

JFFS

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The first monthly meeting of the JFFS was held on Saturday, March 1 at the Columbia College screening room, 600 S. Michigan Ave. in downtown Chicago. Due to just last minute publicity and a two day snow-storm, the turnout was held down to an underwhelming 17 people including 5 members. The film program consisted of GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS (US version) and a 35 minute reel of coming attractions for numerous Japanese SF and fantasy films. Despite the rather disappointing turnout and some poor projection, the program was rather well-received. The screening room facilities seem tailor-made for JFFS meetings, though there are no present capabilities to show scope films as of yet. It was deemed desirable for the next few monthly meetings to be held at this location.

NEWS Osamu Tezuka will be touring the United States during the month of March for preview screening of his new animated feature PHOENIX 2772--LOVE IN THE COSMO ZONE (HINOTORI 2772--AI NO COSMO ZON). To be released this summer in Japan by Toho, American audiences are being given an opportunity to screen this film, the latest effort from Japan's foremost animator, before its official Japanese premiere.

Dr. Tezuka, creator of the popular cartoon characters "Mighty Atom" (ASTRO BOY) and "Kimba the White Lion", is scheduled to appear at screenings of PHOENIX 2772 in Chicago on March 20 at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and on March 21 at Northwestern University. Local JFFS members have been invited to attend this once-in-a-lifetime chance to meet Dr. Tezuka and to view his latest work.

For those unfamiliar with the Firebird legend, Dr. Tezuka has devoted many of his years to the production of a multi-volume comic telling of the legendary Bird of Fire and its influence on mankind throughout eternity. Specifically, this epic deals with the Phoenix's influence on the history of Japan from pre-historic times all the way into the distant future when man has reached out into the heavens. The film PHOENIX 2772 is not a new chapter in this ongoing saga, but instead represents an original story created for the screen, independent of the comic series. The story concerns a crucial time in Earth's future, as Earth's super-computers have become incapable of supplying our overcrowded planet with enough energy to sustain itself. A small band of dissident engineers who have been exiled to forced labor camps escape from their captivity and voyage into space where they encounter the awesome and beautiful Phoenix.

Familiar in this film to seasoned Tezuka fans are two characters seen in other of the animator's work. PHOENIX 2772 marks the reappearance of Hige Oyaji (bearded old man) from "Mighty Atom" and Blackjack from the comic of the same name (he also appears in "Marine Express"). According to preliminary information, PHOENIX 2772 will be a departure from precedent set in other animated features.

Each major character will have its own director supervising its actions all throughout the film. A detailed report of this film should appear in the next issue of the JFFS Newsletter.

No new developments have surfaced from Japan concerning the possibility of a new Godzilla feature film. Reports a few years ago of the possible release of a film called GODZILLA VS. THE DEVIL (alias GODZILLA VS. GARGANTUA) were discovered to be nothing but idle rumors, as Toho never had any intentions of producing any such film. There was also a rumor of a film called SPACE GODZILLA, which was never even given consideration as a film. This was a short story by Nobuhiko Ohbayashi in Japanese STARLOG, issues No. 4 and 5 which concerned the death of Godzilla and the subsequent teleportation of a robot duplicate of the King of the Monsters to a planet in deep space where it would battle an evil alien monster. This story was so unpopular in Japan that it stood no chance of ever being adapted into a film. Tomoyuki Tanaka, executive producer for Toho, related plans for a new Godzilla feature in 1980 to JFFS members Ed Godziszewski and Mike Paul during their visit to Japan in July 1979. An Associated Press story in September 1979 reconfirmed this, with a possible scenario involving a nuclear power plant disaster being mentioned. Comments from Tanaka and director Ishiro Honda in this article indicated that the film would return to a more serious approach. Since that time, however, silence has prevailed on this new feature. There was some talk that first Toho would release an anthology film called GODZILLA SHOW MOVIE before commencing production on the new film. This would have consisted mainly of film clips from the first 15 Godzilla features. However, this project has been reportedly dropped, and no further word has come to the fore about possible production dates for the new feature. Unfortunately, this seems to cast new doubt on a return of everybody's favorite giant monster to the wide screen in the near future.

NEW GAMMERA FILM--Confirmation of the rumored new Gamera film comes from member August Ragone just as this issue of the JFFS Newsletter is being put together. JFFS sources in Japan reported a few months ago that a new Gamera film would soon be released in Japan. Though Toho did acquire the rights to the Gamera character when Daiei folded in the early 1970's, it is unclear at this point who is responsible for this new effort as Daiei is back in business now. August tells us that the new film, advertised in the recent issue of TVLAND magazine, is entitled SPACE MONSTER GAMMERA (UCHU KAIJU GAMMERA). Japanese sources were not too enthusiastic about the new film. It will reportedly contain mainly stock footage from other Gamera films plus some new footage. This new footage is supposed to contain parodies of recent SF films like STAR WARS, SUPERMAN, and CE3K. Pictures in TV LAND magazine show this information to be correct. They show a spaceship that appears as a cross between a STAR WARS Y-wing and a Star Destroyer. Three space women, or Superwomen, appear with white uniforms and capes. No release date is yet known on this film.

Thanks to all members who participated in the first JFFS merchandise offering. Response was overwhelming, with nearly all items being instantly sold out. Still remaining are KAMEN RIDER BROMIDE ZUKAN and MIGHTY ATOM comics. The JFFS hopes soon to have a new offering, including die cast Cosmo Tiger space ships from SPACE CRUISER YAMATO, and soon a still offering. More on that later. We are pleased that response to the membership package has been favorable, and we hope that the JFFS will live up to everyone's expectations. A few complaints were received about the use of Third Class postage rates for the membership kits. Whenever possible, future correspondence will be sent out first class. Also, merchandise offerings will list first and third class postage rates. That's about it for the month of March...till next month.....Sayonara!

Ed Godziszewski