 29! And that's not including the henchmen (these dime-a-dozen weakling characters appear to be normal people wearing wrestling masks; the fighters wear black ones and the scientists are attired in white ones). Most of the monsters are reincarnations from the series. Each episode of the TV show lasted less than 30 minutes, to allow for commercials, but all 32 minutes of this theatrical episode are taken up by the story, allowing longer, more spectacular fights.

Seeing Kamen Riders 1 and 2 (V3 didn't exist then) in action is an exhilarating experience. These two android arachnids generate the same kind of respect, charisma, awe, and heroism as Superman, Batman or any other superhero you can name. In fact, I get many more goosebumps watching these two insects battle the baddies than I do when I watch Superman (which is practically never), Batman, or any other American so-called superhero.

The production values are equal to those in the series, for better or worse. I suppose by American standards, this campy, action packed movie could be considered low budget, possibly even bland. Other than costumes of heroes and monsters, there really aren't many special effects. And the quality of the martial arts could be better. But after all, let's be fair, it's not easy to do quick, precise stuntwork when wearing thick, hot, heavy costumes.

Footage from this theatrical episode as well as the next one (KAMEN RIDER TAI JIGOKU DAISHI) would later be purchased by a Chinese company, re-edited and released in Taiwan as SUPER RIDERS WITH THE DEVIL, but that's another story.

Synopsis:

Some scientists in this story are working on a top secret, critical plan known

as GX, dealing with exclusive data stored on a computer. One scientist called Anu Kun is killed by Schocker's newest powerful monster called Sanjio. This mutant bug created spilt-like foam which somehow enables the funny looking insect (or frog, it's hard to tell sometimes) to travel underground. But the goal of Sanjio, Professor Shingami (Eisei Yamamoto), and the other gruesome members of Schocker is to get their slimy paws on Project GX, whatever that is. They even kidnap Tamari (a scientist's daughter) on her birthday, and offer to return her in exchange for her brilliant father, founder of the GX plan. But Takeshi Hongo (Kamen Rider 1) impersonates the father and doesn't reveal his true identity to the evil Professor Shingami (wearing a Dracula cape) until after the exchange and Tamari is safe with her father. From then on, it's battle time as both Kamen Riders take on henchmen, the resurrected monsters and Sanjio, whom they destroy (making the beast explode like the other dead villains in nearly every Japanese superhero series).

***KAMEN RIDER VS AMBASSADOR HELL** ("Kamen Ralda Tai Jigoku Daishi") Cinemascope, Eastman Color, debut: 7/16/72, CAST: Hiroshi Fujioaka, Jiro Chiba, & Shoji Kobayashi

I don't mean to say the second theatrical episode is in any way inferior to its predecessor, but somehow, I preferred KAMEN



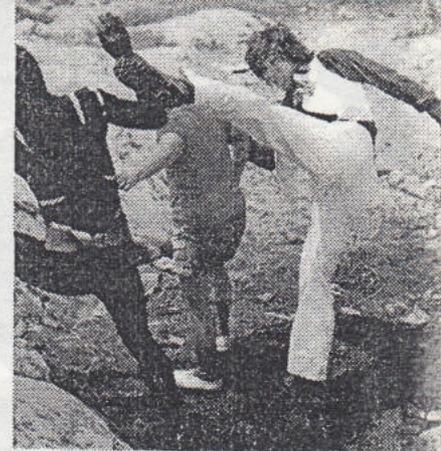
RIDER VS. SCHOCKER. Yet the production values for KAMEN RIDER VS AMBASSADOR HELL are somewhat higher, largely because the staff took on new ideas besides just the usual karate & wrestling duels. Some scenes in this mini-movie involve a

helicopter, there is a longer motorcycle race this time, and a sequence where the characters chase each other while riding horses. Another thing I noticed is that Jiro Chiba has a bigger part this time than in the first movie. This is a positive factor, since although his character is a mere mortal and not a superhero, he's the most skillful fighter in this theatrical episode. His larger role this time makes up for the lack of Kamen Rider 2, who's nowhere to be found in **KAMEN RIDER VS AMBASSADOR HELL**.

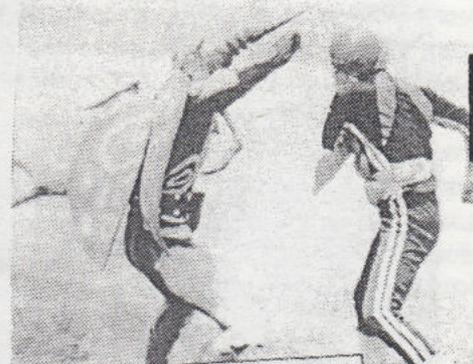
Like I mentioned in the previous film review, scenes from this one were also spliced into the Chinese movie **SUPER RIDERS WITH THE DEVIL**.

Scriptwise, the whole thing starts at a motorcycle race that Takeshi Hongo (Hiroshi Fujioka) and Taki Kazuya (Jiro Chiba) are taking part in. Ambassador Hell of

side of Fujino, near Mt. Fuji. So Takeshi and Taki go to Fujino, rescue Tachibana and destroy the base of Ambassador Hell, who had planned on firing a laser beam at Tokyo Tower. The climactic battle has Kamen Rider 1 riding his motorcycle called Cyclone, riding horses, fighting henchmen and another resurrected army of monsters, including the return of Sanjio. Later, Kamen Rider 1 battles a newcomer called Kamirikko.



At Cal-state Hayward, here I am practicing for two stage shows; as Kamen Rider 1 (1988; above) and as Kamen Rider V3 (1987; below).



KAMEN RIDER V3

debut: 2/17/73, 52 chapters, ending on 2/9/74, starring Hiroshi Miyauchi and Akira Yamaguchi

Some say this is the most wellknown, most beloved Kamen Rider program. Having come out after **KAMEN RIDER**, this 52

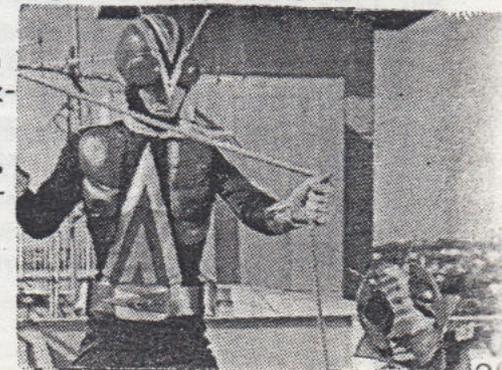
part series understandably had higher production values than its influential prequel. The karate was slicker, and the special effects were somewhat of an improvement.

Hiroshi Miyauchi plays Shiro Kasami, the heroic motorcyclist who becomes Kamen Rider V3. Hiroshi Miyauchi also was the title hero in **KAIKETSU ZUBATO**, played Ao Ranger in **HIMITSU SENTAI GO-RANGER**, appeared in **UCHU KEIJI GYABAN** as Aron, and was also in **THE WAR IN SPACE**.

The character Kamen Rider V3 was the first Japanese superhero I ever portrayed in a stage show as part of a costume contest in 1987. If any of you seem curious about my stage fights I keep mentioning let me know. I've got most of them on videotape.

The main hero was, of course Kamen Rider V3 himself, the bug-eyed crime fighter who rides on his futuristic motorcycle called Hurricane. But he had an occasional helper, a new Kamen Rider called Rideman. Rideman was only in episodes 43 through 51, and supposedly died in an explosion, just like Kamen Riders 1 and 2. Regardless, they all returned after their supposed deaths, appearing in sequels. But in reality, Akira Yamaguchi who played Rideman died of lung cancer in 1987. The late great actor also played the main hero in **DENJIN ZABOGA**.

The villainous demons and monsters in this series which lasted from 2/17/72 to 2/9/73 are called Destron.



Schocker rigs up a trap where an arrow on a road sign is altered to point in the opposite direction (the oldest trick in the book). Takeshi (alias Kamen Rider 1) and Taki are captured, nearly gassed to death in a chamber, and narrowly escape an exploding building. Later, another friend called Tachibana (Shoji Kobayashi) is also kidnapped and taken to the lush country-



Damon Foster kicks Ed Martinez during a rehearsal.

***KAMEN RIDER V3 VS DESTRON**

32 min., first shown in theatres on 7/18/73 as part of a double bill with MAZINGA Z VS. DEVIL MAN

In comparison with the first two Kamen Rider theatrical episodes, this one is more polished, more wellmade, more well-done, etc. I like KAMEN RIDER V3 VS. DESTRON a lot, just as much as I like the other two. The choreography of the fights is quicker with better form, and more realistic (at times it looks as though the kicks and punches almost come in contact with intended targets). The FX are more plentiful, like all the big explosions scattered through out the battles.

The story is complex, and starts off with a Destron agent kidnapping a man on



a boat. This victim had in his possession a jewel which features a deadly energy that changes people into foam. Shiro Kasumi (a.k.a. Kamen Rider V3) locates Destron's base on a small island and destroys it, along with the dreaded jewel, its owner having been rescued. The plot thickens as Tobei Tachibana and friends go on a vacation at what appears to be Kyoto, while more Destron henchmen attempt to capture a female stage performer for some reason. Later, Tobei Tachibana finds

an important piece of paper hidden in a temple. This much sought after scrap must be a map or clue to something since everyone wants it. The ending battle has Kamen Rider V3 being aided by Kamen Riders 1 and 2 as they fight Destron's henchmen, revived monsters (each was already killed in episodes of the KAMEN RIDER V3 series on TV), and their leader Doctoru Gen, which us Americans are expected to pronounce Doctor G, even though the Japanese can't. There's a main monster who makes his debut in KAMEN RIDER V3 VS. DESTRON called Taiho Buffalo.

KAMEN RIDER X

Toei, J.A.C., Shotaro Ishimori, etc., and being 35 measely episodes from 2/16/74 through 10/12/74

KAMEN RIDER X marked the downfall as far as many serious fans were concerned. The series is remembered fondly, although it never lived up to its classic two predecessors.

Interesting to note that the actor playing Jin Keisuke (uncostumed form of Kamen Rider X) also played a main character (some sort of construction worker for Expo '70) in Dalei's GAMERA VS. JIGER (1970).

The plot deals with the heroic Jin Keisuke, who was given the power to become Kamen Rider X because of a successful experiment done by his father, a scientist. But his father was killed by a sinister group of monstrous cyborgs called G.O.D., which stands for Government of Darkness. The leader of these bizarre warriors is King Dark, an enormous mechanical viking. Another main villain is called Apogalsto. Their enemy is the vengeful Rider X, also known as the X Rider. His motorcycle is called Cruiser,



*THE 5 RIDERS VS. KING DARK (?) released 7/25/74, running time: 29 min.

There are five heroes in this one, Kamen Riders 1 & 2, V3, and Riderman, plus the main star X Rider. We never really get to see much of the other four in their uncostumed form. We only see their human faces briefly during a quick transformation sequence as each yells "Henshin" (change) to the accompaniment of the traditional hand gestures. All four shots of them are stock footage from the first two programs.

There are no henchmen in this theatrical episode (#4), although that doesn't take away from any of the excitement of the duels. As always, there are dozens of monsters, and in this case, they suffice as the traditional 'throw around guys'. Each monster had his own episode in the KAMEN RIDER X TV series, where he was more powerful and took on our hero in one-on-one duels. But in their reincarnated forms, such creatures are a dime-a-dozen.



When all five Kamen Riders team up, it begins to look more like a Sentai (superhero team) than a Kamen Rider story. This film's climactic scenes remind me of the Sentai programs. But this theatrical episode actually pre-dates the Sentais, which I suspect mimick the format first seen in this movie. It's hard to believe that any thing from GO RANGER to TURBO RANGER owes all their success to the Kamen Riders!

About the plot. It seems that King Dark (the giant, horned robot) has a new monster called Coumori (Franken, also Frankencoumori. Coumori means bat, so he winged beast's English name would be 'Frankenbat'. This bloodsucker was created in much the same way as Frankenstein's monster, involving a laboratory and lightning. The remainder of the script, unlike the previ-

ous theatrical episode is painfully simple despite occasional attempts to cover up its emptiness with minor subplots (i.e. a little boy named Masaru hears monsters in the night and no adults will believe him) and skits. The script just deals with Frankenbat's thirst for blood, and how other monsters kidnap people to be private bloodbanks for Frankenbat. Rider X (a.k.a. X Rider) places a homing transmitter on a small bat who's probably involved with Frankenbat in some way. So our five heroes follow the little rodent to the base of Frankenbat and defeat the villains.

KAMEN RIDER AMAZON

24 episodes from 10/19/74 until 3/39/75

This was an effort to try and be different than the previous Kamen Rider shows. An unfortunate attempt at originality. You know, kind of like modern art; those weird drawings, sculptures and paintings that only the creator himself can make heads or tails of, and only he gives a shit about it. Such as those abstract pattern paintings that look like what would happen if you ate a bucket full of prawns, washed it down with a bottle of Bacardi 151, and then tried to play Tennis in the scorching hot sun. It would be a mess, just like this program, not that I hate it. There was more bloodletting than the average Kamen Rider series, and the costumes looked much different. The heroic Kamen Rider Amazon was designed much differently than the previous Kamen Riders,



ers, and is one of the few Japanese superheroes to have sharp teeth. His costume is my favorite Kamen Rider costume. Amazon is a brutal hero, sometimes biting off appendages from his foes. The episodic monsters are not the typical cyborgs seen in many previous programs, but are more like mutated animals, similar to those in ULTRAMAN, though not giant. I haven't seen enough from the series to give an accurate commentary, but from what I have seen, this series is disappointing.

In his human form, Kamen Rider Amazon is Daisuke Yamamoto, of Japanese decent although raised in the Amazon jungle. He got his Kamen Rider powers from the magic of some witch doctor, so it appears. But this is a Japanese program, so naturally it must take place in Japan. Yet in Japan, Daisuke is out of place, having been raised in the wild. This Japanese Tarzan can't speak very well. He is a primitive barbarian, so he doesn't use the traditional martial arts when he fights. Instead, he resorts to basic wrestling moves, so the battles aren't as exciting as they could have been. His enemy is an army of wierdos called Gedon, featuring Gorugos and Zero Taltel, which may mean Dr. Zero. A member of Gedon has a magical bracelet on his arm identical to the one worn by Kamen Rider Amazon. If ever both these bands were snapped together, they could create a powerful force that could aid in conquering the world. That's why the sinister forces of Gedon are always trying to get that arm ring from the illiterate hero. Our hero's bike is Jyangura, which is probably suppose to be pronounced Jungler.

KAMEN RIDER STRONGER

4/5/75 'til 12/27/75, 39 parts

As far as ratings go, this 1975 (4/5-12/27) TV show lasted for 15 episodes more than KAMEN RIDER AMAZON. Personally, this one also disappoints me. The sole female Kamen Rider (who never appears outside this series, fortunately) called Tackle is badly designed, so are some of the laughable monsters, and worst of all, some of the henchmen have Mickey Mouse ears! But I do like many of the fights in this series.

Shigero Shiyou was illegally changed into Kamen Rider Stronger (Masked Rider Stronger) by the sinister forces of Black Satan. With the help of his cycle Kaputoro and the other Kamen Riders who make occasional guest appearances, Kamen Rider Stronger is up against Black Satan's monsters, robots, demons, etc.

*ALL BACK AGAIN! THE 7 KAMEN RIDERS

1/3/76, 40 minutes long, Japanese title: "Zenin Shugo! Seibun no Jin Kamen Laida"

It's nonstop excitement from start to finish in this TV-made special from the mid-1970s (the Golden Age of Japanese superheroes). The seven riders featured are Kamen Riders 1, 2, V3, Riderman, X, Amazon, and Stronger. The female Kamen Rider called Tackle also appears briefly in a flashback, something this movie is full of. Tackle's flashback shows how she died during a battle with Dr. Kelto in episode #29 of KAMEN RIDER STRONGER. Tackle is the only Kamen Rider character to have ever really died, although Kamen Riders 1 & 2 supposedly died in duels with Turtle Bazooka in episode #1 of KAMEN RIDER V3, and Riderman supposedly



exploded on a missile in #52 of the same series. However, unlike Tackle, all three male Kamen Riders mysteriously came back to life to appear in sequels like this film.

The setting is Korakuen Amusement Park. Longtime Kamen Rider colleague Mr. Tachibana is watching a superhero stage show put on by Kamen Rider imitators. Watching the choreographed performance, he remembers the first two Kamen Riders and their confrontations with Schocker a few years ago. After some flashbacks depicting Kamen Riders 1 & 2 in action and other characters from KAMEN RIDER, the first four Kamen Riders appear in person, in their non-costumed forms: Takeshi Hongo, Hayato Ichimonji, Shirou Kasami, and Jiyouji Yuki. They all reminisce about their showdowns with the sinister forces of Destron. Then there are flashbacks from KAMEN RIDER V3 focusing mainly on V3 himself, episodic monsters and main villains (none of the flashbacks from any of these programs have any major battles with henchmen, unfortunately). As Tachibana and his four heroic friends continue to have flashbacks from programs like KAMEN RIDER V3 and KAMEN RIDER X, they continue to watch the mock battle performed on stage in front of an adoring audience. Then the next two riders arrive

KAMEN RIDER STRONGER. Speaking of Kamen Rider Stronger, that is who shows up by the bleachers next, as Shigeru Jiyou. But he's distressed; he calls our heroes' attention to the now chaotic performance. The mock monsters on stage turn out to be the real thing! As they beat the shit out of the false Kamen Riders on stage, the audience panicks and runs away. As for our surprised heroes, it's once again 'henshin time!' Takeshi Hongo becomes Kamen Rider 1, Hayato Ichimonji becomes K.R. 2, Shirou Kasami becomes V3, Jiyouji Yuki becomes Riderman, Keisuke Jin becomes Amazon, and Shigeru Jiyou becomes Stronger (by that I mean that he changes into Kamen Rider Stronger, not that he became stronger, although that's probably true too)! All seven space-age insects rush the stage and wipe out the legion of monsters who were re-created (again, they're reincarnations) by some magical wizard called 'Ankoku Dai Shogun,' whatever the hell that means. The finale has all seven bugmen killing the bearded villain backstage.

KAMEN RIDER

(a.k.a. KAMEN RIDER SHIN & SHIN KAMEN RIDER) 10/5/79 to 10/10/80, 54 segments

Sky Rider is what the title hero is more commonly known as. 1979's addition to the Kamen Rider saga was made at an age of high-tech special effects. All Japanese superhero programs reflect the look of the times, and this 54-episode series is no exception. The FX in this program were the best of any Kamen Rider program of the 1970s.

Kamen Riders have always been able to jump up to about 66 feet high though Sky Rider is the first real flyer. The villains are called Neo Schocker because this is a high tech remake of the original 1971 series (but it also may be considered a sequel because there were team-ups with the other Riders). Lead by General Monster, the villains have created a rebellious fighter who refused to help them called Hiroshi Tsukuba, alias Sky Rider.

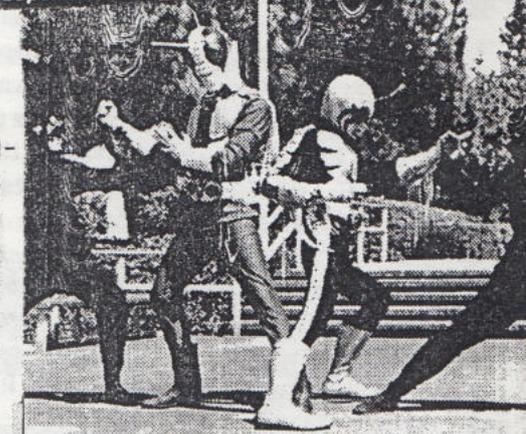
KAMEN RIDER SUPER 1

48 chapters from 10/17/80 'til 10/3/81

My friend Barrie Evans played this character in the same stage show that I played Kamen Rider V3. It was a dramatic performance recreating ideas from these Japanese TV shows. The costumes were made by Barrie Evans and Steve Wang (now a Hollywood FX maker for movies).



Damon Foster as V3, Barrie Evans as Kamen Rider Super 1.



But as for the series itself, all I can say is 'boo, hiss!' KAMEN RIDER SUPER 1 is so childish, it has got to be the ULTRAMAN TARO of the Kamen Riders. One thing about these infantile kiddie shows is that they sure are elaborate. It's a colorful, flashy program. Yet amazingly, it also is very good at achieving utter boredom as well! It's hard to imagine that any one single series can combine naiveness, pretty colors and boredom, but this one has got all three.

KAMEN RIDER SUPER 1 was ahead of its time, though in a negative way. Lame action didn't really set in until around 1984, yet this series offered an early warning of how disappointing these Japanese superhero programs would become to action fans. A rival series at the time was the Sentai program DENSHI SENTAI DENZIMAN (see page). Considering that



Keisuke Jin and Daisuke Yamamoto. Then there are discussions and clips from KAMEN RIDER AMAZON. After the stock-footage from AMAZON featuring all the same elements from the clips of other shows (hero, hero VS episodic guest monster, supporting human character, main villain leader) we're treated to the same format of flashbacks, only this time they're clips from

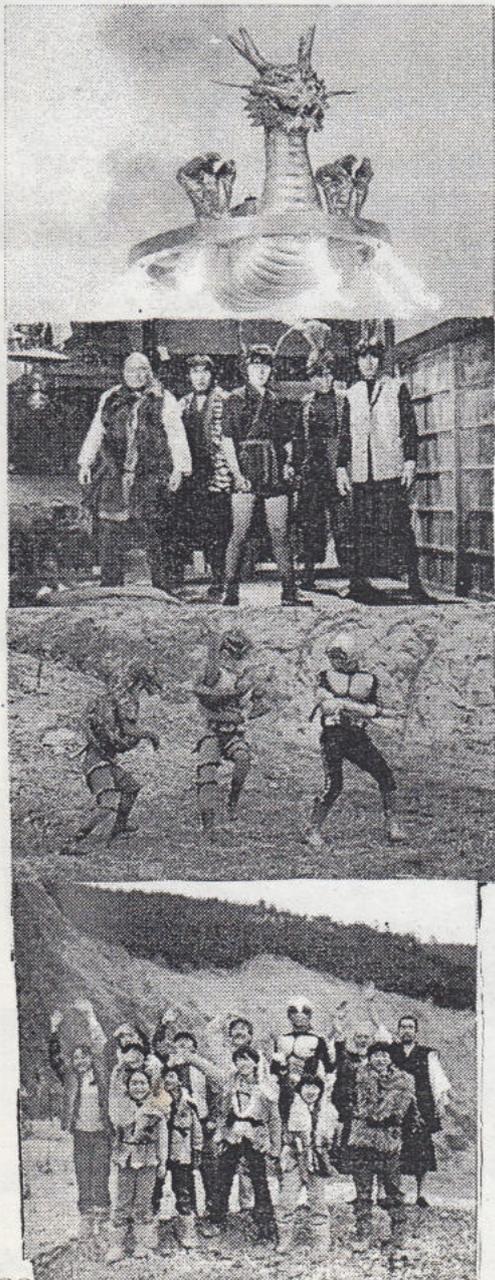


DENZIMAN featured J.A.C. star Kenji Ohba, its stuntwork and action choreography must have blown KAMEN RIDER SUPER 1 away.

Vital statistics: Kamen Rider Super 1 also called Kazuya Waki, and his two most hated enemies are Doguma and Shindouma.

*** KAMEN RIDER SUPER 1**

Produced by Toei, stuntmen from J.A.C., filmed in Vista Vision and Eastman Color. The special effects of this 1981 theatrical episode are naturally, the greatest in any Kamen Rider production to date. That's to be expected from anything made in the 1980s. One of its best special effects is a flying ship, shaped like a dragon. This excellent miniature is based on the designs of viking vessels.



Regretably, the KAMEN RIDER SUPER 1 movie offers a glimpse of an unfortunate 1980s trend that didn't really get underway until around 1984. This upcoming tendency which would later ruin programs like BIOMAN and TURBO RANGER is poor action choreography. In this case, it seems that the costumed stuntmen from JAC are doing their best, although the arty photography is full of pans, zooms, and quick edits which obscure the brilliance of the human body in action. Other fights involve ordinary mortals fighting amongst themselves, since we do not see any worthwhile Kamen Rider action until the later half of this 25-minute special. Other than the little kids who fight, the martial artists are pretty good.

Maki Ueda guest stars as a villain. Her and Jackie Sato were members of a Pink Lady-clone disco band in the 1970s. After the break up of their duo called The Beauty Pair, Maki starred in the Sentai series BATTLE FEVER J. Other actors in this film include excessive little kids, way too many. There is even an obligatory scene of kiddies bullying each other, something that occurs over and over in Japanese superhero productions.

Other comments before going into the plot: This inferior flick is NOT in widescreen, the music is the worst in any Kamen Rider movie, and the other riders (1, 2, V3, Riderman, Amazon, X, Sky Rider and Stronger) only make cameo appearances at the end.

The tale starts off in the mountains, where nearly the whole picture takes place. The monsters of Doguma have disguised themselves as human warriors who wear vests made of animal fur, and so do the members of a family whom the monsters are up against. The villains break into a log cabin and steal some valuable antique swords. This whole battle takes place at night, and is too dark to view properly. All the clan's adults are killed, so their kids (who also wear thick pelts of animals) are understandably upset. These boys and girls each have their own little rock, ball, or jewel (whatever they are, they resemble yo-yos) of varying colors (one is green, one is red, one isn't, etc.) which have some power. I suppose these effective weapons were passed down from ancestors. One kid makes his way to a city and gets word out that his parents were killed by Doguma and Kazuya Waki (a.k.a. Super 1) over

hears this. He goes to the mountains in search of Doguma and meets his old martial arts sensei, also a mountainman. Later, the kids locate an ancient plaque of a dragon, created by prophets a hell of a long time ago. They fulfill the prophecy by placing their magical yo-yos in the holes on the stone plaque. This creates a powerful, wind-like force which damages Doguma's flying dragon ship. Meanwhile Super 1 is briefly aided by his older brothers (1, 2, V3, Riderman, Stronger, Amazon X, and Sky Rider) when he's surrounded by revived monsters he killed in his TV series. As his predecessors defeat these zombie-monsters, Super 1 goes on to destroy the newer ones designed for this film.

***KAMEN RIDER SPECIAL**

("Jugo tonso Kamen Rider Zen Shugo!") Produced by Toei & J.A.C. for TBS, broadcast in Sept. 1983



Viewing this exciting TV special is both a breathtaking experience and a depressing one. The 60 minute feature is breathtaking because of its costumes, fight-scenes, spine-tingling music and imaginative special FX. It's depressing because this is practically our last glimpse at the 1970s heroes in action. It seems that after this movie, the older Kamen Riders went on a long vacation, not to return until six years had passed.

Seeing old friends like Kamen Riders 1, 2, V3, Riderman, X, Stronger, Amazon, Sky Rider, and Super 1 taking on the baddies one last time is truly an awesome spectacle. These are the same characters I've grown to know & love in those classic TV shows & films from the 1970s, but this version offers a flashy 1980s atmosphere complete with improved, innovative special effects. But unlike the other 1980s



superhero productions like BIOMAN and SPEILVAN, the fights are not boring! How lucky we are this TV special was made in 1983, one year before the Japanese superhero productions began to decline.

Only three Kamen Riders are shown in their human form, since trying to round up all those old actors would be a difficult task. The non-costumed riders featured never fight, and are Shirou Kasami (V3), Jiyouji Yuki (Riderman), and Kazuya Waki (Super 1).

A new Kamen Rider appears in this one called Kamen Rider Z-Cross. As a bigger budgeted, state-of-the-art hero, his costume is far more elaborate than those of his predecessors, thereby demonstrating the evolving transgression of these characters. The very first Kamen Rider in 1971 had mere gym clothes as his uniform, and with each proceeding program, each costume is more expensive to make, more flamboyant. In this case, the newest hero (Z-Cross, though spelled ZX in Japanese books) is red & silver, making him look almost like an Ultra Brother.

This TV special was meant to be the pilot episode of KAMEN RIDER ZX, but no such series ever came into existence. Supposedly, the actor portraying Z-Cross's human character turned out to be a yakuza (Japanese word for gangster), and Toei maybe cancelled the series to keep the mafia out of the company.

Riyou Murasame was captured along with his sister when their plane was flying over what appears to be the Amazon Jungle. Their captors are a group of creatures called Badan, lead by Kurayami Daishi, a new & improved reincarnation of Jigoku Daishi (Ambassador Hell). Riyou's sister is later killed while the evil denizens of Badan brainwash him into being one of their own soldiers, and make him become the new Kamen Rider Z-Cross. But a freak lab accident causes an explosion which causes Riyou Murasame to overcome his brainwash, and to remember the death of his sister at the hands of Kurayami/Jigoku Daishi's Badan gang. Speaking of which, they've created an enormous, radar-like laser cannon that can destroy buildings and people. Meanwhile,

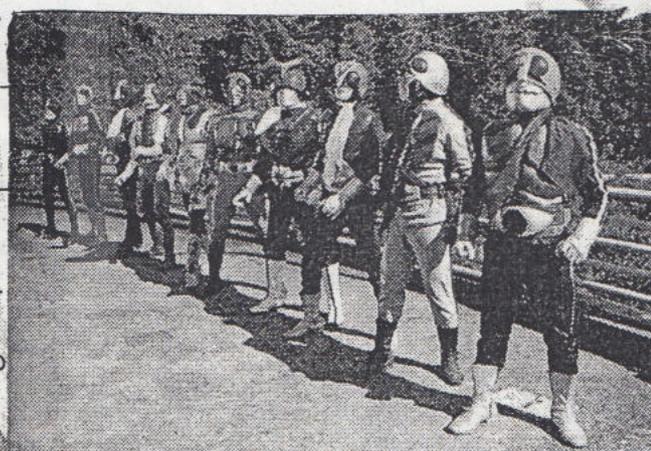
riders (including the new Z Cross) go to Badan's base for the final battle. Z Cross has a score to settle with Tiger Roid, a scary robot whom he befriendd while under their hypnotism at the beginning of the movie. After Z Cross defeats Tiger Roid (the only monster created for this film, as the others are older characters), all the riders team up to wipe out Badan's base in what has got to be some of the most exciting footage ever included in any Kamen Rider adventure.

KAMEN RIDER BLACK

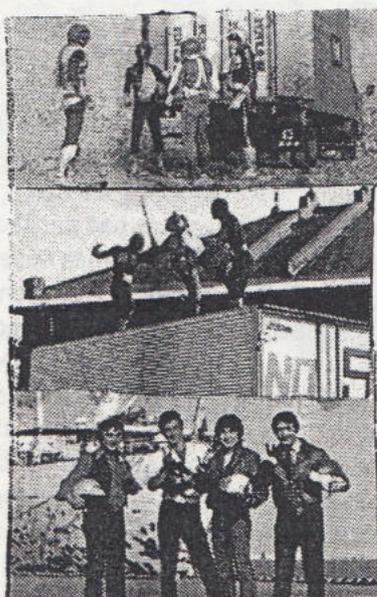
Produced by Toei for TBS, 51 episodes lasting from 10/4/88 to 10/2/89, Starring Tetsuro Kurata as Kotaro Minami, and guest starring Susumu Kurobe, sometimes

Quite a slick, polished, high-tech, no nonsense look accompanies this glossy blockbuster. The costumes for the villainous monsters consistently maintain ghoulishness and add to the production values. These episodic monsters look more like monsters in major American monster movies, despite their being created on a weekly basis. Our heroic biker's costume isn't half bad either, for what it is. It's a great costume, but inappropriate for a Kamen Rider, somewhat out of place. Kamen Rider Black looks more like a Space Sheriff with antennas than a traditional Kamen Rider. Other spectacular FX include the elaborate super-impositions and pyrotechnics which bombard each episode.

But as with almost all Japanese heroes of the 1980s, there is nothing else to praise. The stories, plots and scripts are standard, the acting and characterizations are generic, and the quality of action is merely adequate. Of course, a major highlight from the previous superior Kamen Rider programs were those spintinning henchmen duels where the bug-eyed cyborgs fight valiantly despite their being outnumbered about six to one. As a change of pace, this series has no villainous henchmen. Generally, I'm all for new ideas and experimentation, but in this case, it was a dreadful mistake. Without the traditional, vital henchmen, much of the hero's charisma is lost. Seeing oldtimers



uncostumed Kamen Riders Shirou Kasami (V3), Jyoji Yuki (Riderman), and Kazuya Oki (Super 1) unite and agree that Badan must be stopped. So these three riders are aided by Riders 1 & 2, Amazon, Super 1, Sky Rider, X and Stronger, as they attempt to thwart a group of diesel trucks smuggling explosives to Badan's base. As these nine riders battle out with the monsters & henchmen driving the trucks, Z-Cross arrives and at first mistakes his fellow riders for members of Badan, so he attacks Riderman and Super 1. But then V3 interrupts the brief fight and explains that they're all against Badan. One truck slipped past our heroes and got the explosives to Badan's base. But before all the



like V3 waste an entire task force of henchmen was what made the sole hero seem so heroic, so powerful, so Kamen Rider! And charisma isn't all that's lost when the obligatory henchmen don't exist. The quality of the program's action also dwindles, or rather, it changes. It's a beautiful sight when such complex duels are choreographed properly. But this element is lost, and in its place are the overdone artificial FX.

On the whole, it's an okay series, but by far my least favorite from among the Kamen Rider programs. Each episode is stale, repetitious and after a while, it starts to look like every episode is identical. This statement is true of nearly all Japanese superhero TV shows, but I feel that it is more prominent in this generic program than most others.

Plot, script, story, synopsis and what not. Kotaro Minabi had a friend called Nobuhiko. But the friendship was shortlived because both those geeks were captured by more monstrous invaders. In this case, they're Golgom, three robed-ghosts who look like the mutants from BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES. (As usual, this pale white trio turn their captives into Kamen Riders whom they'll force to assist them on their plan of conquest. Kotaro is immediately transformed into Kamen Rider Black, the Dark Knight of the Kamen Riders. But despite his ominous appearance, Kotaro's good natured personality prevails, and the rebellious grasshopper turns against his cruel captors, with the help of his mantis-like motorcycle the Battle Hopper. But as for Nobuhiko, he was kept in a mutating cocoon form for so long that when the lengthy process was finally completed at about the middle of the series, the brainwashing was successful. Nobuhiko became Kamen Rider Shadow Moon, a powerful villain who nearly defeated our hero. Kotaro and Nobuhiko were the best of friends, but now they're Kamen Rider Black and Shadow Moon, worst of enemies.

KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX. More of the same. In fact, both this series and the previous one are basically the same thing. Only the name changed as well as having new villains. All the program's production values are the same as those in its prequel. Actually, you know, I kind of consider this series to be a minor improvement over KAMEN RIDER BLACK for two reasons. First of all, aside from the typical main villains and episodic monsters, there actually are henchmen this time. However, they really don't do much, and only attack Kamen Rider Black RX occasionally. Second of all, the last five episodes feature team-ups, involving the return of the older Kamen Riders. 1, 2, V3, Riderman, X, Amazon, Stronger, Super 1, Sky Rider and even Z-Cross. Actors like Hiroshi Fujioka don't appear, unfortunately, since the classic heroes appear in their costumed form only.

An interesting plot twist is Black RX's unique ability to change into two other Kamen Riders. Depending on what kind of situation he's involved in and/or what

ally the same character as Kamen Rider Black, but new & improved). The story deals with the further adventures of Kotaro Minabi, again with Tetsuro Kurata in the title role. He wiped out the older villains Golgom from the previous series, but now there's a new army of monsters & robots at large called Crisis. They decide to change Kamen Rider Black/Kotaro Minabi into another one of their soldiers, but their magic backfires. Kamen Rider Black becomes a new incarnation, Kamen Rider Black RX. He may look a little different, but it's basically the same hero as before.



'TILL DEATH DO WE SCARE
 Presented by Cinema City, Produced by Carl Mak and Dean Shek, Co-producer: Raymond Wong, Production Supervisor: Paul Li, Executive Producer: Wellington Fung, Editor: Tony Chow, Original Music: Philip Chen, Special Effects make up Tom Savini, Director: Lau Kai Wing, Cast..... Alan Tang, Olivia Cheung, John Kang, Eric Tsang, Raymond Wong & Wong Ching



Bio Rider, Black, Black RX, and Robo Rider.

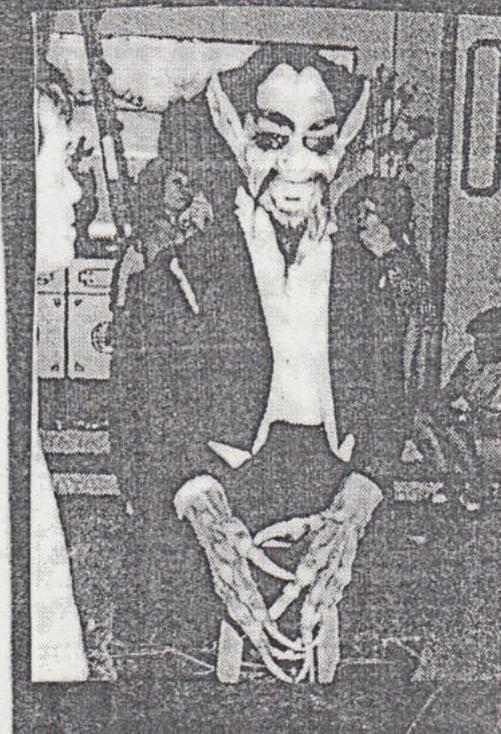
kind of episodic monster he's tangling with, different types of superheroes are required. So he can become either Bio Rider or Robo Rider. There was a theatrical episode (sort of a 'Kamen Rider Black RX movie') where he managed to separate into four separate Kamen Riders: Kamen Rider Black RX, Robo Rider, Bio Rider and even Kamen Rider Black (Black RX is actu-



Shadowmoon vs. Bio Rider.



Black, Robo Rider, Bio Rider and RX.





However, *TILL DEATH DO WE SCARE* has more to offer than just enjoyable makeup jobs. This movie also succeeds as a slapstick comedy, and it is actually more of a comedy than a horror flick. All of its humor is intentional, although not all the humor is hilarious. Some gags are funny, some are mildly stupid.

The story of this nonmartial arts (no fights at all) movie is set in modern China, possibly the late 1970s because of its references to disco. Anyway, after



Mechanical underskull of the Chinese Demon.

The first special effects by Tom Savini that I ever saw were in 1979's *DAWN OF THE DEAD*. And since that and its sequel *DAY OF THE DEAD* (1986) are two of my favorite American films, I was both impressed and amazed to see that the American makeup FX master worked on this intentionally silly flick from China. Savini's FX in *TILL DEATH DO WE SCARE* are great, although not his best work. But these effects and ideas look great in a Chinese movie, probably among the best in the world of Chinese horror movies (but then, a lot of Chinese horror movies have nice FX).



an obligatory hoax scene to start off the flick (people impersonate spooks), we're introduced to the main heroine, an attractive yet cursed lady called Irene. She has been married three times, and all three husbands died immediately after marriage. The names of these three late grooms are Butch Man (a mobster), Walter Fink (a playboy), and Stewart Pik (a Christian Priest). All three bumbling ghosts still look after Irene and want her to be happy, so they lure a guy called Bruce Sit (which, like the other names is meant to be funny. In this case, the name is meant to rhyme with 'bullshit') to her. As Irene and Bruce begin dating, Bruce's friend Bibot Tam (Eric Tsang of *MY LUCKY STARS*) over hears from another ghost (an otherwise unimportant character who only appears

Ghost King's magic pearl is removed from his mouth. So Bibot Tam and Bruce Sit both go to the haunted island of ghosts on the night of the ghost festival. Once at this ghastly party, the attending ghosts fail to recognize them as living warmblooded human beings, allowing them to mingle freely and even dance with the ghosts. The dance is a weird combination of 1970s disco moves, ballroom waiting, and acting stereotypically ghostly (they all even do a gyonsi hop at one point). Then Bruce Sit puts pepper on the Ghost King's food, making him sneeze so hard that he loses the magic pearl he has within him. As a result, Irene's curse is eliminated, so they can marry and live happily ever after.

ESCAPE FROM CORAL COVE

A Solarville Co. Ltd. Production, Executive Producers: Barry Chung and Chang Chin, Photographed by Tony Fan, Underwater Photography by Wong Sum, Production Managers: Candy Chin, Mak Wai Hung, Assistant Directors: Yiu Man Kai, Peter Li, Story by Wong Sum & T. Chang, Written by T. Chang & Yiu Man Kai, Directed by T. Chang, Title Song by Joan Teng, Starring.....Ivan Beo, Bee Le Tan, Louis Kong, Alex Fu, Elsie Chan

Some aspects of *ESCAPE FROM CORAL COVE* are not much different from America's earlier *FRIDAY THE 13TH* movie except that instead of being about teenagers stalked by an undead killer at an abandoned summercamp, it's about teenagers stalked by an undead killer at an island resort. There is a lot of boats & sailing, making it similar to *JAWS 2*. But *ESCAPE FROM CORAL COVE* is even less exciting! For a 1980s horror flick this one is mild, bland. The action lacks any awe or suspense and the special effects are weak, what few there are. Another complaint I have is the usual



Wong Ching is made up for comic role in *Till Death Do We Scare*.

briefly) that she's cursed and that her boyfriend Bruce Sit is endangered of death if he marries her. The ghost says that the curse can only be lifted if the

unapologetic cruelty to animals. In this case, a goldfish died a slow, painful death, all for the sake of this lame film. The one positive thing I can say for ESCAPE FROM CORAL COVE is its occasional use of underwater photography.

Alex is quite a guy. He's arranged a vacation on a sunny island with his uptight girlfriend Irene, yet ends up getting to fool around with her buxom sister San San as well. A third pretty girl is Chan San, the only kindhearted one in the group. Another decent individual is a nerd who has come along with them. This nerd has invented an explosive fluid while experimenting with his chemistry set. At the end of the flick, the unstable liquid proves to be not only effective in killing innocent, defenseless goldfish that never wanted to be in the flick, but it also destroys a dangerous aquatic zombie who had already killed Alex, Irene and the voluptuous San San. About the zombie himself. He appears frequently through out the film, being the only real villain. In his previous life, he was apparently part of some wierd cult, but he died and was given a ceremonial burial at sea. But from what the terrible subtitles translate, it would appear as though he died a virgin, so his horny soul won't rest in peace. That is why he came back to life as an oceanic automation and kills all living humans, especially females. One guy tried to defeat this bright eyed zombie by using known ghost deterrents: Taoist talisman, garlick, wooden stake, and even a Christian crucifix, but none were effective.

P.S. Other good points I forgot to mention: In an opening sequence we see a naked girl swimming and we get full glimpses from various angles. She gets terrified when she sees a head floating underwater (this beginning sequence is delivative of ideas from the first JAWS movie). There's other T&A in the flick, since we get to see the girls (including the gorgeous San San) running around in bathing suits.

Hoyle, Philip; Terry Becker, Claire; Ann Doran.

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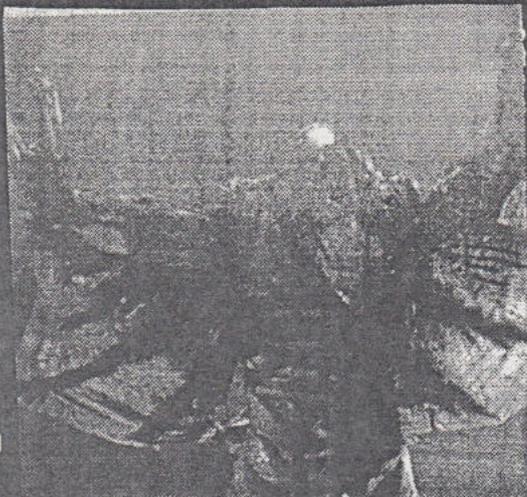
MOVIE; 2 hrs.

"The Seventh Curse." (Cantonese; 1988)

Yuen Fat Chow.

© 1988 BUSINESS OF MANAGEMENT

© 1988 A-TEAM—Adventure; 60 min.



THE SEVENTH CURSE was available on videotape for a long time before I ever saw it. I suppose I would have eventually rented it, but was in no hurry because of its unflattering rental box cover, merely showing dramatic shots of people talking (although the back had a sexy photo of a girl in a river). But then one night on a local TV station called channel 26 (KTSF) I finally got to see THE SEVENTH CURSE for free. It was part of what I call 'Chinese Theatre,' where they show feature length Chinese movies usually accompanied by English subtitles. Most of these films are uncut, and of the same prints available at nearby Chinese videostores. Had it not been for this broadcast on Friday, 7/28/89 at 7 PM, maybe I never would have gotten around to viewing what has since become one of my favorite

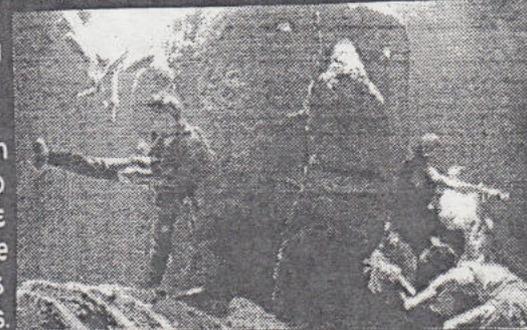


films.

But is it a horror movie, or is it an adventure? It is both, and can also be classified as a martial arts film, as a crime drama, as fantasy and as a monster movie. This excellent flick is RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, ALIEN, and RAMBO all rolled into one. And as all of these kinds of movies it succeeds beautifully. As an adventure, it's thrilling and suspenseful. As a martial arts film, its fights are good examples of the state-of-the-art, post Jackie Chan

stuntwork. As a horror thriller, it's full of gore and marvelous special effects. It's no easy task to make a decent film that so effectively combines all these genres. Yet THE SEVENTH CURSE has accomplished this, the result being almost a masterpiece. My only major complaint is the lighting, or rather, lack of it. I'll never figure out why they tried to ruin all the film's great scenes by making it so dark it's hard to tell what's going on.

The script behind this blood & guts adventure deals with a religious cult in Thailand who curse interlopers by using magic worms. One day an explorer called Heh Lung (played by Chin Suit Ho of MR. VAMPIRE, KUNG FU VAMPIRE BUSTER, VAMPIRE VS. VAMPIRE & BLONDE FURY) inter-



fers when he tries to rescue the cult's human sacrifice; a curvaceous young female called Betsy. But our heroic Heh Lung fails and is captured by the cultists and although he escapes, their worms have made him a victim of the blood curse. This horrid disease has a wierd symptom; his blood often explodes, causing frequent geysers from his skin. But as it turns out, Betsy is immune, thanks to a magical crystal placed in her left breast many years ago by prophets or mystics. To save Heh Lung from this blood curse, she cuts open her tit and makes him swallow the bloody prism so he's vaguely saved (now his skin only erupts with blood spouts sometimes). He returns to Hong Kong, but a year later, he is visited by a Rambo like warrior played by Ti Wei ('Dick Wei,' in America). Ti Wei plays the boyfriend of Betsy, who is still in Thailand and in danger of the cult's curses (her immunity is gone because she gave that important transparent rock to Heh Lung). So Heh Lung and Ti Wei's character go back to Thailand to wipe out the cult, and to get another immunity rock, this one located in the eye of an enormous statue of Buddha. Once this is accomplished, they attack the cult. The cult has demonic monsters, such as parasitic babies made out of crushed children who were their

THE SEVENTH CURSE (1988)

Golden Harvest, Produced by Leonard K.C., Starring: Chin Suit Ho (aka Chien Hsiao Hou), Ti Wei, Sybille Hu, Aman Chou (Chow Yuen Fat), Ken Boyle, Yasuaki Kurata, James Tien, & Wang Lung Wei



insane girl for human sacrifice. La La herself also ends up killed by the cult, even though all holy images (Eastern and Western) are effective in combating this crocodile evil. Then a bunch of new characters are introduced, and an elderly expert in magic pits his super powers against that of the dangerous wizard. Next, an ex-cultist gets in on the magical duel and uses some sort of religious pendant to aid in defeating the crocodile wizard.

VAMPIRE VS. VAMPIRE
Produced by Golden Harvest in 1989, Starring: Lam Ching Ying, and Chien Hsiao Hou (also spelled Chin Suit Ho)



*繼「殭屍叔叔」後，又一驚天動地片
*林正英大門中亦殭屍



大略電影製作公司攝製 嘉禾貢獻 最佳

This Chinese horror comedy could easily be taken for another addition to the top grossing MR. VAMPIRE series, and possibly is. Lam Ching Ying again has funny looking, obviously fake eyebrows and is (of course) once again portraying another heroic Taoist often found battling denizens of the occult in late 1800's (or early 1900's) China. Like I said, another MR. VAMPIRE sequel, though titled differently. There is even another bumbling captain of a military police force who wears glasses and wants to marry his own cousin (sound familiar?). The one thing which keeps it from being MR. VAMPIRE 5 is that it's not from Golden Harvest's Boho Films branch.

VAMPIRE VS. VAMPIRE is a pretty fun movie. Not one of my personal favorites, but very enjoyable. It has got good FX, standard level for the average Golden Harvest horror epic. The story is a little weird to us Americans, since its structure is so very Chinese. Nearly the whole first half of the picture comes off as pointless monkeying around to Americans, yet is actually added for character development, so we get to know the film's heroes well, before the actual plot begins halfway through the movie.

There's far less kung fu in this flick than there is in the average MR. VAMPIRE adventure. But what few fights there are feature some breathtaking stuntwork involving jumps and kicks. I tend to suspect that they used wires and pulleys, but the acrobats are thrilling all the same.

Plot: Long ago, two caucasians came to China. Although both brothers were Christian priests, one was possessed and often found himself battling bats & demons even in the new Christian church they founded in China. One priest was killed by

human sacrifices. But the most deadly monster is a god they call Old Ancestor. This scary creature starts off as a skeleton/zombie, but can transform into a winged reptile that looks like the monster in ALIEN. The grand finale has the good guys wasting Old Ancestor with a bazooka.

CROCODILE EVIL

CROCODILE EVIL has too many characters, a complex plot and no subtitles. I suppose it does not really matter, since **CROCODILE EVIL** is neither good nor bad. The movie isn't scary either, although it tries. At best, it comes off as eerie. It has a few familiar faces but no big stars I could recognize. Its only special effects are the traditional superimpositions used to represent magic powers which look like the rays of a STAR TREK ray gun when us westerners see them. There is a lot of nudity and softcore semi-porn, but what really pissed me off was all the cruelty to animals. This is a disgusting tendency (in this case, ducks are the victims) that is frequent in Chinese films.

This is the saga of an evil wizard in modern China. With his crocodile magic, he has possessed a number of people, forming a cult. An attractive girl called La La lost her boyfriend as he fought with cultists who were planning on using an

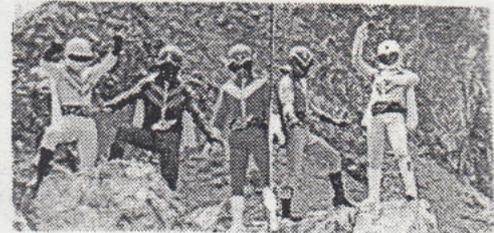


So they eventually destroy the vampire with fire, and chasing him into a pool of quicksand. I must say, these Chinese film makers did a good job at displaying typical European folklore, what with bats and all. There are so many bats in this film, at one point I was watching NIGHTWING.

the other, who became a vampire. This western vampire is not much different than those in American films. There's an interesting variation though; he doesn't turn into a bat to fly, instead he hires a whole flock of bats to carry his unconscious body through the sky in the daytime. Meanwhile, our heroes are a wise old Taoist (Lam Ching Ying), his assistants and an obligatory young gyonsi boy (childish vampire that hops). As always, the stereotypical little gyonsi is nice, never harming anyone. A typical character in



human-sized cyborgs using martial art and not relying heavily on special effects. But HIMITSU SENTAI GORENGA (aka GORANGERS) carried this format a step further by making the series into one about five heroes instead of just one. But again, earlier programs played influential roles. TRIPLE FIGHTER and Toho's ZONE FIGHTER series could be classified as early Sentais I suppose, though neither was as successful or groundbreaking as GORANGERS.



SENTAI (SUPERHERO TEAMS)



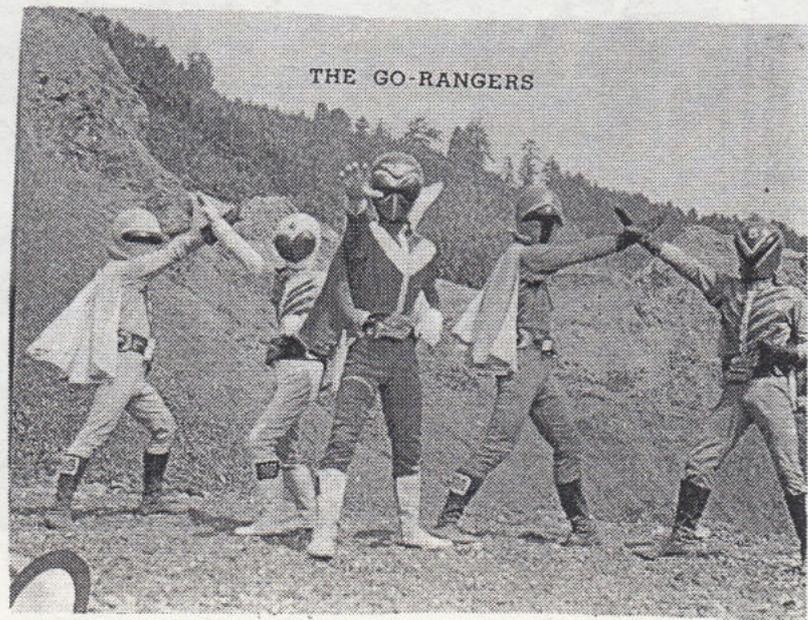
HIMITSU SENTAI GORENGA
("Secret Task Force: Five Rangers") Produced by Toei, 84 episodes from 4/75 until 3/77

Like I mentioned earlier, in the Kamen Rider article, I feel that KAMEN RIDER X VS. KING DARK was the first example of Sentai, or superhero team. Of course, the Kamen Riders had an enormous effect on all Japanese superhero programs, for it was they who first promoted the idea of

GORANGERS had a brief airing in the San Francisco area which lasted about ten episodes. This was a couple of years after KIKAIDA's bay area cancellation, and after KIKAIDA had turned several local boys (i.e. August Ragone & myself) into superhero fanatics. So when GORANGERS was finally shown in nearly the same time-slot that KIKAIDA had occupied two years before, our thirst was quenched, though briefly. It was shown in Japanese but unlike KIKAIDA, lacked English subtitles. But as a schoolboy, I loved GORANGERS and always will. Looking at it today, it appears crude, but it will always have sentimental value. I can remember getting other non-Japanese kids at my elementary school to watch the show, and bringing my doll of Aka Ranger (one of the show's characters) to class as part of show & tell.

GORANGERS is far-fetched and elaborate

this type of movie, though treated differently than usual. In this case, the character is treated just like one of the human characters, rather than an oddity or nemesis. Before our heroes' tangle with the dangerous European vampire, there's a subplot involving an attempt to let a female ghost rest in peace by retrieving her body. She was a singer or hostess in a classy brothel in her previous life. When Lam Ching Ying eventually takes on the foreign devil (literally), it's quite interesting. His Taoist weapons (like a coinsword, talisman paper, etc.) have no effect on this caped vampire. Of course, we all know that the way to defeat a white vampire is by using crucifixes, garlic, wooden stakes and holy water. But these Taoists don't know about all that.



This is a page from one of Toei's promotion books where they tried to sell the series overseas but were unsuccessful.

FIVE RANGERS

84 half-an-hour episodes

Five Rangers are a group of secret agents who carry out missions under special command.

The Special Defense Forces of Japan have suffered extensive damage under the attack of the masked monsters of Black Cross, the merciless organization of all evil powers.

Among the survivors are five young fighters — Tsuyoshi Kaijo (Red Ranger), Daita Ohiwa (Yellow Ranger), Peggy Matsuyama (Pink

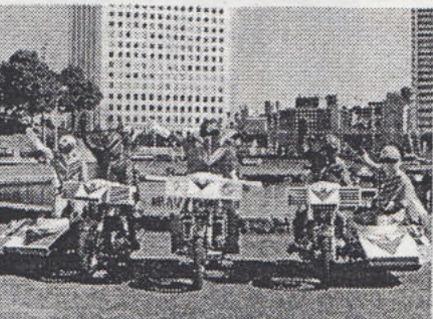
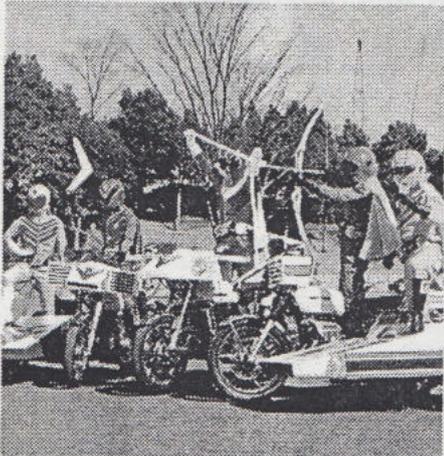
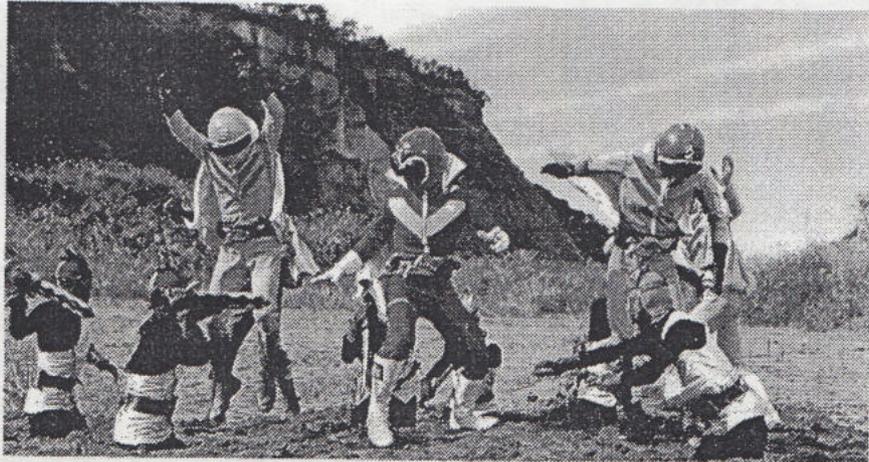
Ranger), Kenji Asuka (Green Ranger) and Akira Shinmei (Blue Ranger). Having survived death-defying tests, the quintet have united to form the secret Five Rangers squadron to thwart the vicious invasion of Black Cross.

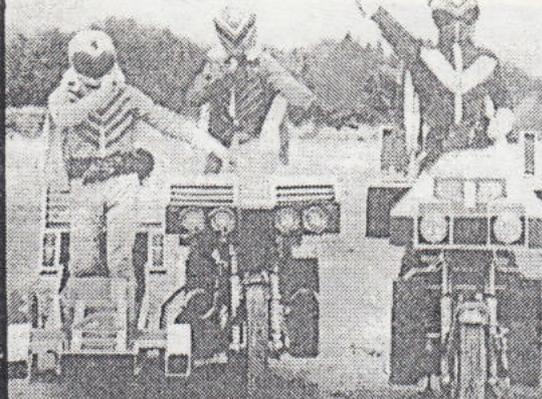
Not a moment is to be wasted. Enemy troops have raided a gunpowder plant, taking children as hostages and setting a time bomb where they are being confined. In the nick of time, the Five Rangers

succeed in rescuing the children.

Now the mighty counterattack of the young warriors begins. With the exploding fist of Red Ranger, quick gun of Blue Ranger, judo skill of Yellow Ranger, kick of death of Pink Ranger and boomerang of Green Ranger, the evil forces are devastated.

The Five Rangers have become the symbol of justice, continuing their ceaseless mission to Protect mankind.





and without the needed budget which may have made its outlandishness believable, so everything comes off as cheap and artificial.

Its martial arts choreography is fast-paced and with skillful form, although it is not convincing sometimes. I recall opponents falling after supposedly receiving a kick which obviously missed by two feet. On the positive side, there's the music of the series. Even today, the program's opening & ending songs are awesome and make the audience cheer the heroes in their battles with the evil villains.

The script deals with five adults who are secret agents at the Eagle Station, lead by Commander Edogawa. The names of the five heroic rangers are Kaijo (Aka Ranger), Shinmei (Ao Ranger), Daita (Jie Ranger), Peggy (Momo Ranger), and Asuka (Midori Ranger). Aka means red, Ao is blue, Jie (?) is yellow, Momo is pink, and midori is green. Kaijo commands the other four, Shinmei is the pilot for their fake looking air vehicles like the Vally Dorin and Vally Bloon, Daita is a bumbling fool added for comic relief, Peggy Matsuyama is the obligatory sexy female, and Asuka is the only character never really given much to do. The five are protecting Japan from a sinister group of cyborgs called the Black Cross Army. Generally, these gloomy caricatures are considered Earthlings, but on the final episode, it turns out that the leader Generalissimo Black is actually an alien from some other planet. The climactic battle of each episode usually begins with a group of villains (some henchmen and an episodic guest robot) up to no good. Then the heroes arrive, usually standing up on top of a hill or cliff. Each yells his or her name and does a pose before jumping down to attack the villains. What follows is an astonishing karate duel as all five heroes battle it out with nearly twice as many henchmen, sometimes more. Each Ranger also has an individual weapon occasionally made use

of, like: Red Ranger's whip, Blue Ranger's bow & arrow called Blue Cherry (Don't ask me why), Pink Ranger's exploding earrings called Brooch Bombs (don't ask me about that one either), and Green Ranger's boomerang. The way each episodic villain is killed is by using a time-consuming ritual called Gorenga Storm Attack, involving a ball that each ranger kicks to one another. By the time this mighty weapon (actually an ordinary volleyball with paint on it) reaches Aka Ranger, it has spikes growing out of it, and Red Ranger's final kick is what makes the ball kill the villain (who explodes, of course). A stupid, over dramatic climax, but one which allows for participation from all five of the rangers.

AKUMAIZER 3 アクマイザー3
("Akumaiza Suri") 38 episodes, starting on 10/7/75 to 6/29/76

I guess technically, AKUMAIZA 3 isn't another link in the Sentai chain, as it never replaced GORANGERS, it ran the same year as GORANGERS but not for as long. GORANGERS started broadcasting six months before AKUMAIZA 3 premiered, and AKUMAIZA 3 was cancelled a full year before GORANGERS finally ended.

The similarities between AKUMAIZA 3 and GORANGERS are minor. The likenesses: Both programs are created by Toei with help from J.A.C., and they both involve a superhero team. The differences: The heroes in AKUMAIZA 3 generally don't have human forms; they practically always look like superheroes, there are only



three heroes in AKUMAIZA 3, they do much more fencing than karate, and all three heroes are more elaborately designed, and are more individual; no repetitious uniform.

It appears that a more talented crew was behind AKUMAIZA 3 than there was for GORANGERS. The budget for AKUMAIZA 3 is probably equal to its competitor, although AKUMAIZA 3 is more believable, less chincy looking. Personally, I like both programs a lot, mostly for different reasons (each program has advantages in its favor), and I don't really prefer one over the other. Like GORANGERS, AKUMAIZA 3 has an enjoyable musical score.



Like I mentioned earlier, the three heroic robots in the series remain in their costumed forms almost constantly. So there are human characters as well who accompany the demonic trio on many of their adventures. One such character is a reporter played by Jiro Chiba. His character this time is humorous, unlike the serious character he played in KAMEN RIDER. Regardless, he's given a few chances to give the villains some kicks every now and then.

There was a TV series called BIBYUN which was a sequel to AKUMAIZA 3. The program basically offered more of the same, but I have not seen enough of it to make an accurate review. GORANGERS was still airing when AKUMAIZA 3 ended, and on through the entirety of BIBYUN. BIBYUN started in 7/76, and ended 3/77, same month & year GORANGERS ended.

Plotwise, Zabitan is a rebellious devil who defected from the legions of Hell, and so have Ebrin (Evil), and Gabura. Zabitan is mostly black, leads the three and is generally the program's #1 hero. Evil is yellow, and often makes use of a wierd looking machine gun. Gabura is a funny

looking monster with an even funnier voice and speech pattern. His only needed source of nourishment is water, which he must drink whenever possible. Unlike his two more serious counterparts, he rarely uses a fencing sword, preferring his spiked ball & chain as his main weapon. They have a magnificent motorcycle built to hold all three of them, called the Garibard, which can fly or separate into three individual motorcycles, one for each.

They also have at their command a giant air vehicle shaped like a medieval ship (perhaps like a "Cutty Sark," though I'm no ship expert), but it can fold and modify into another flying vehicle (this was way ahead of TRANSFORMERS!). This other air vehicle is a bicentennial oddity that looks like something you might expect to see in THE YELLOW SUBMARINE. There's a female hero called Darinia who appears in most of the episodes. The course of the program depicts the good guys in constant war with the evil Meza Lord and his minions.

JACKERS

(Full Japanese title: 'Jyaka den geki tai') 35 episodes from Toei, broadcast from 4/2/77 until 12/24/78

I've seen very little of JACKERS, but having seen enough of GORANGERS, I have a pretty good idea as to what JACKERS has to offer. JACKERS is a new and imp-



roved GORANGERS. By this time, Toei was less nervous about Sentais, and put more energy (not to mention yen) into production. In spite of these advancements, JACKERS was nowhere near as successful as GORANGERS.

Near the end of JACKERS' broadcast, there was a movie made, called either JACKERS VS. GORANGERS or GORANGERS VS. JACKERS. As you can guess by the title, the film compared both hero teams. The climax had both groups teaming up with each other to combat the villains of GORANGERS (Black Cross Army), and the villains of JACKERS (Crime, lead by Iron Claw).

JACKERS was the first Sentai series to make heavy use of a cannon as part of the climax of each episode. The way the heroes almost always defeat their episodic monster is by quickly assembling a cannon (the pieces of cannon just magically pop out of thin air) which is then used to blast the guest villain, so he explodes. The idea of assembling a cannon to kill the villain is something which would later be repeated for many Sentais of the 1980s.

The designs of the program's heroes are very interesting; they're similar to those in GORANGERS, but a bit fancier, and based on symbols from playing cards.

JACKERS was the last Sentai series to be produced, designed, and planned by the master Tooru Hiriyama, who had been creating nearly every Toei superhero series since KAMEN RIDER. A few years after JACKERS, Toei began to accept excessive repetition that Tooru Hiriyama objected to.

The script has our heroes Higashi (Diamond Jack), Daichi (Clover King), Goro (Spade Ace), and a female called Karen (Heart Queen) who's helmet has a red heart face and she's mostly pink, so she bears a striking resemblance to Momo Ranger of GORANGERS. A new hero called

(get this) Big One joined the foursome on episode #23, bringing the team's number up to five, which lasted the final 12 episodes. This heroic team of cyborgs worked at the International Bureau of Scientific Investigation, lead by Superintendent Kujirai. Their enemies are a monstrous gang of nasties called quite appropriately, 'Crime!' Their meen leader is called Iron Claw, and the henchmen are known as 'Crimers.' They're stationed on Earth, but get their commands from invading aliens.

BATTLE FEVER J

Toei, 1979, J.A.C., Broadcast from 2/3/79 'til 1/26/80, 52 episodes. Cast: Hiroki Tanioka as Den Masao (Battle Japan), Yuh-ei Kurachi as Kyosuke Shira, Takeshi Ito as Kensaku Shiraiishi, Kenji Ono as Shiro Nagisa, Maria Nagisa as Naomi Ogi, Ghyonosuke Azuma as General Tetsuzan, Character designs by Saki Hijiiri. Special effects by Nobuo Yajima.

BATTLE FEVER J is alive with costumes, miniatures, explosions, and monsters. For the first time in a Toei Sentai, there are even giant monsters! They were added so that the heroic team's giant robot would have something to fight. The idea



of a live action Shogun Warrior dates back to 1977 with Toei's DAI TETSUJIN 17, basically an up to date rip off of JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT (see page 13). In the 1978, Toei did it again in their SPIDERMAN TV show. But the Shogun Warrior in this one is better designed than those in their two predecessors, although BATTLE FEVER J's robot owes it all to the revolutionary one in SPIDERMAN, a ground breaking show in that it was the first J.A.C. action series with a giant robot. The robot in BATTLE FEVER J is called Battle Fever Robo, and has the ability to turn into a giant air vehicle called the Battle Shark, controlled by the human-size heroes. And this series came out BEFORE rip offs like THE TRANSFORMERS!!

JACKERS

35 half-an-hour episodes

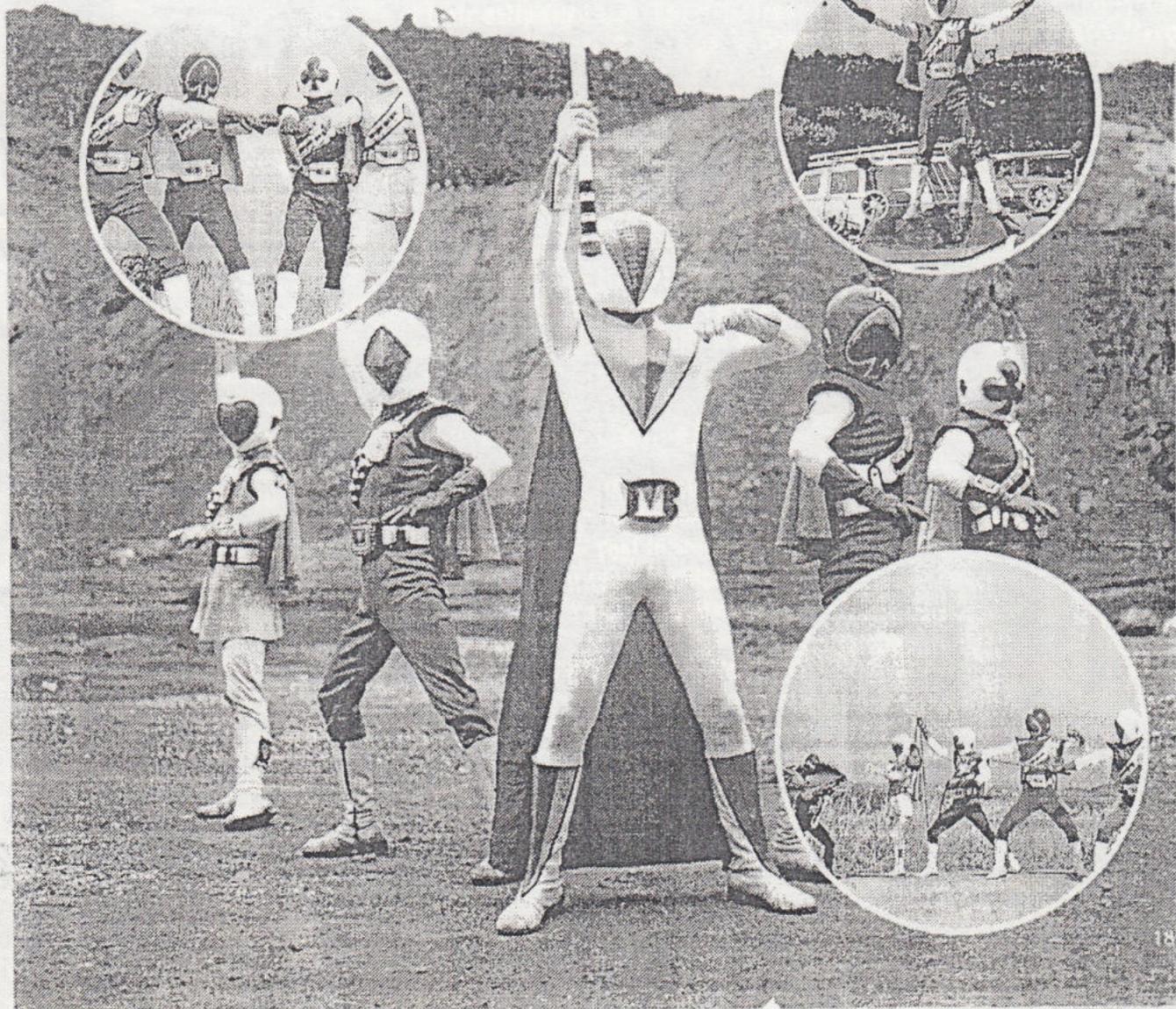
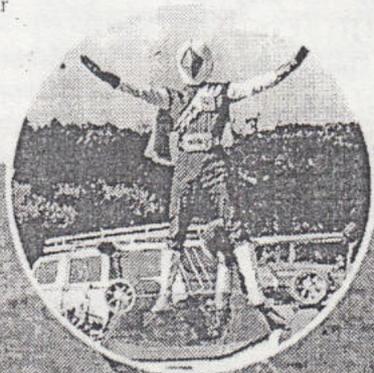
Strange incidents occur in quick succession without leaving the slightest clue as to their causes. A man is suddenly missing, a large amount of money disappears from a bank, a tanker is lost at sea.

Superintendent Kujirai of the International Bureau of Scientific Investigation is instructed by New York headquarters to organize a special troop of cyborgs. It becomes known that a wicked syndicate called "The Crime" is behind the bizarre occurrences. Their power covers the world and they leave no traces.

Goro Sakurai, an Olympic

modern pentathlon champion, at first refuses to become a cyborg, but changes his mind after witnessing "The Crime's" attack on the Bank of Japan. He wears his symbol of a spade. Other volunteers are Higashi (diamond), a hustler; policewoman Karen (heart), whose father lost his life at the hands of "The Crime", and Daichi (clover), a marine scientist, who is endowed with life as a cyborg after his death during a submarine investigation.

The four cyborgs — each with a card symbol — challenge "The Crime" with their mighty power and secret weapons.



battle of the giants only occurs at the end of each episode), the hero against henchmen format is not unlike that in the other Sentais. But as always, it's done more efficiently, there is definite improvement. For one thing, the Japan Action Club has been payed to do more than just supply stuntmen for the costumed fights. Kenji Ohba, one of J.A.C.'s most talented martial artists made his debut in this revolutionary addition to the



on July 1, 1979 and also began to play a main villain in BATTLE FEVER J. There's another wellknown (though not to me) actor in this program, the elderly Azuma Chiyonosuke, who was known by older audiences as an actor in chanbara (more on chanbara next issue) films. Stuntman & martial arts master Kazo Shimbodi made his 'Super Sentai' debut in this program, playing the character Battle Japan. Kazo is a costumed actor always being the one to wear the superhero costume, although he occasionally makes guest appearances in smaller roles in some programs, where his face is visible. As a child, this valuable performer grew up on the early stuff like GEKKO KAMEN. Kazo proved himself in BATTLE FEVER J to be so efficient at superhero gesturing, fighting and stuntwork that he has played the leading red hero in every super sentai since BATTLE FEVER J, anything from Denzi Red in Denziman to Red Turbo in TURBO RANGER. His earlier roles include the costumed forms of Kamen Rider Amazon and Dai Tetsujin 1-7.

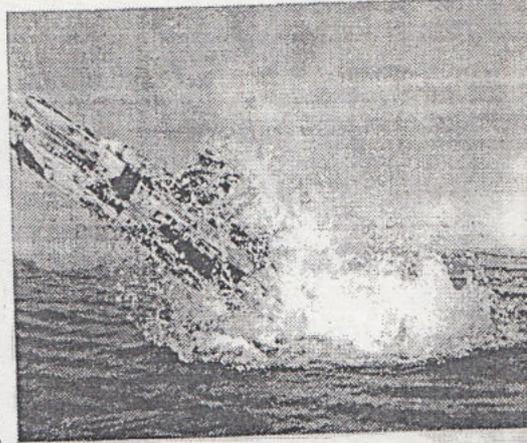
Sentai programs. He plays only one of five heroes in BATTLE FEVER J, and stands out as the most skillful of them, as Battle Kenya. The guy who played Asuka (Midori Ranger) in GORANGERS returns to play Battle Cossack. Another familiar face is that of Maki Ueda. In 1976, Maki Ueda and Jackie Sato formed a Pink Lady clone called the Beauty Pair. But in 1979, personality conflicts arose between the two members of this disco duo. Both had some wrestling skill, so they agreed to fight each other in the WWWA World Woman's Singles Match in Japan, in May of 1979. The loser would have to leave show business. The judges declared that Jackie Sato had won, after 50 minutes of fighting. But a couple months later, Maki changed her mind about retiring, and re-

Producer & writer Tohru Hiriyama got fed up with repetitious superheroes at about the same year that BATTLE FEVER J was produced. So the new producer of BATTLE FEVER J and its rip offs is Susumi Yoshikawa, who is far more cooperative with toy companies and general repetition. However, in the way of creativity, BATTLE FEVER J holds its own. The script:

The five members of Battle Fever J are all of Japanese decent, though each was born in a different country. Their names reflect their place of birth: Battle France, Battle Kenya (Kenji Ohba), Battle Japan (their leader of course), Battle Kossack (Russian despite Egyptian headwear), and Miss America (female, naturally). I guess they called her that instead of Battle America to make fun of America's stupid obsession with beauty pageants. Each member has more than just the usual post Kamen Rider superhero pose, they all do ridiculous dance movements. The four male heroes' obligatory dance steps are ethnic, while Ms. America's moves are that of a go-go dancer, I suppose. The dance clips are just about the most stupid things in the show, but there are other childish things in BATTLE FEVER J which are equally stupid. Getting back to the



Beauty Pair singing in the ring



plot, the International fivesome is at war with a gang of Earthly monsters called Egos. These assholes always create another monster who fights the heroes, the heroes kill him in a traditional way (like DENZIMAN, with a cannon), so then the monster reincarnates to the form of a giant in a matter of seconds, and then Battle Fever J's Battle Shark becomes the Battle Fever Robo, who battles the monster as the heroes remain inside, at the controls. It is during this traditional overdone fight that the episodic monster die and explode.

DENSHI SENTA DENZIMAN ("Electronic Fighting Team Denziman")
Toei etc., 51 episodes lasting from 2/2/80 until 1/31/81, Produced by Akori Watanabe, Scripted by Shozo Uehara, Directed by Koichi Takemoto, Cast: Akagi Ippei (Denzi Red) played by Shinichi Yukimura, Daigo Oonu (Denzi Blue): Kenji Ohba, Jun Kiyama (Denzi Yellow): Iechi Tasuyama, Tatsuya Midorikawa (Denzi Green): Naoya Uchida, Takira Momoi (Denzi Pink)



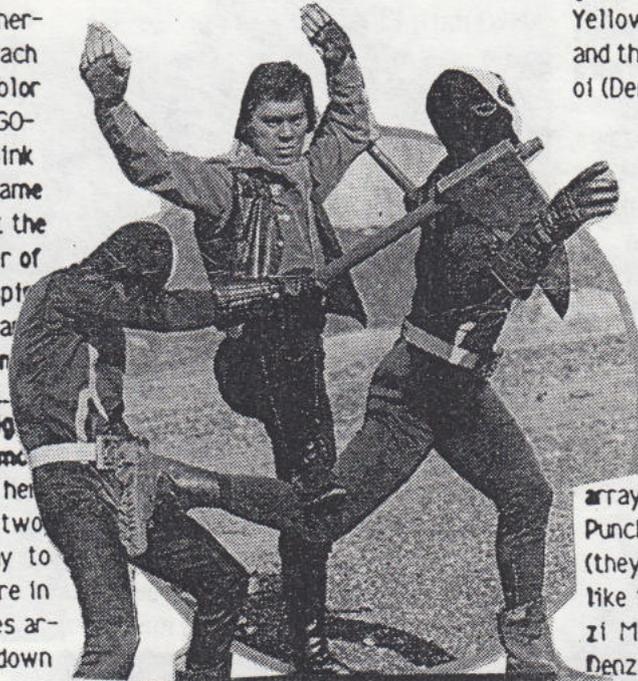
Akira Koizumi, Hedorian Jiyou: Machiko Soba, Hedora Shogun: Kosuke Kayama, Miralle Rikawa, Kera: Chiaki Kojo, Bandikita: Kiri Oma, Narrator: Tohru Ohira

With DENZIMAN, it seemed that Toei decided to remake the old GORANGERS format from 1974, dealing with five heroes who look basically the same as each other except for each is a different color and a slightly different mask. Like GORANGERS, the red one leads and the pink one is female. From BATTLE FEVER J came the idea of a heroic giant robot that the five heroes control. And the remainder of DENZIMAN is also BATTLE FEVER J inspired, since each episode for both programs has a lot of FX, and goes a little something like this.....

Villains create monster, monster assigned to a diabolic mission, interaction among villains, villains strike somewhere, heroes arrive and there's a fight or two, heroes later try to think of a way to thwart plans of villains, villains are in the act of doing another crime, heroes arrive (again) for a climactic showdown and say their names and do fancy poses, heroes fight henchmen then kill the episodic guest villain, dead monster immediately comes back to life as an enormous giant, heroes' spaceship becomes a Transformer robot, heroic robot battles and destroys giant monster, giant monster explodes, then usually there's footage of human characters goofing off. Just before a freeze frame. That format is prevalent in all the Sentais from 1979 - 1989, though there are minor variations from show to show. The outlandishness of the villains is also derivative of those in BATTLE FEVER J, but I think many villainous designs in DENZIMAN are imitations of the baddies in Shaw Brothers' INFRAMAN (Hong Kong; 1975) movie, which in turn, was an unapologetic imitation of Japanese heroes, especially INAZUMAN (Toei; 1973-'74). As for DENZIMAN, this was the beginning of

something really big. The DENZIMAN format would be repeated over and over again for at least ten years. The name was to be changed each following year, but that was about all. Starting with BATTLE FEVER J, all these programs were to be called 'Super Sentai,' and the ratings for every series relentlessly defeated its competition. DENZIMAN is the most influential among the Super Sentais. The upcoming repetition in these succeeding programs is largely a result of the producer Susumi Yoshikawa, who lacks the creativity of his predecessor Tohru Yoshiyama.

FX in DENZIMAN are even better than



Kenji Ohba as Daigoro Ouno (Denzi Blue)!

In BATTLE FEVER J. Well what do you expect? You think they'll get worse each year? Another improvement is the martial arts choreography, again supplied by J.A.C., who are responsible for staging all the action in all the Sentai programs. Fans couldn't get enough of Kenji Ohba in BATTLE FEVER J, so now he's back for an encore!! Again, Ohba is cast as one of five heroes.

So what's the story?

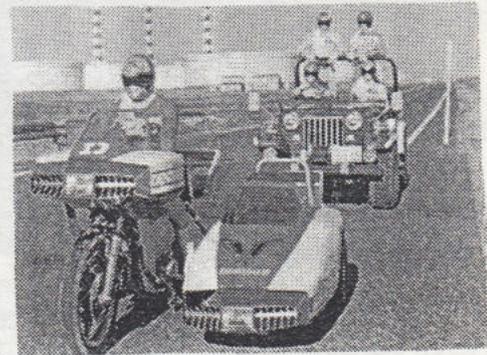
It's happening again! More monstrous monsters are hassling Japan's latest team of bionic saviors. The villains this week appear to be genetic mutations, spawned from pollution, but they are from outer space. They're called Vader (Beda), and the leader is a queen called Hedorian Jiyowau, and there's a tough warrior called Hedora



Shogun (I think that means Pollution Chief). Two other main villains are two ladies called Kera and Mira. As for the good guys, there are five of them: leader Ippei Akagi (Denzi Red), Kenji Ohba as Daigoro Ouno (Denzi Blue), Jun Kiyama (Denzi Yellow), Tatsuya Midorikawa (Denzi Green), and the obligatory pink female Akira Momoi (Denzi Pink). They've got an amazing



array of powers and weapons like: Denzi Punch (heavy steel gloves), Denzi Dash (they run really fast, but in slow motion, like in THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN), Denzi Miran (both a sword & boomerang), Denzi Machine (motorcycle), Denzi Baggi (Jeep), Denzi Tiger (an enormous land vehicle that becomes Dai Denzin), and Dai Denzin (an enormous robot that becomes Denzi Tiger). Another supporting hero who aids the team is a robotic dog.



サンバルカン

SUN VULCAN

("Tiayo Sentai San Barucan")

lasting from 2/2/81 until 1/31/82, consisting of 51 episodes, CAST: Ryunosuke



Kawasaki as Owashi (Vulcan Eagle), Takayuki Godai as Tobiha (Vulcan Eagle), Kimiya Sugi as Sanejima (Vulcan Shark), Asao Kobayashi as Sao Kyowa, Shin Kira as Arashi Yama, Misao Miyamoto as Misao Arashiyama, Sakao Yamada as Yazawa, Machiko Soba as Hedorian Jyo, Yukie Karawa as Amazon Killer, Takako Chikawa as Zerowan, Narrator: Asuko Hirako

Many of the superhero designs of this one come from (believe it or not) the Japanese branch of Marvel Comics! But it's not at all evident, since all three heroes look more like the Denzimen than any Am-



erican comic hero. This early in the career of 'Super Sentai legacy,' excessive repetition hadn't set in entirely. That's why SUN VULCAN has only three heroes instead of the usual five. But otherwise, SUN VULCAN is a complete mimickry of DENZIMAN. Producer Susumi Yoshikawa has found a highly profitable format which is the same thing each year.

Unlike DENZIMAN, I have enough of SUN VULCAN on tape to know that the series is excellent. I love SUN VULCAN, and it's one of my favorites from the Sentais. Kenji Ohba is not in this program, DENZIMAN was his final Super Sentai. But the three actors (actually, it's four, since the first actor to play Vulcan Eagle quit during the course of the series, requiring a replacement) portraying the heroes suffice, although little is known about them. From what I've seen, most of the karate duels are done just with the heroes in costumed form. That suits me fine, since



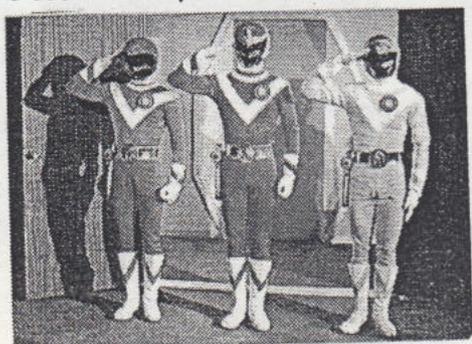
the sensational J.A.C. stuntmen wearing the costumes are sensational, performing the battles better than average. It's a certainty that there were numerous injuries caused while filming the marvelous battles in SUN VULCAN. With only three heroes, less time needs to be spent in transitions from hero to hero; during fights (the hero in foreground wastes henchmen in foreground, then camera zooms into background to show other hero joining same). So the duels in SUN VULCAN come off as much longer than those in most other Super Sentais.

Once upon a time there were three superheroes called Sun Vulcan, an astronaut who becomes the red leader, Vulcan Eagle, an occasional guitar player who is the aquatic blue member called Vulcan Shark, and a yellow member accidentally named Vulcan Panther, even though he's a cheetah. The three are commanded by a general played by the late Kazuya Aoyama, best known for his role as Nanbara the Interpol agent in GODZILLA VS. MECHA-GODZILLA. The team has a number of vehicles and weapons, including the mandatory robot, called Vulcan Robot. As

always, the robot isn't formed until the end of each episode to combat the episode's guest monster, who has returned to life and is now a giant (he was human-size through out the rest of the episode until the heroes killed him). The way the three heroes kill the episodic monsters (before they return as enormous zombies) is by using a ritual not unlike the old 'Goranger Storm Attack.' Rather than using a cannon like in JACKERS or BATTLE FEVER J. Like in GORANGERS, our heroes use a fatal method involving a football that they each kick, and it becomes a spiked ball during the process. There are other evil invaders, like main villains. The leader is the same bitch that the Denzimen failed to kill in the previous program, Hedorian Jyoo. Her old army Vader was defeated so now she's joined new army of cyborgs, called Black Maguma. Another main leader of Black Maguma is the Darth vader-like Hell Satan. (Full title: 'Hell Sa-

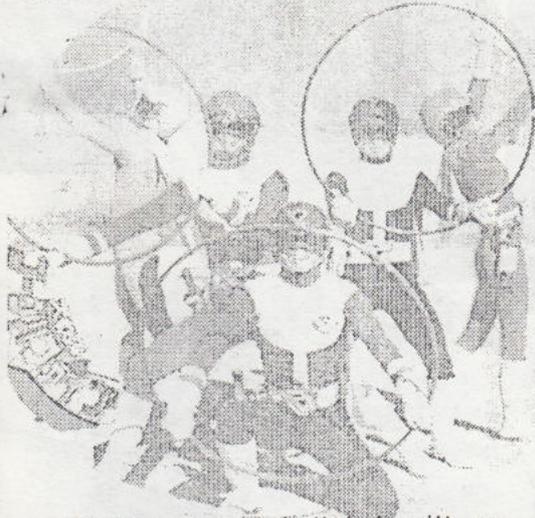


tan Eutou.' There's a corrupt team of sexually appealing females called the Zero Girls consisting of four members. Starting on episode 23, a new character was introduced; another female called Amazon Killer, who dies on episode 50. Amazon Killer is also from Vader, but came to assist Black Magma at the request of Hedorian Jyoo. From a planet called Galaxy Tribe came a robot called Inazuma Ginga, who occasionally helps the members of Black Magma, despite inner-villain rivalries and power struggles (Inazuma Ginga even decapitates Hell Satan during a duel in one episode!).



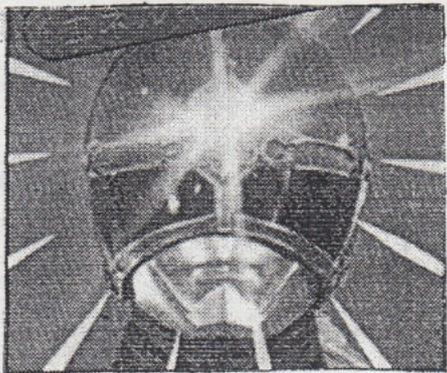
GOGGLE V

("Dai sentai Goguru V") 50 episodes, broadcast from 2/6/82 to 1/29/83



Do you ever get irritated with my choice of how I interpret names of these wierd programs? Some times I call them by their original Japanese pronunciation (i.e. Gyaban Instead of 'Gavan'), sometimes I use American pronunciation (i.e. Ultraman Instead of Urutoraman). I know it gets confusing but it all stems from how I verbally pronounce the programs' titles. Now, for this series, I verbally pronounce it "Goguru 5," like the Japanese. But as for writing, I spell it with its misstranslated English equivalent, "Goggle 5." But even though I spell it this Innacurate way, it is only pronounced "Goguru 5," to the best of my knowledge. By the way, the V in the TV program's graphic title is Roman numeral 5, and always pronounced 'five,' or 'fuaibu' as them Japanese over in Japan say it.

GOGGLE V goes back to the five hero format, featuring a pink female, unlike SUN VULCAN. Everything else in GOGGLE V is the same as both DENZIMAN and SUN VULCAN; you've got your alien invaders, your monsters who get reincarnated as giants, your vehicle that becomes the giant robot, your henchmen, your miniat-ures, and your karate.



Stuntman Junichi Haruta makes his superhero debut in GOGGLE V, as Goggle Black. This fantastic stuntman helped the ratings, since a rival series at the time was Kenji Ohba's UCHI KEIJI GYABAN (but both programs aired on different days), broadcast the same year. All the fighters in GOGGLE V are sufficient, but Junichi Haruta is incredible. Again, I'm sure the fightscenes in GOGGLE V ended up with a lot of costumed stuntmen taken to the hospital. Almost as good as the fights in GOGGLE V are its special effects. The FX include abundant amounts of super-impositions, explosions, minifatures, elaborate sets and costumes. These programs may be outlandish, outrageous, and flamboyant, but they're in no way cheap! Even the monster costumes must cost a fortune to make on a weekly basis, they're made of good quality latex and foam rubber, not to mention great paint and dyes. But some of these bulky costumes appear silly, cartoon like. Yet many costumes are designed quite brilliantly. The designs of the heroic robot and the vehicle he transforms into look as fake as the line of toys these programs inspire, and that's the whole idea. Producer Tohru Hiriyama has gotten these programs at the mercy of toy manufacturers like Bandai.



The villains this time are called Deathdark, commanded by a one-eyed demon called Dabu. Other regular characters affiliated with Deathdark include Deathkiller Shogun and an appetizing female called Mazuruka. But these villains are no match for the six heroes: Goguru Red (leader), Goguru Black (played by Junichi Haruta), Goguru Pink (female), Goguru Yellow, Goguru Blue, and Goguru Robot. These Goguru heroes had a base located underneath Korakuen Baseball Stadium, that is until episode # 48 when Mazuruka snuck in and destroyed the headquarters with a bomb, at her own sacrifice. They relocated to a cave that nearly every Japanese superhero has visited at one time or another (this same cave appears in so many TV shows,



it makes me wonder if this is the only cave in Japan). The Goguru V heroes have help from a group of little kids who serve as dispatchers, communications officers, and computer technicians on a high-tech set and wear blue uniforms looking like typical sci-fi attire (STAR TREK, SPACE 1999, etc.). These irritating kids make GOGGLE V very childish, yet the quality of the battles makes up for it.

Junichi Haruta

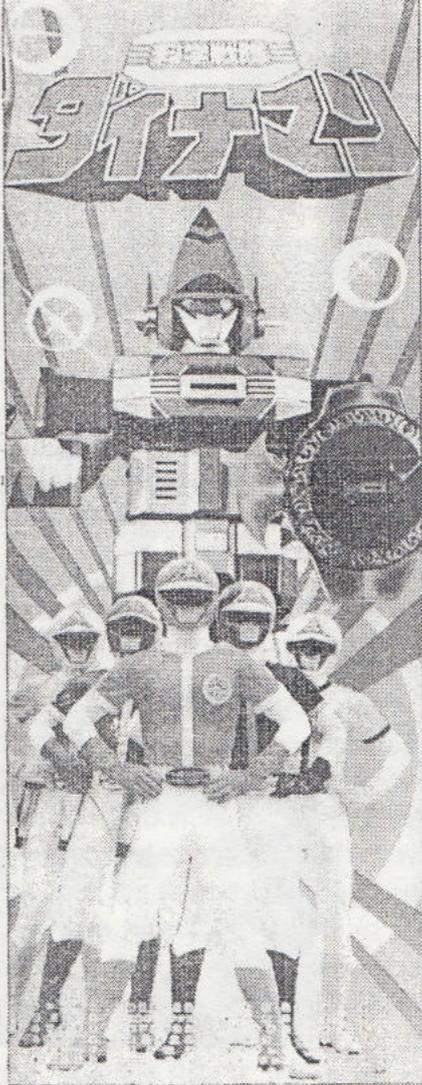


DYNAMAN

("Kaga K Sentai Dynamaman") 2/5/83 to 1/28/84, 51 episodes, Producer: Susumi Hiriyama, Narrator: Toru Ohira, Producer: Hatori, Action Director: Junji Yamaoka of JAC, Cast: Satoshi Okita as Dyna Red, Junichi Haruta as Dyna Black, Koji Unagi as Dyna Blue, Tokita Sugura as Dyna Yellow, Sayoko Hagibara as Dyna Pink, Junji Shimada as Professor Hisataro Yumeno, Milton Ishibashi as Telou Aton, Mariko Kano as Oujyo Kimira, Hayashi Kenju as Oujji Megido

DYNAMAN is a landmark Sentai addition for numerous reasons. One reason is because it was the only Sentai ever released to America (see page 14 for details). Another reason is because it was Junichi Haruta's final appearance in a Sentai (he went on to do other programs), but the worst tragedy was that after this, no Sentai program would have the same kind of wild & crazy karate stunts. DYNAMAN represents the last of a dying breed.

The FX are also quite enjoyable, but where DYNAMAN failed was in its humor.



My comments on the monster costumes for this show are basically the same as my comments on those in GOGGLE V. In fact, those same statements are the same for all the episodic monsters in each and every Super Sentai program.

Okay, it's like this: A son-of-a-bitch called Aton (played by Masashi Ishibashi) has left his subterranean empire called Jyashinka, in favor of conquering Japan. Along with Ka (fire) Shogun, Megido and the ultra sexy princess Kimira, they're attempting to outdo each other in rank, involving the usual inter-villain conflicts that accompany each series. Somehow, their militaristic power is based on how many tails they have, so they occasionally try new methods to grow extra tails. Yet



the heroic Dynamen always defeat the Jyashinkans, and they don't have ANY tails!!!!!! The leader Dyna Red is okay, and so is Dyna Yellow, a comedic cowboy. Dyna Black is played by the magnificent Junichi Haruta, so naturally Dyna Black is outstanding. Other JAC member Koji Unagi isn't half bad either, who plays Dyna Blue. But aside from his appearance in this series, little is known of the illusive fighter. Last but not least, Dyna Pink

character development. Nearly every character acts so incredibly silly in this show, and much comes off as stupid to older fans. The infantile antics put me off, but the FX & stuntwork make up for it. These two conflicting elements could each tip the scale of the series to being either outstanding or garbage, but both factors make the series average Sentai quality.



Mari Kano (left as Princess Kimira (below).

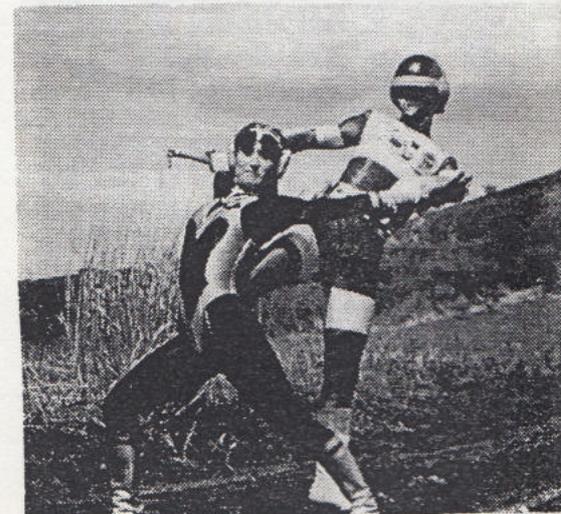


The actress Sayoko Hagibara is not a good martial artist, but with an ass like that, who cares?! According to rumors at Toei, she got her part by sleeping with producers at Toei. I would really like to be a producer at Toei, especially in the casting department.

BIOMAN

("Shodenshi Bayoman")

debut: 2/4/84, 51 episodes, ending: 1/26/85, Created by Sabura Yasuda, Music by Tatemio Yano, Action Director: Junji Yamaoka of JAC, Cast....Ryosuke Sakamoto as Red 1, Naoto Ohota as Green 2, Akito Ohsuka as Blue 3, Yuki Yajima as Yellow 4, Michiko Makino as Pink 5, Sadamaru Khoda as Dr. Man, Sirohisa Nakada as Meisun, Strongu Kongho as Monster, Yuko Asuko as Fara, and Yukari Oshima as Fara Cat





A couple of things which make BIOMAN unique from its predecessors are the names of its heroes and the climactic battles of the giants. Rather than mimicking the last couple of shows and calling the heroes Bio Red, Bio Green, etc., each of the five is referred to by color and rank number. The leader is Red 1, and the other two males are Green 2 and Blue 3. The two females are Pink 5 and Yellow 4. BIOMAN's idea of having two regular heroines would be repeated the next three years in CHANGEMAN, FLASHMAN, and MASKMAN. As for the uniqueness of the ending scenes from each episode involving the obligatory robot duel, it's done better, more realistically than those in all the other Sentai before or since. BIOMAN doesn't always have a stereotypical guest monster in each episode who gets killed and returns in humongous form. Instead, the main villains are given more to do, and they serve to take the place of the guest villains of previous programs. The villains have an enormous warehouse full of their own uniquely designed giant robots, and they release one at the end of each episode, and that makes way for the climactic confrontation of giants.



As I've mentioned many times in this issue, the FX in Japanese superhero programs just keep getting more and more efficient each year. BIOMAN's FX are better than DYNAMAN's, which are better than GOGGLE V's, which are better than SUN VULCAN's, which are better than DENZIMAN's, which are better than BATTLE FEVER J's, which are better than JACKERS, which are better than AKUMAIZA 3's which are better than GORANGERS's.

But one thing which no longer improves is the quality of martial arts action. DYNAMAN offered the first hint of FX trumping over stuntwork, by frequently interrupting the battle with a flashy FX insert. These annoying inserts usually are a close-up of a hero as he either pulls out his weapon or has it materialize out of thin air to the accompaniment of more superimpositions and explosions. But although DYNAMAN made use of this gimmick, there was still a lot more two-fisted action to make up for it. But as for BIOMAN, these disturbing FX & weapon inserts are more common. But BIOMAN still has a lot of life in its battles, though not up to par with any of the older Sentai programs.



Yukari Oshima (above left) as Fara Cat (above right).

I wish the gorgeous female JAC members Yuki Yajima and Yukari Oshima had starred in an earlier show, one which can make use of their talents. Yuki Yajima plays a motorcyclist and photographer, Yellow 4's uncostumed, human form. She is a good martial artist, but this program doesn't make wide use of that kind of action. Maybe that's why she she quit after the first nine episodes. The remainder of the series featured an equally attractive actress as a replacement. As for the yell-



TSUJI KEIJI: Above as Yellow Four (note autograph) and below (second from left) in San Francisco with Hiroshi ('Sharivan') Watari (far left), Barrie Evans (second from right), and August Ragone (far right).



ow costumed form of the character Yellow 4, the generic hero was actually played by a male JAC member, wearing fake tits and hip padding under the costume to make him look female. The actor in question is Tsuji Keiji who I met when he spent the night at my house on Christmas 1987, as part of a visit to America with old chum Hiroshi Watari. Tsuji Keiji also appeared in KUNG FU CHAN and DYNAMAN where he doubled for (amazingly) fellow JAC member Junichi Haruta. Why the limber, strong Junichi Haruta would need a stunt double is beyond me. The stunt in DYNAMAN I'm referring to involved Dyna Black falling over a waterfall and down into a pool of water with a hearty splash. Another JAC member in BIOMAN is Yukari Oshima, a sexually stimulating actress who's as deadly as she is attractive. As



the villainous Fara Cat, she gets in her share of duels with the heroes, such as a great nunchaku fight (with Yuki Yajimal) near a fountain in BIOMAN, episode #2.

Dr. Man, Fara, Fara Cat, Meisun, Monster, and the other aliens from the snowy empire Giya are pretty damn stupid, if you ask me! These robots from the North Pole think THEY can conquer Tokyo! Obviously, these galactic morons haven't learned that conquering Tokyo is impossible. After all, Jyashinka, Death Dark, Black Magma, Vader, Egos, Crime, and the Black Cross Army all failed, thwarted by the many Sentai teams that regularly protect Tokyo. Perhaps if Dr. Man and his legions attacked some place other than Japan; the superhero capitol of the world, they could win. But no, these idiotic invaders fall right for the trap, and chose to attack Tokyo (home of the Sentais), just like their predecessors. The current superhero team in defense of Tokyo this week is a group of robots from outerspace called Bioman. The leader is Red 1, and there are two males (Green 2 and Blue 3) and two females (Pink 4 and Yellow 5). They reside within Biorobo, and so does another robot called Pibo. This female robot is human-size, golden and serves as a dispatcher, not a fighter and is added for comic relief. She looks like a bug-eyed C-3PO.

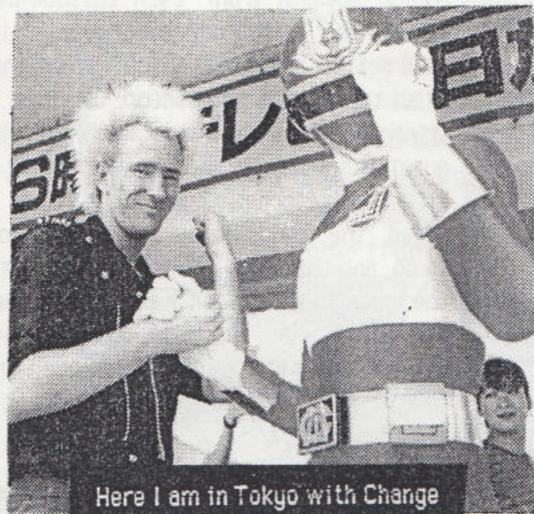
電撃戦隊チェンジマン

CHANGEMAN

("Denjeki Sentai Chenjiman") 55 episodes, lasting from 2/2/85 up until about 2/22/86

As with all the superhero programs of 1985, this one has sentimental value to me, since I watched it regularly when I lived in Japan. I enjoyed viewing it every Saturday night, and loved watching the Changeman liveness plays at Korakuen amusement park on Sundays. I even got to explore Toei studios and played around with many actual props from the show, including villain costumes and sets.

FX-wise, CHANGEMAN is a successor to BIOMAN. And since BIOMAN itself is flawless in that area and rates as a classic of its type, that is saying a lot. This is not to imply that CHANGEMAN the series is an improvement over BIOMAN, since it's generally agreed that after BIOMAN, each preceding series was inferior to the last. The only thing that gets better with each series is the FX. If you're a fan of just FX, fine. But I like many aspects of these programs, and it's these other elements that



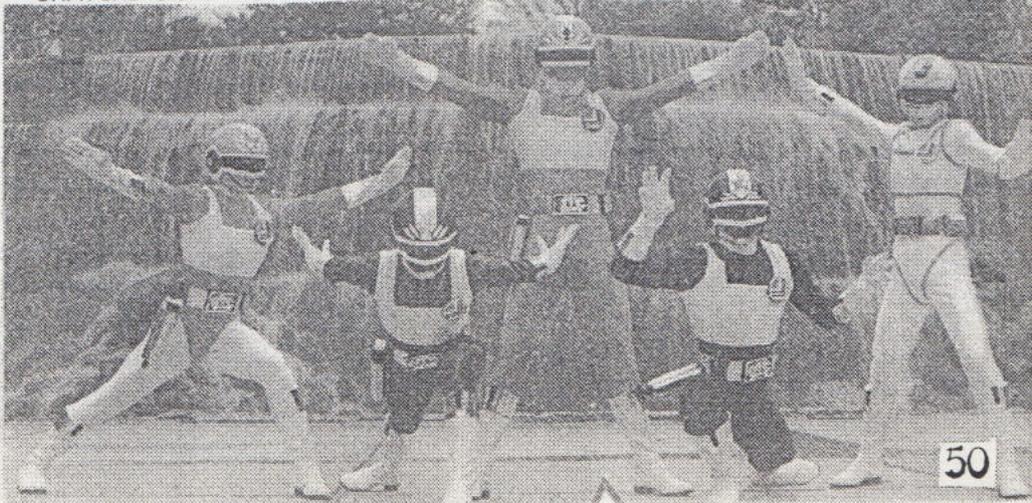
Here I am in Tokyo with Change Dragon in 1985.

are neglected a little more each year. I'm referring to inadequacies like scripts, music, character development and of course, martial arts staging. Getting back to discussing the FX in CHANGEMAN, I must say that I like all the costumes for the episodic monsters and main villains. The only laudable character is a short, pudgy reptilian villain called Geta, but his humorous look is intentional. Many of the other monsters are intentionally gross. Inspired by what I call gwey monster movies like ALIEN, THE KINDRED, THE SEVENTH CURSE, and the remakes of INVASION OF THE BODY-SNATCHERS and THE THING.



One thing in CHANGEMAN's favor is a unique idea that a few of the villains eventually defect from the evil side and prefer the company of the heroes. There are individualities of these heroes as well. For the first time, one hero has a white uniform, as opposed to green or yellow. Like BIOMAN, there are two females instead of just one.

By now you know that literally every Sentai program involves villains trying to conquer the Earth, and how the current superhero team always thwarts their efforts. In this case, the bad guys are polluted mutants from an alien planet called Gozuma. Their sinister members have names like Giruku and Anames. There's even a female dubbed with a masculine voice, called Shima. Their episodic monsters do not reincarnate into giants by themselves, they get high with a little help from their friend. The friend is an odd, one-eyed monster called Giyodal. After Changeman uses their post-JACKERS cannon to kill each episodic monster, Giyodal makes a giant replica of that exploded villain, and then it's time for Change Robot to go into action. Bazu is the king of Gozuma. The five heroes who oppose Gozuma each have a uniform color, as always, but are not named according to color. Their names are Change Dragon

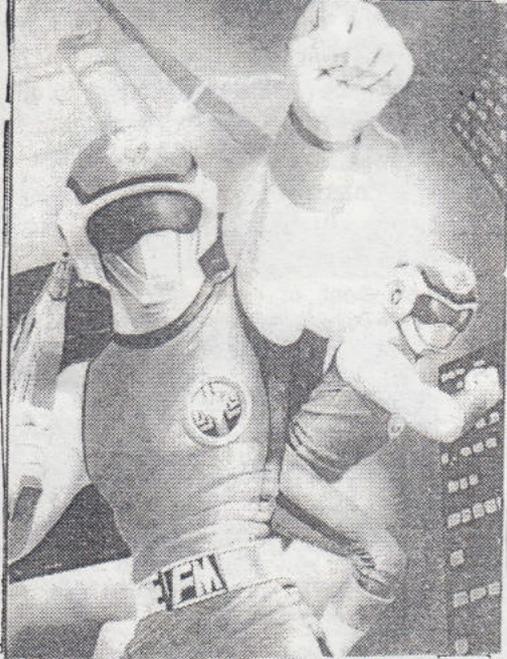


(red leader Hikuyu Tsurusa when not in costume), Change Griffon (black; Hayate Shiyou), Change Pegasus (blue; Yuuma Oozawa), and two females: Change Mermaid (white; Sayaka Nagisa), and Change Phoenix (pink; Mai Tsubasa). The team has the usual weapons like swords and guns, plus more of the same vehicles like motorcycles, a jeep, airships that combine with a land tank to form a giant Transformer robot, and so on and so forth. The human characters (heroes not in their costumes) are young soldiers at a military academy, always undergoing training depicting simulated combat.

FLASHMAN

("Sho Shinsei Flashman")

50 episodes, from 3/1/87 to 2/21/88



What can I say that I have not said before? The FX are the best yet, but everything else is the worst yet. My main problem with FLASHMAN is that it was



made at a time when I was losing faith in the Sentai programs. Since then, I've come to expect very little from the newest Super Sentais. With Flashman (as well as CHANGEMEN), I still had some hope that the Sentai Legacy would pick up again, and that one new series would offer a comeback, a step back in the right direction. Yet as I watched FLASHMAN and MASKMAN, I kept finding myself saying 'why must these new Japanese TV shows always disappoint me?'

Believe it or not, I really do like ALL the Super Sentai programs. I do prefer the earlier ones, but even these newer ones like FLASHMAN have something to offer and are at least worth checking out. All the programs are entertaining as opposed to boring, which is all that really counts. The series is fun, and that's what it's all about.

Uniqueness in the favor of FLASHMAN includes the helmets of the five heroes. They tend to stand out from the designs of characters of other superhero teams because of white round objects on each half of their head resembling ears. Also, the human

forms of these five heroes sometimes wear wierd, futuristic attire as well.

Japan is in the middle of a battle between the members of Dyna, I mean Blom, I mean Change, I mean Flashman and a group of assholes called Mesu, from outerspace. The five heroes this minute are Jin (Red Flash), Dai (Green Flash), Bun (Blue Flash), Sara (Yellow Flash), and Ru (Pink Flash). These five are aided by the robot called Magu, an R2D2 with hands & legs. There are 2 other robots who aid Flashman called Titan Boy and Great Titan. Both are obligatory giants who only appear at the end of each episode, although FLASHMAN is the only case I know of where the team has not one, but two giant robots at their disposal. I tend to think that maybe one was destroyed halfway through the series and the other came in as a replacement. The nasties from Mesu include the usual scary beasts like Ra Deus, & Ri Kefuren as well as the usual shapely females like Nefurus (Sayoko Hagibara from DYNAMAN) and a couple others. This time, the evil gals don't look like the usual death rockers and road warriors, but cat-like wild women.

MASKMAN

("Hikari Sentai Maskman")

51 episodes, 2/28/87 to 2/29/88

Worse than FLASHMAN, but better than LIVEMAN. I haven't seen a lot of this remake, and hopefully never will. By the time this loser came out, it was generally agreed that the disappointing Sentais had gone to the kiddies, which they were meant for originally. The generation of children who enjoyed FLASHMAN and watched it regularly have hazey memories of CHANGEMAN, and they were being conceived when DYNAMAN aired. But hyper active Japanese schoolboys are bad critics anyway, it's the avid diehard adult

In Japan (1987), Red Flash met the one and only Barrie Evans in person!



Debut: 2/27/88

By the time this one came out, the general attitude was "Forget about 'em!" And unlike DYNAMAN or GOGGLE V, LIVEMAN has been forgotten already. Things have sunken so low that no Sentai program could get worse.

Aside from the usual comments praising FX and panning choreography, I can (amazingly) find positive things to say about this otherwise terrible addition. The human characters aren't quite as infantile as those in many other Sentai shows, they are actually allowed to almost act mature on occasion. The villains generally are not as outlandish and flamboyant as the warriors in earlier programs where the baddies look like bionic road warriors from Hell. In this case, their attire looks more subtle, more European, more historical, and more humanoid. So in this way, I suppose the FX in LIVEMAN are less plentiful than those in MASKMAN, since the villain costumes make them look more like members of a gothic romantic (an offshoot of new wave) band than the

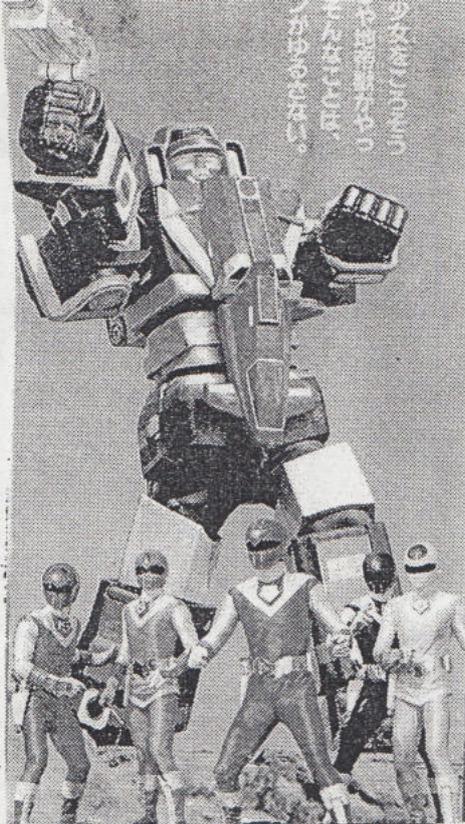


fans like myself that collect all these Sentais on tape and are familiar with all the Sentai programs over the past ten years. Even though none of the new programs have the punch of the early classics, I accept, support, view, and collect each series.

Of course, my viewpoints are opinionated. Keep in mind that I am a fan of martial arts, stuntwork and acrobats. If my main loves were super-imposed lazer FX, miniatures, costumes of monsters and robots, pyrotechnics (explosive FX), and



other FX, I would consider each new series outstanding, blowing away the previous program. Indeed, FX are just as important to a superhero program as stuntwork. But I still maintain that a little of both is needed. DYNAMAN has great, plentiful FX, though not as advanced as those in MASKMAN. Yet DYNAMAN's superior action choreography balances the



quality of the series so that it is MASKMAN's equal, at least!

Legend has it that monsters called Gyabuu were out to get us in 1987-'88. With Zeba commanding Anagumas, Anguramon and the whole menagerie opposing us, it's a damn good thing the heroic fivesome Maskman are here! It makes a fella feel good to know they're out there looking out for us. Our god-like saviors this time are called Takeru (Red Mask), Kenta (Blue Mask), Akira (Black Mask), Momoko (probably Pink Mask), and Haruka (maybe Yellow Mask), who is one of those rarest of things, a female Japanese superhero who is butt ugly! The commander who leads the five would appear to be a master of some sort of mysticism, as he often meditates in a lotus position, sometimes even floating in midair. The character is played by veteran Toei actor Hayato Tani, who was featured regularly in 1979's NETCHU JIDAI, KEIJI HEN, and another crime drama series called GUERRILLAS SEVEN (Toei) starring Sonny Chiba.

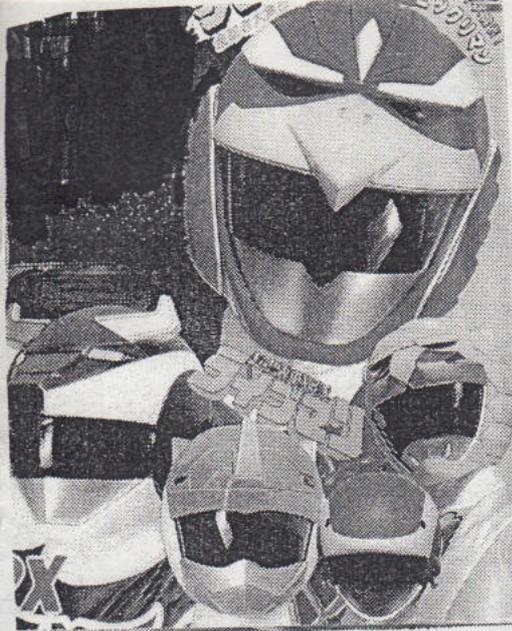


menacing caricatures who were heavies in the older, better programs.

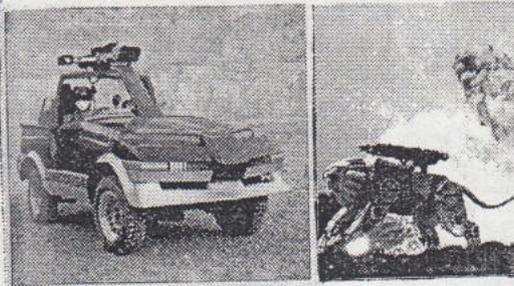
LIVEMAN started off rather unusual, having only three heroes, a concept not done since the days of SUN VULCAN, although there is no comparison. Unlike SUN VULCAN, one of the three was an attractive female. Toward the later half of the series, two new members were added, bringing the total number of heroes back up to the usual five. But still, there is only one female member, not the usual



Mizutani Yukata (left) with Hayato Tani (right) in NETCHU JIDAI KEIJI HEN.



member who traditionally never fights is a female robot called Coron, who is even more annoying than Pebo in BIOMAN, especially when she does her Michael Jackson walk. Their obligatory giant robot is of course Live Robot. He bears a striking resemblance to the heroic robot in the Japanese cartoon GO LION, shown in America as VOLTRON. In fact, one of the vehicles that transforms into Live Robot is a robot lion called Land Lion that also looks like something out of that car-



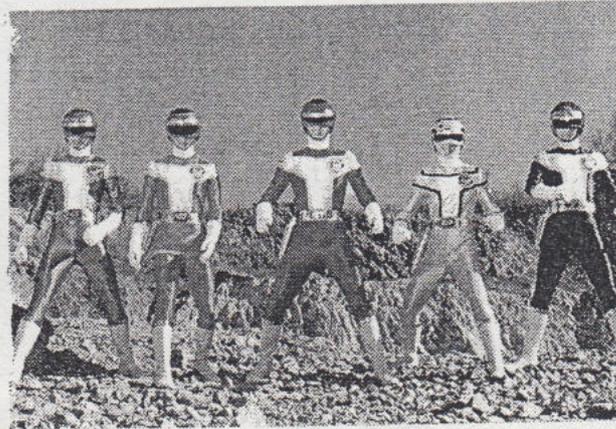
toon! The other combining vehicles that are part of Live Robot are Aqua Dolphin, Jet Falcon, and Machine Buffalo. Getting back to the colorful villains, they have names like Blasu, Gadrold Gashiyu, Dr. Kenpu, Dr. Mazenda, Dr. Obura, and Ashura. Their green, mowheekan henchmen are robots called Zinmas.

TURBO RANGER

("Kousoku Sentai Tabo Renja")

The first time I reviewed this sad 1989 series was in the previous issue of O.C. (ORIENTAL CINEMA #8, page 28). I really don't want to write about this dull piece of rotten kiwi again but what the Hell, you only live once, I'll give it a try.

The thing about TURBO RANGER is that the-ugh, well, ummm, awe nevermind, forget it, I've got better things to do with my life. ☐



GHOSTS GALORE

Producers: Mona Fong & Wong Ka Hee, Directed by Hsu Hsia, Presented by the Shaw Brothers, Starring Lo Lien

GHOST GALORE is one of those spectacular films that is so fantastic that every time I view this classic, I can not help but consider it one of my favorite movies! It has got just about everything I like: fantasy, fabulous kung fu, comedy, special effects, psychedelia, and cultural interest.

Of course, I'm a complete nut for all of Shaw Brothers' later films depicting history and colorful costumes. Any fan of THE KID WITH THE GOLDEN ARMS, SUPER NINJAS and FIVE DEADLY VENOMS will get a kick out of this one, one of the last period films to come from the now defunct Shaw studios.

Despite the title, this is much more of a fantasy than a horror film (if this movie were scary, I would have included it in my CHINESE CHILLERS column). GHOSTS GALORE is a fantasy first, probably comedy second, a kung fu adventure third, and if at all, a horror movie last. It succeeds in all these genres except for horror, possibly. Lemme show ya' what I'm a talkin' about. Fantasy: Very colorful and elaborate, involving fine FX as magical wizards battle it out. Comedy: Funny at times, silly at others. The crazy antics of our heroes is relentless and lively. Kung fu: Plentiful battles utilizing both hand to hand combat and various weapons duels. Great stunts! All these elements fit well together, highlighted by a great musical score.

The Chinese do a rather poor job at mimicking Japanese. This flick features Japanese villains, but its got a couple of good Japanese as well, to try and make it okay, no hard feelings from Japanese audiences. To me, it's painfully obvious that

the Japanese characters in the SOCIAL-ORE are typical Chinese actors wearing Japanese uniforms and carrying samurai swords. The gestures, mannerisms, kyais grunts and theatrical fighting techniques are all very Chinese, despite superficial Japanese elements like weapons and clothing (their wigs are even Chinese, without the traditional samurai cuts).

The climactic battle is a colorful work of art as a good wizard (Lo Lieh) and a bad wizard (Li Hai Sheng) face each other using magic and ethnic symbolism. Among other amusing gimmicks, the good wizard Lien Ching summons the Chinese god of wealth to aid him in battle. The evil wizard Okada responds by creating Japanese yakuza gamblers (with the usual tattoos) who win all of the god's money! Much of the remainder of the battle depicts magnificent martial arts involving two scoundrels, the film's main characters. These elaborate duels feature beautiful costumes of ancient Japanese demons against ancient Chinese characters right out of the many operas of old China. It's a beautiful combination of historical costumes and high-tech karate!

The saga starts off with two young comen, a fat one called (get this) Fat Chick (referring to the type of bird) and another whom I think is played by Chien Hsiao Hou, but I could be wrong. Anyway, the character played by Chien Hsiao Hou (?) poses as a Taoist for money and is hired by a foolish customer to eliminate a nearby female ghost. As a mock wizard, Chien Hsiao Hou (?) and Fat Chick fail and the lady spirit nearly kills them. Fortunately, a real Taoism wizard played by Lo Lieh (in a non-kung fu role) stumbles upon the situation and rescues the two bumblerers from this ghastly fate. As the wizard Lien Ching (Lo Lieh) teaches the two pranksters Taoism & magic, a Japanese girl named Junko is on the run from a gang of evil ninjas she defected from, lead by the sinister Okada (Li Hai Sheng). When she and her boyfriend (or brother?) fled to China, he was killed by Okada's ninjas. Fat Chick just happened to wander by, got in the way and was also killed in the scuffle. Junko befriends Chien Hsiao Hou's character, and with the help of Lien Ching and Fat Chick's ghost, a flamboyant duel occurs which marks the end of Okada and his magical ninjas.

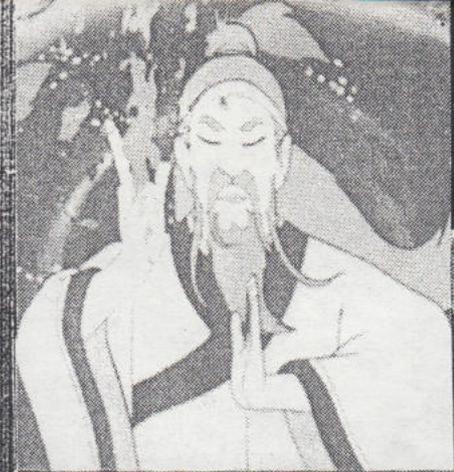
NOVEMBER 19, 1982 (s.)
12:30 2 MOVIE—Cartoon
"Chinese Gods." (Chinese; 1960) A Bruce Lee cartoon character battles mythological and earthly villains in this animated feature set during the Shana dynasty. (2 hrs.)

THE STORY OF CHINESE GODS

Producer: Chang Ying, Associate Producer: Feng Yu Li, Scriptwriter: Shen Kang, Director: Chang Chih Hui

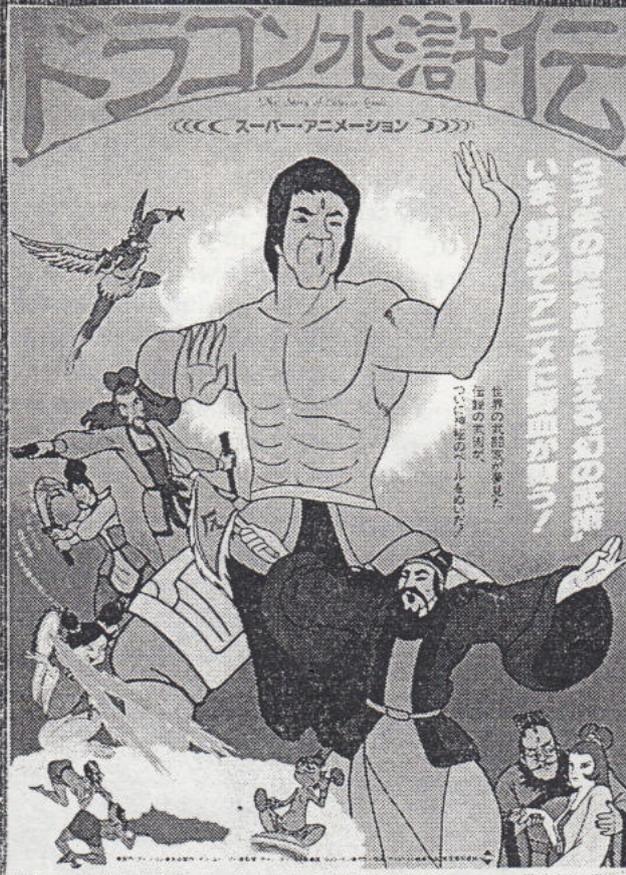
Cartoons are not something I try to keep a whole lot of in ORIENTAL CINEMA. Of course, there's always ANIRAG, but that's mainly satirical. THE STORY OF CHINESE GODS is one of those rarest of things, a Chinese cartoon. It is a fun cartoon, a feature-length combination of colorful art and addequate animation. This animated movie is very imaginative as well. Actually, I already reviewed this cartoon in O.C. #5 (1983), but back then my writing was even more naïve than it is now. Now I think I am more experienced, so I can be more informative. Also, back in 1983, I lacked any of these nifty photos I'm including to illustrate the movie this time around. And finally, the fact is, I want to continue doing this column on fantasy, which may mean an occasional repeat.

As a Chinese movie from the 1970s, it



does have its crudeness. I recognized some of its sound effects from somewhere else, just as portions of music are stock tunes from BARBARELLA. Not much can be praised about its plot either. Clearly just an excuse for numerous battles, captures, deaths and creative psychadella. The flick's later half is mostly just fights and chases, where as the first portion has a lot more dialogue and dramatic scenes among characters. During these early scenes, there are what are meant to be witty scenes where main characters preach and/or give advice based on ancient Chinese philosophy and morals. Somehow, it sounds strange when translated into English. The voice

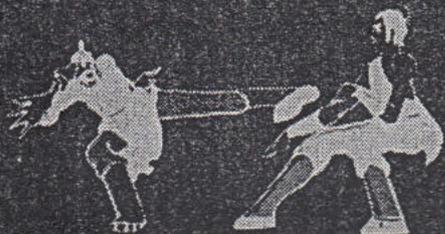
dubbing is done by those same British who were dubbing in many Chinese movies in the 1970s. For this one, there are only two "But still's". The English adaptation's voices are decent, but it is quite obvious that lots has been cut out from the English version's death scenes. Regardless, there are still a few scenes of bloodshed uncommon in cartoons, left in this American version. The English dubbing lacks the extra explaining understandably not in the Chinese version. Most of these ancient characters are wellknown in Chinese mythology so there's no need to introduce them to Chinese audiences. Two examples are Kuo Chueh and Kuo Ming, alias the Wonderful Eyes and Marvelous Ears. They were never named in the English version (both characters had their own live action movie called WOND-ERFUL EYES AND MARVELOUS



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スーパーアニメーション
8月中旬*闘魂のショー
ロード
新館オアナム
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EARS). There's a situation in the film which makes no sense in the English version unless you remember a similar incident in ALAKAZAM THE GREAT or some other Monkey King movie. The scene in question involves one of those magical jars where if you respond to your name being called, the jar (or bottle) sucks you up. Speaking of Monkey King adventures, a number of characters in CHINESE GODS also do cloud flying. For more details on Monkey King stories, see O.C.#7.

One character not based on ancient Chinese literature is an animated version of Bruce Lee who appears at about the middle of the film and from that point on becomes the main hero. The drawing looks fairly accurate despite a third eye on the forehead which can fire a ray. The character has high pitched kiais like Lee's and does many of the same kinds of kicks, punches, and gestures Lee was famous for.



Going heavily into the plot would be pointless; a waste of time and paper. I went ahead and wrote up an in-depth synopsis which was accurate down to the last detail but have decided not to use it as I would like to keep this issue under 100 pages long. So let's just say that it is a story of good vs. evil, involving a nasty dictator called King Chow out to kill the Duke of Shi with the help of various soldiers and demons, so a heroic wizard called Cheng Chi Nao gathers together a bunch of good Chinese gods who battle and eventually defeat the bad guys.

HOCUS POCUS

Presented by Golden Harvest in association with Boho Films, Producer: Samo Hung, Supervisor: Wo Ma, Directed by Chien Yue Sang

HOCUS POCUS is most certainly more of a horror movie than a fantasy, despite flamboyant elements of fantasy. The problem is, my horror column (CHINESE CHILLERS) has a waiting list, it is overflowing with Chinese horror romps just waiting to be reviewed. Fantasy flicks are a little harder to come by. And since HOCUS POCUS is almost classifiable as fantasy, that's close enough!

There are scenes of an acrobatic troupe much like the Peking Opera performing, and these stage shows are the highlight of an otherwise dark film. Where as much of the rest of this gloomy yet goofy flick is visually unclear (insufficient lighting), the opera scenes are colorful and feature outstanding acrobats. After viewing my tape of HOCUS POCUS a few times, I finally figured out why this movie is so goddamn hazy! When they transferred it onto video, they projected it onto a dirty, wrinkly screen! Nice move, assholes!

All in all, this is an enjoyable, worthwhile film. It's no classic, but it is worth watching at least four times.

It's all about a traveling group of acrobatic performers lead by Uncle Sheng (Lam Ching Ying in a pre-MR. VAMPIRE role). From here we go through one silly situation after another as Kuei keeps playing obligatory jokes on a fellow acrobat, the uptight, egotistical Chia, in films like this, traditional hoaxes are commonplace (impersonate a spook, add some bathroom humor, etc.), but in HOCUS POCUS, it's overdone to the max and this mumbo jumbo takes up nearly the whole first half of the movie. Eventually, the plot thickens when Chien Yuet Sun (the odd little actor from THE THREE AVENGERS and KUNG FU VAMPIRE BUSTER) plays a blue-skinned, mischievous ghost dubbed in a female voice. This silly, bumbling spirit has a large forehead reminiscent to that of the Klingons in STAR TREK THE NEXT GENERATION as well as whatever new Star Trek movie is out this week.

The ghost complains that his bones are buried beneath the stage and that the acrobats' performances keep him from resting in peace. So Uncle Sheng, Chia, Kuei and Pino agree to dig up the disturbed ghost's bones and bury them elsewhere. Unaware that there are actually two skeletons beneath the stage, they accidentally dig up the wrong one. The ghost whose bones were removed didn't want his skeleton to be re-located so he vows revenge. The climactic climax is a fantastically fantastic battle between this scary, vengeful ghost and the defensive, misinformed acrobats. Our heroes get into full theatrical attire (makeup, fancy antique clothes, etc.) for this symbolic duel. Before the evil spirit is destroyed, there is a lot of flashy fantasy as everyone jumps, flies, and crashes through walls. An exciting ending to an otherwise merely adequate example of Chinese fantasy.



I really don't know how many superhero movies have come out of China. Not many, since China is generally not known for its science fiction. But I suppose that technically, even a common kung fu movie could be considered a superhero movie, and so could all those fantasies dealing with the Monkey King. But as for



traditional, space-age superheroes inspired by the Japanese ones, I'll include as many as I can come across. One such film is a Chinese version of the Ultra Brothers called FEI TIEN CHIAO JEN, which I reviewed as part of my Ultra Brothers article on page 21. There is also a Korean movie I haven't seen and couldn't identify, but have included photos of it on this page. The Korean comedy would appear to be a spoof of the classic Toei series KAI-KETSU ZUBAT. Another illusive film is a Chinese rip off of KAMEN RIDER X called THE INVINCIBLE SPACE STREAKER. There are undoubtedly other similar superheroes throughout the orient, but other than the Japanese ones they're hard to find. But for now, here are all three Chinese superhero flicks I've gotten a chance to see.....

SUPER RIDERS WITH THE DEVIL
 Presented by Tong Hsing Film Co., Director: Chong Guan Lin, Starring: Tong Hai Wang, Chien Cher Wang, Judy Reynolds

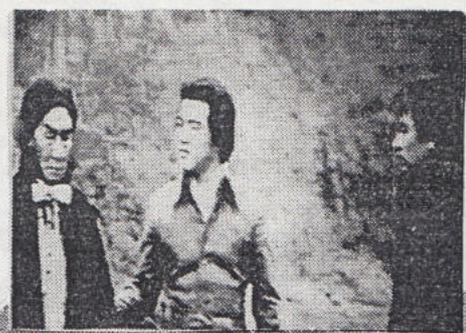
There are actually at least two Taiwanese adaptations on Toei's Kamen Rider theme. This one is the first, the second is called "閃電騎士 V3" whatever the hell that is. Since this kanji is nearly the same as that for this film except for the additional V3, the illusive sequel may very well be called SUPER RIDER V3 WITH THE DEVIL, but I'm not certain. I've never seen number two, but I know that it has Kamen Rider V3 and Ri-



derman in it. The late American monster magazine **FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND** #133 (April, 1977) featured photos from the second Chinese Kamen Rider movie, labeling it **FRANKENSTEIN'S KUNG FU MONSTER**. Most likely, this is a title for an English version of the movie, but to the best of my knowledge, it was never released to America, or any place for that matter. Of course, there's always the

possibility that the title **FRANKENSTEIN'S KUNG FU MONSTER** was another of Forrest J. Ackerman's jokes, thereby making it misinformation. Indeed, FM's photos from the mysterious sequel lacked any article or serious information to explain what the photos were about.

But as for **FRANKENSTEIN'S KUNG FU MONSTER's** prequel, it's called **SUPER RIDERS WITH THE DEVIL**, and it's a variation on the stories of the original Japanese characters. The story is a derivative remake, loosely based on the first **KAMEN RIDER** TV series (see page 26) from Japan. Only this time, the human characters are played by Chinese actors, not the original Japanese ones like Hiroshi Fujioka. The only major Japanese actor to appear in **SUPER RIDERS WITH THE DEVIL** is Sony's brother, Jiro Chiba. His scenes in this Chinese variation are stock footage from two Japanese Kamen Rider movies: **KAMEN RIDER VS SCHOCKER** (see page 28), and **KAMEN RIDER VS AMBASSADOR HELL** (see page 28 again). Jiro is of course, dubbed in Chinese. The two Chinese humans who represent Super Riders 1 & 2 (formerly Kamen Riders 1 & 2) are attired to look like Takeshi Hongo and Hayata Ichimonji (human forms of both Kamen Riders in the original TV shows), but their facial similarities are only slight. It's amusing to see shots of the two Japanese actors fighting henchmen, intercut with the two Chinese imitators doing the same. Naturally, we never do see full facial glimpses of the Japanese originals, but I could easily tell which angles were from Japan, and which were Chinese filler. Aside from already being entirely familiar with every frame of the original Japanese films, I can detect a specific difference between the theatrical fighting styles of China and Japan. In this case, both are basic, non-technical, though the Chinese do have more form & variety to their kicks and at that time, still mimicked Bruce Lee, superficially. The sound effects for all the hits, jumps, & kicks are all Japanese, taken from the original Kamen Rider films (there's a distinct difference between a punching sound effect of a Chinese punch and those in Japanese films). But verbally, all sounds like grunts, sighs, and kiats are 100% Chinese. Example of difference: When a Japanese language hero jumps up high, he yells: "Toooooooooooooooooo" (pronounced 'tow;



though extended). Generally, when a theatrical high jump occurs in a Chinese movie, the jumper yells: "Hoy," or "Hoi," extended. "Aya," is the Chinese equivalent of both 'ouch' and 'damn it,' and is more common in Chinese movies than Japanese ones.

Most of the music is from Toei's original Japanese soundtrack, though Chinese singing replaces the original songs, like the theme sung by Hiroshi Fujioka originally. The main theme song used in the opening credits was made by Chinese, and is only in this movie, not the Japanese originals. At least this Chinese version has subtitles in English, so at last, it can be known what the lyrics mean. I must say, the Chinese singer is better at pronouncing "Go, go, let's go" (for the English part of the old theme song) than the original Japanese singers.

Like I said, generally, the human characters' dramatic scenes of dialogue are Chinese, the costumed fights are stock shots from the first two theatrical Kamen Rider episodes from Japan. But there are exceptions. There are two battles done very well by the Chinese, using actual costumes of Kamen Riders (now called Super Riders) created at Toei studios, and sent to China. These two battles, (one at the beginning, one at the climax) are almost as good as the Japanese duels inserted through out the film's middle. The Chinese henchmen look a little sloppy when compared to Toei's slick originals, but the sole episodic monster on hand (a red sphinx) is an adequate costume.

Being an expert on these things, I can always detect the difference between Chinese and Japanese footage. But most other people could easily be fooled by this movie's tricky editing; thinking the whole film was done in China, by just one crew & cast. The change in film grain is hardly detectable, and is done more convincingly that the way the late Bruce Lee's **GAME OF DEATH** was edited together.

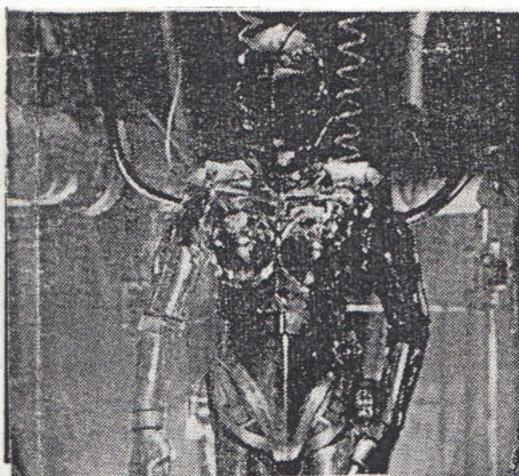
The story starts off as a low budget remake of **KAMEN RIDER** episode #1, very

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Pioneer 1, Pioneer 2, and Pioneer 3. They use these mechanical marvels to commit daring crimes. A leader of the Hero Gang is Maria (Sally Yeh) who modeled for Pioneer 2's creation, so the robot's gorgeous face is the same as Maria's. One member defected from the so-called Hero Gang and became an alcoholic bum now called Whisky (played by film director Tsui Hark who was infinitely funnier when he acted in ACES GO PLACES 2). Whisky has befriended a weapon designer called Curly (John Sham) who is a cop. Paranoid, the Hero Gang decide to kill Curly and Whisky. They send the female robot Pioneer 2 to kill them. After some cat and mouse games, one of Pioneer 2's missiles hits a water pipe and the force of the water sends her flying back and she is damaged. So our heroes repair & reprogram her so she's on their side now. Then the Hero Gang captures her, another member defects and releases her, and then the final battle occurs. All the villains including Maria die, but Pioneer 2, Curly, an obligatory heroic reporter called Zuang (Leung Chiu Wai), Whisky, and the righteous traitor played by Lam Ching Ying survive all the explosions.

INFRAMAN

Stunt coordinators: Yuan Hsiang, Tang Chia, Make Up: Wu Hsu Ching, Art Director: Johnson Tsao, Assistant Director: Li Yung Chang, Editor: Chang Hsing Lung, American Editorial Supervision: E. H. Glass, Panavision titles: Optical House, Sound: Picture Scores, English Dialogue: Peter Fernandez, Mix: Emil Neroda, Executive Producer: Peng Cheng, Produced by Runme Shaw, Directed by Hua Shan, Released by Joseph Brenner, Cast..... LI Hsiu Hsien as Raymar, Terry Liu as Princess Dragon Mom, Wang Shieh as Professor Chang, Wuan Man Tzu as daughter, Lin Wen Wei as Chu Ming

Now come on, you all remember this one, don't you!? This flick is America's most wellknown Asian hero next to Ultraman. INFRAMAN has (amazingly) gotten a lot of praise in America and is well received. With that kind of positive exposure, it's a mystery why more films and programs of its type haven't been shown here. I suppose I could have included this English dubbed fantasy in that article in this issue which covered all the live action heroes in America. But INFRAMAN is not a Japanese movie, it's a Chinese flick from Hong Kong's company of companies, the Shaw Brothers. American film critic Roger Ebert is a big (in more ways than one) fan of INFRAMAN. Though even that cow's comments are sarcastic, he likes INFRAMAN as an unintentional comedy. He includes INFRAMAN as one of his "guilty pleasures," yet I see nothing guilty about

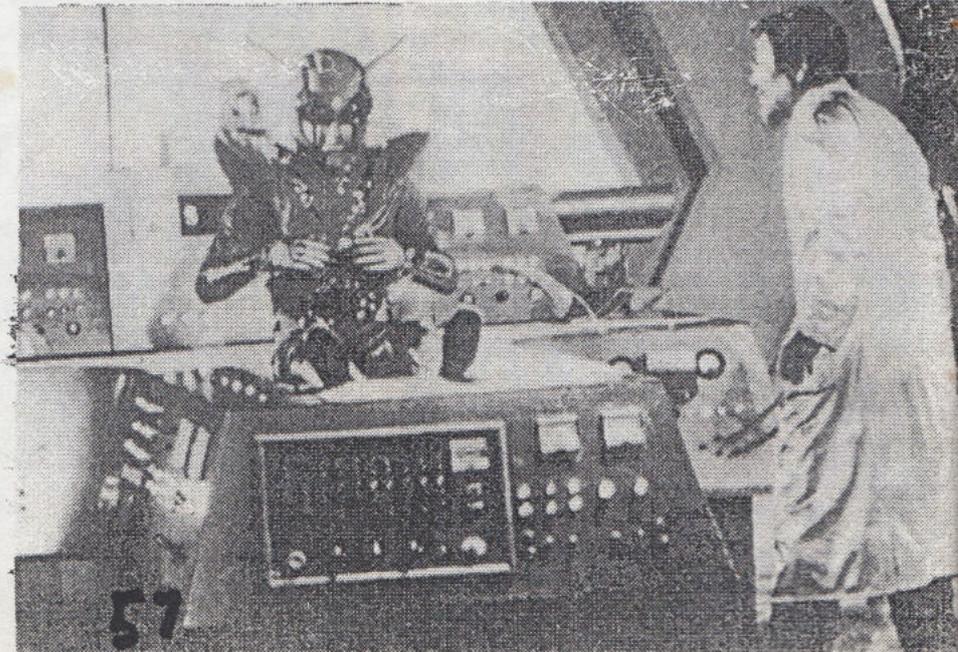


liking this magnificent work of art. Apparently, the narrowminded attitude of American critics is, why watch a unique film which combines fantasy, martial arts, sci-fi, monsters and superheroes when you can watch Merril Streep talk with an accent?! Like I said when I first reviewed INFRAMAN in ORIENTAL CINEMA

#5 (1983), I enjoy INFRAMAN seriously honestly, the way it was meant to be enjoyed. When Siskel & Ebert discussed INFRAMAN on their TV series, Ebert demonstrated his lack of knowledge on the superhero scene by claiming INFRAMAN is entirely unique, one of a kind. The existence of this issue of ORIENTAL CINEMA proves him to be dead wrong! At least Gene Siskel knew to correct him by saying something like: "Come to think of it, I think I seem to remember an earlier one called ULTRAMAN." Ebert's response: "It was probably a rip off of INFRAMAN"

But now that I mention rip offs, INFRAMAN can be considered a rip off of Japanese TV shows. It mimicks more than closely. Inframan himself looks like a combination of Kikaide, Inazuman and Kamen Rider Stronger, and the robotic hero is even accompanied by a team of scientific soldiers not unlike ULTRAMAN Science Patrol. The villainous henchmen are blatant imitations of those in the various Kamen Rider programs. In many ways INFRAMAN's big budget makes its production values higher than the weekly TV programs in Japan at the time.

Inframan himself acts differently than the average over dramatic superheroes in Japan. None of those overdone poses where the hero just stands there facing the villains, giving them a chance to sneak up on him. This formula routine is a Japanese tradition that nearly ruins credibility in the TV shows. But INFRAMAN needs no dramatic appearance; once he changes, it's time to fight the monsters! Another improvement is its daring to defy tradition. In Japan, it seems that the dead, defeated monsters always exp





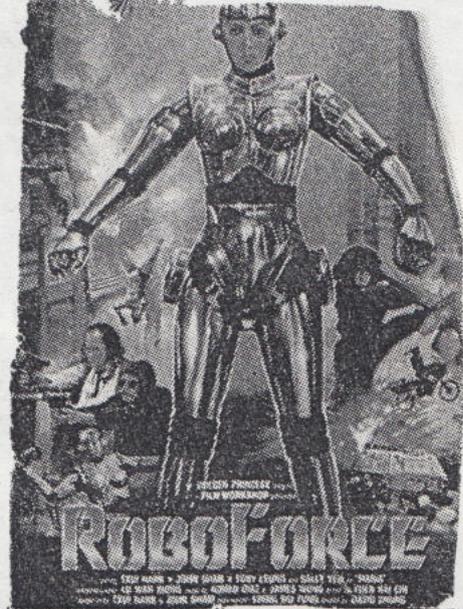
much rushed. Again, an athletic young motorcyclist is captured by monstrous villains. The kidnapped 24 year old victim is called Tong Chi Wai, and the corrupt demons are called Devil. Against his will, he's turned into the Super Rider, only its Super Rider #2, not #1. A rebellious scientist who defected from Devil helps the Chinese superhero escape. Later, Tong Chi Wai is informed there's another hero called Super Rider #1, so a meeting is arranged. The two Super Riders decide to wipe out both of Devil's bases, one in Seoul, Korea. Meanwhile, stock footage (scientists and a kid's birthday party) from KAMEN RIDER VS. SCHOCKER re-caps the whole plot involving the GX formula, which you already read about on page 28, when I reviewed the original Japanese movie. Only this time, there's English subtitles (common in Chinese films, unlike Japanese ones) so the story is easier to follow. Like the Japanese version, the situation ends up with our two heroes surrounded by monsters on the above cliffs & hills. As they traditionally yell their names, the subtitles present some funny names for these monsters, some of which are accurate, some aren't.

I LOVE MARIA (Japanese title: "Robot Force") 1988 Golden Pictures, Special Effects by Cinefex Workshop, Production Manager: Won Kar Man Production Supervisor: Claude Chung, Executive Producer: Ng Yu Kwan, Art Director: James Leung, Costume Designer: Dora Chu, Cinematographer: Lo Wan Shing, Lighting Director: Chan Kwai Wo, Original Music and Theme Song: Romeo Diaz & James Wong, Film Editor & Music Score: David Wu, Screenplay & Associate Producer: Yuen Kwai Chi, Action Director: Ching Siu Tung, Produced by Tsui Hark & John Sham, Director: Chung Chi Man, Starring..... John Sham (a.k.a. Cen Jianxun), Sally Yeh, Tsui Hark, Leung Chiu Wai (a.k.a. Liang Zhaowei), Lam Ching Ying

Talk about over rated! After all the praise given to this disappointment, I

guess my expectations were too high. So after all the positive reviews directed at this Chinese superhero flick, here's an article which offers a significant change of pace!

Boring, dull, just plain uninteresting! Definitely the Lawrence Welk of Chinese action movies. Granted, some of the robot battles may raise a few eyebrows, but that's to be expected. Yet I still say the over all movie is drab, and these robotic



duels are substandard, compared to similar confrontations involving robots in other films. These fights are also a little hard to view, since many take place at night in dark warehouses.

The FX (that's short for special effects, in case you have the IQ of pudding) aren't especially bad, but won't make anyone yell "Wo, Cool! Check out those like totally rad FX, dude" either. The heroic



female robot's costume is okay, best for its shiny look. And the fibre glass mannequins aren't bad either, though these cups were probably empty. Well, I don't know since I'm not certain exactly what actress Sally Yeh's measurements are. Does anyone out there have any photos? Anyway, the robot costume looks like a combination of C-3PO, Robocop and of course, that robot in that ancient film METROPOLIS, or whatever it's called. As for the villainous robots called Pioneer 1 & 3, these bulky criminals look more like walking insects made of Indian clay than metallic robots.

Musically, I have nothing but praise. The score is my favorite thing about I LOVE MARIA. I tend to prefer this type of poppy, rock-like soundtrack over the traditional orchestral tunes commonly found in most films.

Why was I of the impression this is an action comedy? It lacks sufficient amounts of both action and comedy, and neither element is done especially well. Of the two, the action is superior to the comedy, which isn't saying much. There's very little (if any) kung fu, as the fights are incredibly brief and lack any breathtaking stuntwork. Lam Ching Ying is the only actor in I LOVE MARIA to be known for his fighting skills, yet he has such a small part. He was much better in MY VAMPIRE, EASTERN CONDORS, and MY LUCKY STARS. Sally Yeh has a big part in this film, since she plays the title character Maria. However, she was more interesting in ACES GO PLACES 4, a superior movie.

There was quite a stupid mistake in editing or video transfer. Toward the middle of the film, there's a lackluster action sequence involving a James Bond-like chase through a forest and a rescue by motorcycle. Don't ask me why, but this whole sequence is repeated, shown twice!

Once upon a time, there was a corrupt army of villains who were called the Her Gang. They've created three robots called

lode. There's a sequence in INFRAMAN where he grows giant and stomps on a spider monster who is squashed and spurts out green blood! No firey explosion!



For what it is, INFRAMAN is a very good movie. It has a fast-paced plot, psychadelick FX, and even an early appearance by the Bruce Lee immitator called Bruce Le, but at the time he was known only as Huang Kin Lung. He's given a few chances to fight in INFRAMAN. I must say, it's funny to see him fighting monsters while wearing a silver space costume, rather than fighting more Japanese and wearing kung fu uniforms. Li Hsiu Hsien plays the heroic Raymar (Inframan). Li Hsiu Hsien was a hero in another Shaw Sf movie called GOLIATHON (a variation on King Kong) and did kung fu in THE SAVAGE FIVE along with Lin Wen-weil, who is also in INFRAMAN. One of Li Hsiu Hsien's more recent appearances was in 1987's THE CRIMINAL HUNTER, a modern action film starring Eric Tsang. The villainous She Demon is played by Lei Dana, a beauty who also appeared in IMAGE OF BRUCE LEE. Since this paragraph seems to be mainly involving toward discussing martial arts, that's what I'll write about next. Inframan's fighting technique is a combination of moves from both Chinese kung fu movies and those of Japanese superhero programs. In this way, Inframan achieves a unique fighting style all his own. The duels are nifty, even Hiroshi (Sharivan) Watari was impressed when I showed him my videotape of the film.

The story of this psychadelick adventure deals with prehistoric mutants from underground. They're an outlandish assortment of cyborgs and monsters, lead by Princess Dragon Mom. With the help of

stock footage of destruction from TIDAL WAVE, these subterranean creatures are attempting to conquer Hong Kong. Their base is within a cave that has an outside entrance decorated with spectacular dinosaur skeletons. But Professor Chang at a satellite station has turned the soldier Raymar into a red superhero called Inframan. The film depicts various confrontations between the good guys and bad guys, as the once righteous Tu Ming gets turned into a villain, the monser Nemisis tries to blow up the satellite station with a bomb, and the final situation: Professor Chang has a daughter whom the villains capture. Inframan and the other soldiers raid Dragon Mom's Island base, rescue the daughter and destroy the base and its muppet-like inhabitants. □



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NEXT ISSUE:

D.C. #10, THE PERIOD FILM ISSUE!



There is no Editorial Part Two this time, because I lost it somewhere!

*****UPDATE*****

So it's like I get this certified package in the mail, and like it really annoys me because I like recieve a notice so goddamn late that if I don't go and get it right away, it will be too late and the goddamn post office will send it back to its place of origin. And what a bad time this certified package arrived. This was back when I worked at a costume shop and in the middle of a hectic Halloween rush, so I had little or no time to myself. So I force myself to get this mysterious package (there was no indication on the notice as to where this thing came from) by waking up way too early, and drive all the way out to Fremont during the hectic 8am commute. Thinking this certified package to be bad news; like some tax agency claiming I owe them money, I go into the post office quite nervous. Fortunately, it turned out to be from some guy called S. C. Dacey who is producing HIGH CALIBRE, an American action-adventure. Considering my negative reaction to other American adventures, normally my expectation of this \$10 million-plus budget film would be quite low. However, Hong Kong martial arts star Samo Hung is directing HIGH CALIBRE, so it can't be all bad. I love many of the Chinese movies he directed, so his American directorial debut intrigues me, and I look forward to HIGH CALIBRE's debut. The main actress is Sybil Danning, best known for her work in exploitation flicks like CHAINED HEAT, REFORM SCHOOL GIRLS, and JUNGLE WARRIORS. She plays the heroin, and her villainous foe is played by Joyce Godenzi. She is a half Chinese, half Australian actress who is former Miss Hong Kong. Chinese films to her credit include GHOST SNATCHERS (see ORIENTAL CINEMA #8 for details), HUANTED ISLAND, and EASTERN CONDORS. □



科学忍者隊 ガッチャマン

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