

JFFS

JAPANESE FANTASY FILM SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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SPECIAL REPORT: 1982 JAPAN SPECIAL EFFECTS CONVENTION II--On August 20 and 21, the second (and hopefully) annual JAPAN SPECIAL EFFECTS CONVENTION was held at the Sugunami-Kokaido convention hall in Tokyo. The event was a complete sellout as more than 2000 Japanese science fiction fans were in attendance, as well as two somewhat conspicuously out-of-place American JFFS members, Ed Godziszewski and Kyle Smith. To our slight surprise, we were the only two foreigners in attendance. Yet, despite the unfortunate circumstance of not having a translator on hand for some of the big events, a few English speaking fans did take some time out to discuss various matters with us. That, combined with what we were able to observe, allowed us to learn a good deal about the past and present state of affairs in the science fiction and fantasy field in Japan. This report on the Special Effects Convention will be divided into two sections: this newsletter will cover the various news items and

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impressions of Japanese fandom, and our next newsletter will detail the events of the convention.

Of course, the number one question on our minds was whether or not there would be a new Godzilla film as had been recently rumored by a number of different sources in Japan. Unfortunately, it is regrettable to report that news of Godzilla's resurrection was quite literally nothing more than wishful thinking. A fairly large and well-organized fan club in Japan called the Committee for Godzilla's Revival had spread the many rumors about the new Godzilla film around the country, making them sound like fact by the inclusion of statements about the purported budget (\$6 million), music by Akira Ifukube, possible effects teams, etc. All this was just what the fan club wanted to see happen--such things were never announced by Toho. According to some fans in Japan, including some of the Special Effects Convention organizers, these kinds of antics have done nothing but antagonize the people at Toho, making them all the less inclined to consider making a new monster epic. Supposedly, this fan organization has been exerting pressure on Toho to make a new Godzilla film over the last 12-18 months to the increasing irritation of Toho's top brass. The leaders of the Committee for Godzilla's Revival were characterized by the fans we met in a not at all favorable light, the kindest comment being, "They are people who know nothing about Godzilla." Unfortunately we did not meet up with any English speaking members of the Committee for Godzilla's Revival to get their side of the

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第2回 特撮大会

昭和57年8月20、21日
於 東京杉並公会堂

story, so it is difficult at this point to draw any further inferences from this information other than to report that special effects fandom in Japan is quite sharply on this topic. Further evidence of this difference in opinion came to light as most fans who expressed a negative opinion on the Committee for Godzilla's Revival also were not too interested in seeing a new Godzilla film being made. Citing the glaring lack of innovation and experimentation in the Japanese special effects techniques since the death of Eiji Tsuburaya over 12 years ago, these fans voiced the desire to see a new movie made featuring a newly designed monster which would be realized through some new special effects technique. Not that these fans dislike Godzilla--indeed they have great respect for the Godzilla series--it was just that these fans felt that Godzilla has been taken as far as possible and that now it was time to move on to something new. In connection with this, the desire for the use of new or experimental special effects techniques was quite pronounced with many leaning towards the use of Go-Motion technology which was so brilliantly used in DRAGONSLAYER (surprisingly, this film has not and will not be released in Japan). Not only did they feel that the great degree of realism inherent in new techniques was appealing, they also felt that use of such methodology was one way to establish Japanese special effects films in both the domestic and international film markets as viable commercial products. Japanese producers today feel completely unable to compete with foreign special effects films, and hence there is little inclination to finance new films requiring special effects.



Apparently the final nail in the coffin for hopes of a new Godzilla film came at one of the convention events. Toho's executive producer Tomoyuki Tanaka, who had produced nearly every Toho science fiction picture since the original GODZILLA, spoke as a guest at the convention. He gave no indication of any willingness on the part of Toho to bring Godzilla back to the big screen in a new adventure, this view having been influenced by the above mentioned factors. Also a few remarks were made regarding Mr. Tanaka's advancing age to the effect that he seems to be getting a bit senile and therefor inconsistent in his thinking. Sorry news indeed if it is true, but alas not the type of thing about which much can be done. So at least for the immediate future it would seem that hope for a new Godzilla film is virtually non-existent. No doubt further rumors will crop up from time to time, but it would appear prudent not to get too excited until some hard evidence bears them out.



One of the laments of some convention-goers was about the manner in which cel animation has come to completely dominate the current crop of science fiction and fantasy products made in Japan. Combining this with the financial burdens of live action special effects on cash-poor film companies, new special effects products are few and far between. Just how long the animation craze can last is anyone's guess, but the pervading lack of thematic creativity in animation is certain to eventually swing the pendulum back towards a more balanced mix of mediums.

The dealer's room at the Special Effects Convention provided ample evidence of high level of active Japanese special effects fandom. Of course there were the usual assortments of dealers selling older memorabilia (mostly toys and books from old superhero shows), but almost



half of the dealers present were either fans or fan organizations. Fanzines were the staple item on the table for nearly every fan-dealer, but these fanzines were much different than what we in America are accustomed to. Prices ranged anywhere from \$4.00 to \$25.00. The more extravagant fanzines to be found contained up to 230 pages and were all printed photo offset. Most were neatly hand-written since typeset Kanji characters are extremely expensive. Some fanzines had as many as 100 photos in them--not the commonly seen stills, but usually rare or behind-the-scenes stills! Among the many subjects covered by fan publications were Tsuburaya Productions' MIGHTY JACK series, Gerry Anderson's Supermarionation shows, Ishimori Productions TV superhero shows (KAMEN RIDER et. al.), ULTRAMAN, Daiei's DAI MAJIN, and of course the Toho monster and science fiction films.

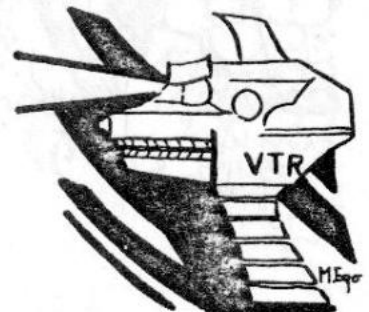
But what really made one sit up and take notice were the other kinds of items sold at the fan tables, all of professional quality. Five different sets of 10 black and white stills, 11" x 14" sized, were sold at one table. These stills were all of Toho monsters and vehicles, and almost every scene was an action photo or behind-the-scenes. A couple different kinds of Godzilla T-shirts were sold, each well-crafted and handsomely designed.

A small fan-organized company from Osaka named GENERAL PRODUCTS was on hand, selling beautifully screened T-shirts of Godzilla and King Ghidorah, as well as a Godzilla book bag. General Products also offered small replicas of Godzilla, Rodan, the Robotrix from METROPOLIS, a drone robot (Dewey) from SILENT RUNNING, and Robby the Robot of FORBIDDEN PLANET fame. Vacuum-formed model kits were available of the Science Patrol spaceship from ULTRAMAN, a laser pistol from SPACE: 1999, and a Martian War Machine from George Pal's WAR OF THE WORLDS. General Products' biggest eye opener was an 8" tall metal bust sculpture of Godzilla. Weighing a full 6kg, this stunning replica was styled after the Godzilla of GODZILLA VS. THE THING.

Kaiyodo Hobby Con, also a small fan-built company from Osaka, was on hand at the convention as well. Their wares included small models kits of Talos the bronze giant of JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS, a triad of Martian War Machines from WAR OF THE WORLDS; and the larva Mothra; large vacuum-formed model kits of the super-submarine Atragon, the S-16 submarine from ULTRA SEVEN, the Science Patrol spaceship from ULTRAMAN, and the teddy bear monster hero Buska.

The most striking items of all were two huge limited edition model kits of Baragon (FRANKENSTIEN CONQUERS THE WORLD) and Godzilla (GODZILLA VS. THE THING). Each standing nearly two feet tall, these kits were molded in a heavy polyethylene resin. These kits were incredibly detailed--easily the finest monster replicas ever made, professional or not. A huge KING KONG VS. GODZILLA-style Godzilla was also on display, but was not for sale.

All of these 3-D replicas for sale seemed typical of a fan movement which has arisen over the past couple years in Japan. These fans call themselves 3-Dians, and their accomplishments have been featured since 1980 in Saki Hijiri's fine UCHUSEN Magazine. Nearly every field of science fiction and fantasy has been the subject of a 3-Dian project--from 50's B movies to today's high-tech SF, from vintage American SF television to animated



giant robot programs. Some of the finest examples of 3-Dian talent (not for sale) were a homemade Godzilla suit, a remote controlled miniature Mazer Canon (WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS), a Kamen Rider costume, and various tv monster masks.

Next newsletter will bring a rundown on the convention events, so don't miss it!

For all the animation fans, a visit to a Japanese animation shop would prove to be an exciting experience. While in Osaka, we had the opportunity to visit a Toei Animation shop. If anyone were to have doubt about how popular animation is in Japan, such a visit would quickly dispell those doubts. Every square inch of space was filled with all manner of merchandise imaginable--comics, photonovels, sketchbooks, notepads, stationery, posters, animation cels, and lots of do-it-yourself animation materials. As seemed to be the case with merchandise available in regular department stores, animation merchandising was pretty much restricted to only those films and tv shows which were currently running at the time. During August, this included SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA, MY YOUTH IN ARCADIA (new Capt. Harlock film), THOSE OBNOXIOUS ALIENS, GUNDAM, IDEON, DOUGRAM, and XABUNGLE. Each animation shop sponsors an animators club, with members receiving special discounts on their purchases.

Unfortunately, YAMATO--THE FINAL VOYAGE had been delayed until early 1983, but the following teaser synopsis has been gathered from the lp YAMATO FINAL, an original



symphonic arrangement by Hiroshi Miyagawa which will serve as a basis for his score for this upcoming film. Some of this music bears resemblance to famous works of notable Western composers Wagner, Debussy, and Stravinsky (Rite of Spring).

The roots of the story are traced back to the creation of our solar system 4 billion years ago. As Earth was in the initial stages of its existence, the huge water planet Aquarius passed through the solar system very near to Earth. The extraordinary gravitational forces caused by the passing of Aquarius resulted in vast quantities of water being deposited on our planet, giving rise to the oceans in which life first formed. Centuries later, Aquarius again passed near to the Earth, this time causing the upheaval of water from the Earth's surface and killing off the dinosaurs.

In the year 2203 A.D. (oddly, pre-dating YAMATO III's storyline by two years), the orbit of Aquarius has the water planet headed towards our galaxy again. The passing of Aquarius causes an entire nebula to undergo a dimensional relocation into the Milky Way galaxy. To investigate the cause of this strange phenomenon, the Yamato is dispatched to Aquarius to meet with its only remaining inhabitant, the Queen of Aquarius (sounds much like Queen Staasha of Iscander).

En route to Aquarius, Yamato comes upon the planet Deingil, home of the Vulcan Empire. This planet's surface has been completely submerged under water from Aquarius so Deingil's leader, the evil Lugar, casts his eyes towards another planet for his people to establish a new home on.

The Garuman-Gamiras Empire, led by Desler, and the Bollar Empire enter into the story at some point, making for a very confusing (at this point) storyline. For Yamato to encounter either of these forces during YAMATO--THE FINAL VOYAGE would directly contradict the events of YAMATO III wherein Yamato and its crew was seemingly unaware of the existence of these races and of Desler's involvement with them. To further fuel the controversy and confusion, the original captain of Yamato, Jyuzo Okita, will somehow return in this film! And supposedly, the Yamato itself will be destroyed at the conclusion of the film. Confused enough? We will just have to wait until next year to see just how all this is explained.

RECENT THEATRICAL AND TV RELEASES--Reiji Matsumoto's popular space buccaneer Capt. Harlock appeared in a 2½ hour feature film entitled MY YOUTH IN ARCADIA during August.



This film attempts to chronicle the origins of Captain Harlock, and to that end contains a number of flashbacks that feature both Harlock and his ancestors, Phantom F. Harlock (one of the first aviators in history) and Phantom F. Harlock II (a Messerschmidt pilot in World War II). This film has paved the way for a new television series featuring the famous space pirate.....

Similarly making way for a new fall tv series was the July release of SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA. This adult oriented animation involves the exploits of a cigar-chomping space jock and a sexy female android. COBRA seemed to be the summer favorite among Japanese fans and seemed sure to be a hit on tv this fall.....

THOSE OBNOXIOUS ALIENS (URUSEI YATSURA) ran this summer in Japan. This series told of the misadventures of an alien family on Earth, with storylines closely related to the old U.S. series MY FAVORITE MARTIAN and I DREAM OF JEANNIE. The main character of the show is Lum, a teenage girl wearing a tiger-striped bikini and endowed with magical powers.

CHICAGO AREA members are advised that the 1980 Toho feature film MAGNITUDE 7.9 (RENGO KANTEI) will make its Chicago premier on January 22 and 23 at the Francis Parker Japanese Cinema, 2247 North Clark Street. This film will be co-featured with the samurai epic AMBUSH, starting at 7:00 pm. MAGNITUDE 7.9 is a Toho release, directed by Kenjiro Ohmori and featuring the special effects work of Shokei Nakano. Each feature will be presented in original Japanese version with English subtitles. Don't miss this rare chance to see this disaster film which in all likelihood will not receive any kind of release in this country.

Late this summer, the original Japanese version of GODZILLA with English subtitles toured this country, making a stop in Chicago during late August. Next issue of the JFFS Newsletter will discuss some of the more interesting aspects of this film, and soon a transcript of the dialogue, in English, will be made available to JFFS members. Also in the near future, copies of the English language script for DEMON POND will also be made available to JFFS members.

Once again, apologies to all our members for the lateness of this newsletter. Our appreciation to all of you for showing a great deal of patience during the delays in publishing society materials. Among other items, next issue promises to cover the events of the SPFX Convention, the original GODZILLA, and we will be printing some of the new designs to be used in YAMATO---THE FINAL VOYAGE. So until next time, sayonara!.....

January 22 & 23

SATURDAY &
SUNDAY 9:00 P.M.

MAGNITUDE
7.9

地震列島

Directed by Kenjiro Ohmori

Starring: Hiroshi Katsumo, Toshiyuki Nagashima,
Yumi Takigawa

DEMOM POND will also be made available

