



# Kaiju Productions' HENSHIN NEWSLETTER

A NEWSLETTER BY FANS, FOR FANS DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF JAPANESE FANTASY MEDIA



## GAMERA SOARS AGAIN!

### Second Gamera Film Better Than The First

**Gamera II: The Advent of Legion** is without a doubt the ultimate kaiju-eiga. Top notch special effects, a simple but intelligent story line, fine performances by the entire cast and action that never lets up from the start of the film to the final (literally) explosive finale. All this adds up to a film that will be hard for anyone, including the much talked-about US Godzilla, to live up to, let alone surpass.

The basic plot involves the appearance of insect-like life forms from outer space and Gamera's eventual confrontation with them. Along the way we get to see the complete annihilation of the city of Sendai, the return of several key players from **Gamera, Guardian of the Universe**, including Ayako Fujitani, Steven Segals's daughter as Ayako, the girl with the psychic link to Gamera. There is also a cameo by Shoji "Capt. Mura" Kobayashi, plenty of green monster turtle blood, laser beam blasts and explosions and the scariest movie monster since **Alien**.

The special effects are even better than the last time. Surprisingly it's the standard man-in-a-rubber-suit effects that come off best. The scenes involving computer graphics are fairly obvious, and thankfully few. The miniatures are flawless and even more detailed than before. And those optical effects...the previews before the film were for **Twister** and **Independence Day** and nothing in those previews was any more impressive than the effects **Gamera II** had to offer.

The token foreigners fare pretty well this time. Though there are no foreigners as main characters, a number appear as reporters or nameless scientists throughout the picture and most of them are decent actors. Having done this sort of thing a few times, I know that Japanese film companies tend to grab the first foreign face they can find for these roles. Here they seem almost professional.

The music is great, even the token pop song at the

end is a melodic REM/Byrds type number rather than the standard Japanese candy-pop stuff that normally gets used. The score itself is big and lush with enough Ifukube-style low, rumbling monster themes to keep fans happy, though none of it is particularly memorable.

It is just an all around great film. It looks as if this one might actually make it to theaters stateside (depending on the success of the current limited run of **Gamera, Guardian of the Universe**) so try to catch it there. Bootleg videos or even the inevitable laser disc release just are not going to do the film justice.

- BRADLEY S. WARNER

**GAMERA 2: THE ADVENT OF LEGION** (aka G2: GAMERA VS. LEGION) ¥ A DAIEI MOTION PICTURE COMPANY LIMITED production in association with THE NIHON TELEVISION BROADCASTING NETWORK, FUJI EXPRESS and NIPPON PUBLISHING ¥ Released thru TOHO MOTION PICTURE COMPANY LIMITED ¥ Directed by SHUSUKE KANEKO ¥ Written by KAZUNORI ITO ¥ Special Effects Director SHINJI HIGUCHI ¥ Music Composed and Conducted by KO OTANI ¥ Executive Producers HIROYUKI KATO, SHIGERU ONO, KAZUTO OSHIMA ¥ Production Manager TETSUYA IKEDA ¥ Planning by JUN SHIMADA ¥ Line Producers TSUTOMU TSUCHIKAWA, NAOKI SATO ¥ Starring TOSHIYUKI NAGASHIMA, MIKI MIZUNO, AYAKO FUJITANI, TAMOTSU ISHIBASHI, YUKIJIRO HOTARU, YUSUKE KAWAZU, HIROYUKI OKITA, MIYUKI KOMATSU, HASUNORI HASEGAWA, SHOJI KOBAYASHI, RUSSELL ISHI, BENGAL, HIROMASA TAGUCHI, TOMORO TAGUCHI, AKIRA OHASHI ¥ VISTAVISION ¥ Running time: 100 MINS. ¥ Released JULY 13, 1996.



# HENSHIN FLASH!

# ULTRAMAN TIGA

## FIRST NEW JAPANESE ULTRA SERIES IN 16 YEARS!



Finally! It is now official! The title of the new Ultra Series to debut on Friday, September 6th at 6:30pm is **Ultraman Tiga**. The last domestic Ultra Series was produced over 16 years ago, as **Ultraman 80** (and after the failed attempts of producing **Ultraman Great** and **Ultraman Powered**) but with all indications pointing in its favor, **Ultraman Tiga** is looking to be well worth the wait!

In Indonesian, "Tiga" means "three", and represents the superhero's ability to assume three distinct Ultra-forms: the "Multi-Type" has red, silver and purple markings, and can fight on land using his Zepherion Beam; the "Sky-Type," whose markings are purple and silver. His powers are obvious, his main weapon being the Rambolt Photon; the third is the "Power-Type," red & silver, whose form is used as a last resort. His weapon is the most powerful of all, the Darassium Ray. According to press releases, Ultraman Tiga stands 53 meters tall and weighs 44,000 tons.

Ultraman Tiga bears no direct relationship to any of the previous members of the Ultra Brothers. He is the last survivor of a race of Ultra Beings who watched over and protected a highly developed super-ancient civilization which existed on Earth over 30,000 years ago (Mu, Atlantis, Lemuria?). Agent Daigo, a member of the scientific investigation team G.U.T.S. (no info to meaning at presstime), is caught in an experimental teleportation beam, and his body is becomes merged with the stone statue of an "Ancient Ultraman." Tiga, found deep within an ancient pyramid. Thus Daigo and Tiga becomes the first "Earthling Ultraman."



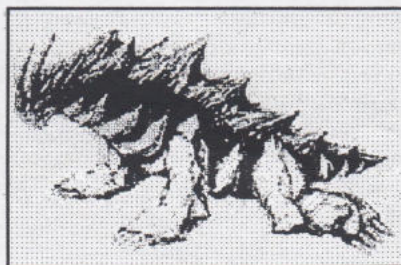
Like his predecessors, 23 year-old Daigo is a character full of spirit and bravado, and is played by Hiroshi Nagano, a member of the pop group, V-6. G.U.T.S. is the investigative/response/sault branch of the Terrestrial Protection Combine. The Japan Base is located on an island off the shore of the Chiba Prefecture (located just northeast of Tokyo). 36 year-old Captian Iruma (Mio Takaki) is the first female in charge of such a unit. She is a cunning expert strategist,

and fearless in combat tactics, earning her the nickname "Captian Demon", but, above all, she is ever the lady; 33 year-old First Commander Munakata, is Captian Iruma's No.1, a no-nonsense, serious combat professional; Agent Horii (Yukio Soda) is the 28 year-old weapons expert, who loves to kid around...the exact opposite of Munakata; Agent Shinjo (Shigeki Kagamaru), Horii's buddy, is a 26 year-old expert in the martial arts, and is the physically strongest of the team; by far, the youngest member, Agent Yazumi (Yoichi Furuya, a member of the pop group, Journeys Jr.), is an 18 year-old computer/communications expert; 22 year-old Agent Rena (Takami Yoshimoto), the series' "Akiko Fuji"-type character, is best described as a "superwoman", an expert in combat flying, and more knowledgeable in the team's hi-tech weapons, than the male members of the team. Ms. Yoshimoto is the only member of the cast with actual Ultra Credentials! She is the real-life daughter of Susumu Kurobe who played "SI Agent Hayata" on the original **Ultraman** series in 1966.

There are other characters involved in the drama of **Ultraman Tiga**, including T.P.C. Chief of Staff Sawai, Colonel Nahara (Takeuketa), G.U.T.S. female science officer, Professor Kashimura (Takako Kitagawa), and the G.U.T.S. Medical Center personnel headed by female Doctor Mayumi Shinjo (Kei Ishibashi), and more will come into the story as it evolves.

Crank In, or principle photography, for **Ultraman Tiga** began on July 1, 1996, with Kazuo Tsuburaya (Eiji's grandson) listed as the series creator. Kazuo Mitsuta, who served as the main director on the 1967 series **Ultra Seven** (and who supervised the two recent **Ultra Seven** telefeatures, as well as **Gridman**), is the overall creative producer; veteran Ultra Series special effects director Koichi Takano, is head of the special effects team, which will combine the latest in miniature SPFX photography with the most advanced CGI effects, to bring the "Super Ancient Monsters" and other humanity-threatening beings to life, every week.

**Ultraman Tiga** is being produced by Tsuburaya Productions and Mainichi Broadcasting (a subsidiary of Tokyo Broadcasting System, based in Osaka), will air on 27 MBS/TBS affiliates across Japan. Stay tuned to *Henshin!* for more details as they develop!



→ Special thanks to sources at *TV Magazine* for their help with this article!



# HENSHIN FLASH!

## EASTERN FRONT

Compiled and Written by August Ragone

**BANNING BANDITS STRIKE AGAIN:** Well, after that "Human Rights" group in Japan banned Toho Video's remastered laserdisc of the 1963 masterpiece, **Matango** recently (reported here, exclusively, last issue), they didn't waste any time in hitting yet another genre classic, an episode of Tsuburaya Production's 1968 teleseries **Operation: Mystery!**, effectively sabotaging the forthcoming remastered laserdisc boxset... **RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS:** Yes, Virginia, there are monsters popping up all over Japan again, and isn't it grand? The '90s are turning out to be the most prolific decade since the first Monster Boom of the 1960s. We have seen the return of Godzilla, Gamera, a new Ultraman series, and Toho's upcoming **Mothra**, it was inevitable that one would start joking about remakes/sequels to **The X From Outer Space** (Uchu Daikaiju Gilala; Shochiku, 1967) and **Monster From a Prehistoric Planet** (Dai Kyoju Gappa; Nikkatsu, 1967), but now comes the amazing news that Shochiku Motion Picture Company is producing, not just a remake of **The X From...** but, the most astounding pairing of the century: **Guilala vs. Gappa!** what's next? "Majin vs. Goke"?... **IN GHOSTLY JAPAN:** There has been a huge boom in the Horror/Occult genre in Nippon and a flurry of films and teleseries have materialized up to capitalize on the craze. Tsuburaya Productions enters with **Moonspiral** (Munsupairaru), the new horror/sf anthology teleseries which premiered May 7th, on NTV. Described as a cross between Tsuburaya's own teleseries **Ultra Q**, **Operation: Mystery!** and **Unbalance** (1970), with a dash of Fox's **The X-Files** and Japan's **Nighthead**, "Moonspiral" is a secret watchdog group of supernatural investigators, who were formed to protect mankind in light of the coming of the Prophecies of Nostradamus! Some of the principal members include: Secret Service Investigator Kessaku Yatsumata (Hiroshi Miyashiro), Esper & Space Researcher Chihiro Yatsumata (Mariya Yamada), Nostradamus Researcher Shirisaku Taitosawa (Eisei Amamoto), and Moonspiral Colonel Gekko Maizora (Hiroshi Banno). The first episode "The Reconstructed Man" (Ningen Kaizo), was written by Kazuya Okada and directed by Shoko Tsuburaya (Eiji's grandson); 30 mins; episodes on latenight Tuesdays at 1:45 am, produced in association with Vap Video.... Next from Tsuburaya Productions is **Neo Hyper Kids**.... More ghosts, this time from Toei, arrived with their own theatrical release: **Hell Temple: The Spirit-World Movers** (Jigoku-do Reikai Tsushin), a spfx-laden horror film concerning a group of young ghostbusters out to do poltergeists bad, namely "Inugami" and "Shinigami", released April 13th.... Toho follows up last summer's hit with three theatrical releases: the first is a sequel: **The School of Ghosts 2** (Gakko no Kaidan 2) directed by Hideyuki Hirayama, about a school possessed by an evil spirit, who begins his revenge on 4/4 at 4:44pm.... released on July 20; the second is a remake of the late '70s hit Shochiku film (based on the story by Seishi Yokomizu): **Village of Eight Gravestones** (Yatsuhakka Mura), directed by the great Kon Ichikawa (**Princess from the Moon**), to be released November 2, the original film contained a score by the late Toru Takemitsu; the third is another sequel, **The Ghost in the John 2** to be released in October. . . . Gaga Communications, who brought you Kieta Amemiya's **Zeiram** back in 1991, are back in the fantasy business with a pair of theatrical films: **Blue Dragon: The Legend of Demons** (Yoku Densetsu Doragon Buru), the story of a Gillman-type monster wrecking havoc with wrestlers, released March 30th; and, in association with Tsuburaya Eizo, a sequel to last year's hit **Eko-Eko Azarak: The Wizard of Darkness**, **Eko-Eko Azarak II: Birth of the Wizard** (Ekoeko Azaraku 2), reuniting genre female director Ms. Sato and star Kimika Yoshino, with a special appearance by Eisei Amamoto (there he is again). Both films were produced by Akira Tsuburaya. The remake of Kinji Fukusaku's blockbuster Hirofumi Sanada/Sonny Chiba starrer, we mentioned last issue, **Otherworldly Evil** (Makai Tensho; aka "Samurai Reincarnation"), Gaga's official English title for the film, based on the Futaro Yamada novel, is **The Armageddon**. The film sports guest-star appearances by Hiroshi (**Kamen Rider V3**) as the ghost of famous swordsman Miyamoto Musashi, Nobuyuki Ishida (**Mirrorman**) and Shohei Yamamoto (the villain of **Starwolf**, **Changeman**, **Cyberninja** and others). Produced by Tokuma Japan Communications. . . . On July 26th, Image Factory I.M., in association with Tsuburaya Eizo, released Jiro Tsunoda's **The Terror Daily News** (Kyofu Shimben) starring Hiroko Nakayama, Kaji Obayashi, Kana Ito, Natsu Ito and a special guest appearance by comic author Jiro Tsunoda. This original video movie, written by Chiaki Konaka and directed by Teruyoshi Ishii, centers on a underground newspaper run by a pair of university students (Nakayama and Obayashi) which reports their investigations into supernatural occurrences. This film was produced as a follow-up to Tsuburaya Eizo's successful **Eko-Eko Azarak** series, which was also culled from "Suspina" comic monthly. . . . After eight years, director Tomoaki Takahashi has returned for **Door III**, a sequel to his unnerving 1988 film (he did not helm the first sequel, which is largely ignored). The story concerns the 20 year after-effects of renegade foramone experiments on the offspring of its unknowing "volunteers." The original video film, currently in release, promises heavy emphasis on mood and horror, with a scenarion written by veteran Chiaki Konaka and directed by Itami's **Sweet Home** helmer Kiyoshi Kurosawa. Released by Zumex and Tokuma Japan Communications. . . . Director Kenichi Yoshiwara has brought another ghastly comicbook nightmare from the pen of Kaz Umetsu to cinematic life. **Confession** (Shinrei) is the bizarre tale of child abuse, twins, madness and horrific brain transplants, starring Risa Kagawa and Rie Imamura. Reports indicate that the film was shot in color, but has scenes remastered to b&w through the telecine transfer system. Kazuo Umezu/Shogakukan/Shinrei Production Committee/Vap Video.... **WEIRD WORLD:** Last Fall's TV Asahi mini-series, **Blackout** (Burakuauto), began its release to home video from March 22nd on the Amuze Video label, and is described in press materials as a "cross between" Tsuburaya's teleseries "**Operation: Mystery!** [again?]" and **The X-Files** [again?]. Set in the year 1999, two special members of the "Science Investigation Unit", check into unknown phenomena, in two 50 min. episodes per tape (except Vol. 5, which is 126 mins. in total): Vol. 1: "Futurity #1: DNA" & "Futurity 2: Plazuma" (Purazuma), Cont. on pg. 7



# EASTERN FRONT

Compiled and Written by August Ragone

(Con't. from pg. 3)

Vol. 2: "Futurity #3: Virus" (Uirusu) & "Futurity 4: Holograph" (Horogurafu), Vol. 3: "Futurity #5: Call" & "Futurity 6: Poison" (Doku), Vol. 4: "Futurity 7: Parasite" (Parasaito) & "Futurity 8: Install" (Insutoru), Vol. 5: "Futurity 9: Sleep" & "Futurity 10: Life", Vol. 6: "Futurity 11: Selfishness" & "Futurity 12: Blackout". It has been announced that there should be six volumes in all to complete the series (perhaps more if popular)....From Bandai Visual comes the further live-action adventures of Osamu Tezuka's famous other-worldly *manga* surgeon, **Blackjack 2: I Love You Pinoko** (Burkujaku 2 Pinoko Ai-shiteru) and **Blackjack 3: Madman for Two** (Burakujaku 3 Futari no Kuroi Isha), both (directed by Chiaki Konaka) are feature-length original videos. The latter billed as the "Final Blackjack", we'll see....NTV's limited series **Mystery Files of the Silver Wolf** (Gin-Okami Kaiki Fuairu), is a primetime entry which ran from January until March, and is now making its debut on VHS through Vap Video. Based on the comic "Silver Wolf The Superbrain", **Mystery Files** is described as a cross between **Operation: Mystery!** [yet again!] and Osamu Tezuka's **Toru with Three Eyes**. Within the series' 10 epsidoes, the Silver Wolf (who has an I.Q. of 220) and his friends, from Tenjin University, encounter Spontaneous Human Combustion, Paintings by the Devil, Man-eating Rats, a Society of Mind Controllers, Living Mummies and other nightmarish aberrations. Guess what? That rascal Eisei Amamoto appears in episodes #5 & #6! The series was produced by Ken Inoue and Tetsuya Oishi, who already have a follow-up on the air, **The Invisible Man** (Tomei Ningen)....**SCI-FI IN THE SKY** or "WOWWOW In Space" could be another title for the new film produced by the WowWow Satellite Cable Network, entitled **Space Salvage Ship: Remnant 6**, a made-for-cable movie. Airing this past February 24th, **Remnant 6** boasts itself as the first all-CGI effects film produced in Japan, and calls on a number of talents from the SPFX-biz: Director Shinji Higuchi (**Gamera 2**), Designer Shoji Okawara (**Gundam**) and Hajime Matsumoto (**Zeiram 1 & 2**)....**Klein's Vase** (Kurain no Tsubo) is the first entry in NHK's popular "Shonen SF Series" in almost 20 years. The eternal story concerns the limits of man and his technology and the line drawn between them. The telefeature showcases the latest in CGI effects and imagery, and was broadcast in March....From the pen of director Keita Amemiya comes **Juskiss** (Jasukisu), described as an "Action-Comedy," featuring the hilarious exploits of a female "space sheriff" (played by singer Yuko Anai) assigned to the Earth; released July 1 on Vap Video, **Juskiss'** producers hope that the popularity of the film will make way for further adventures....Also from Amemiya was the Director's Cut of his 1995 film **Hakaider: Mechanical Violator** (Jinzoningen Hakaida) from Bandai Visual....**SCOOP!** Amemiya has begun production on **Zeiram 3!** Stay tuned for details....and just for the Record: There have been at least three feature-length, live-action Original Video adaptations of the Horror/Soft Core "La Blue Girl", produced by Daiei! Just imagine the rape scenes from the **Urotsukidoji** series as a non-anime centerpiece....ugh! Hope there's a better note to end on next time.

## MAT IS BACK FOR THE ATTACK WITH ISSUE 6!



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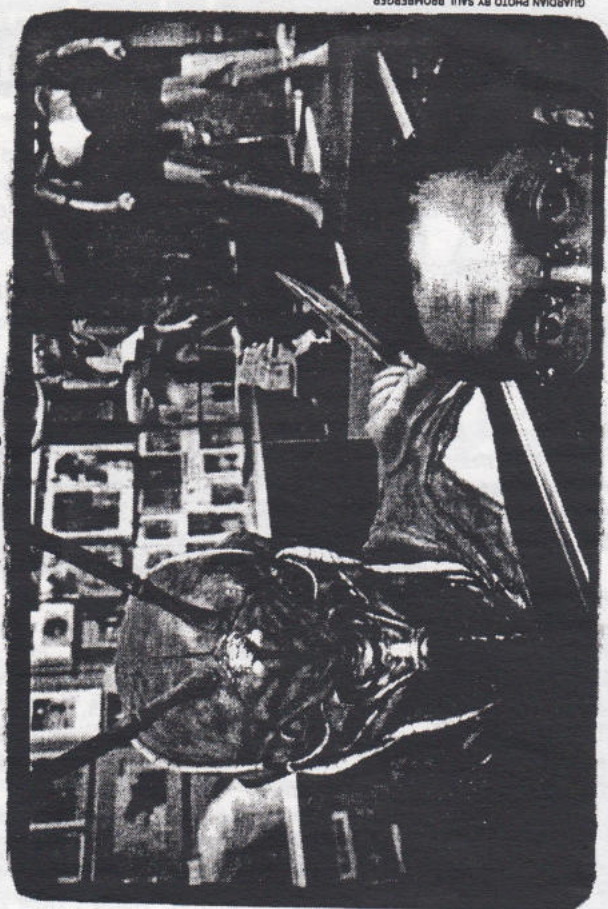
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GUARDIAN PHOTO BY SAUL BROMBERG

## Best manga-model store

Unless you're a die-hard model enthusiast, there's probably not a whole lot you'd actually want to buy at **Heroes Club**. But for the passerby with a onetime (or perhaps ongoing) giant-robot fetish, window shopping here is a delight. If you watched *Ultraman*, you'll probably remember a few of the uglies. Bonus points if you remember their names. Bolton (*Ultraman's* nemesis, that lobster guy-thing) makes an appearance. So, of course, do *Godzilla* and his pals, including *Gamera*, the giant space turtle. Giant-robot types include *Gundam* and *Mazinger*. The new school is best represented by the fresh-faced female heroes of the genre, including some impressive *Sailor Moon* models, complete with flailing hair; *Iria*, the heroine from the *Zeiram* series; and *Sandra Taylor*, from *Virtua Fighter*. The high turnover of stock means a constantly changing cast of characters. 840 Clement, S.F. (415) 387-4552.

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# AMEMIYA

## Visions of the Future Images of the Past!

Interview by Bob Johnson & August Ragone

At AnimeExpo '94 in Oakland, we had the privilege to meet one of Japan's most famous young genre directors, Kieta Amemiya. Before directing such films as *Cyber Ninja* (aka *Future Ninja*) and *Zeiram*, Mr. Amemiya was an illustrator for *Uchusen Magazine*, and a character designer at Toei for such shows as *Kamen Rider Black RX* and *Mobile Cop Jiban*. He has formed his own collective, "Crowd Inc.", to create and produce his projects. The following contains some of the highlights of our roundtable interview with Amemiya Kantoku (Director Amemiya)...

**--What inspired you to become a filmmaker and illustrator?**

Well, I started out making amateur 8mm films in college. After graduating, I began making television commercials for an advertising firm. When I finally quit the company, I tried to establish myself as a professional illustrator, hoping that the filmmaking career would come to me later.

At 27, the proposal finally came through [from Namco] for *Future Ninja* [Mirai Ninja]; and that was my debut as a director.

**--Growing up as a fan of the genre, what were some of your favorite films or TV series?**

As I was growing up, my favorite films were RKO's *King Kong* [1933] and Toho's *Godzilla* [1954].

**--What most contributes as an influence to your art?**

Hmmm...I do not have a particular artist that I have been inspired by or admired. But, I do like Japanese brush paintings from the 18th and 19th Centuries; I really love traditional Japanese art.

**--Your films have an excellent sense of tempo, with a lot of kinetic editing. Which directors have influenced you the most?**

Akira Kurosawa is the director I draw the most inspiration from. Before I shoot a film, I sit and watch Kurosawa's, and then go to work! My favorite of his films is *Tsubaki Sanjuro*. Even while I draw my storyboards, I watch Kurosawa.

**--Your first feature film, *Zeiram*, recieved two sold-out showings in San Francisco, unfortunately most fans have only had the opportunity to see it on video.**

Because the mechanical designs and details [in *Zeiram*] are so complex, the screen of a normal video monitor is too small to appreciate these qualities. You have to see the film on the big screen to realize everything is that is there!

**--What elements did you incorporate, and what processes did you use, in making *Zeiram*?**

At first, GAGA Communications asked us [Crowd Inc.] to put together a low-budget film, and then I started writing. I had already come up with the idea to have this alien character with a huge, umbrella-like head, much like the hat of an ancient Buddhist monk. I already had this character in mind from the start, so I just wrote a story about what happens when this alien lands on Earth one night.

At the same time, since it was only a low-budget picture, we continued to solicit sponsors while I was writing and designing. Originally, *Zeiram* was intended for video release only they were not thinking about a theatrical release at all! But, soon after it was completed, the proposal came through for a theatrical run.

This was due to a screening of the picture at the "Tokyo International Fantastic Film Festival", in which I submitted *Zeiram* for its premiere. This was to see how audiences would react to it, and they did...very enthusiastically! This created the opportunity for the film to be released theatrically in Japan.

Since then, I believe it has been a moderate success [laughter].

**--In *Zeiram*, you use two comical characters to balance out the heavy drama in the film. Were you satisfied with the results?**

My philosophy in putting those two characters into the story, was to show how regular human beings would react if they were thrown into this conflict. So, I didn't plan to emphasize the comedic aspect. I simply wanted to show a human reaction to this extreme situation.

**--Have you been getting a good response from the fans, here at the convention, who have attended the screenings of *Zeiram*?**

Yes. I'm amazed that the fans know who I am. I always thought that I was a domestic director, so I'm surprised when I leave Japan and find that fans here are interested in my work and illustrations!

**--When American audiences think of Japanese science fiction films, they think only in terms of *Godzilla* and *Gamera*. Many are amazed by the imagination and special effects in *Future Ninja* and *Zeiram*.**

With that in mind, I hope that *Zeiram 2* will continue to close the gap between American and Japanese special effects techniques. I'm trying to make them the best that I can.

**--We really like all Japanese movies,**



**but it is time for films like these to come out in the States, and show to the general audience that Japanese special effects are equal in quality to ours.**

Well, I would like it if you would do your best to promote them even more! [laughter]

**--Do you have any special plans or ideas for your proposed "Future Ninja II?"**

Yes. There's this Japanese mythological tale about seven gods which will bring happiness to mankind [The Seven Fortunes]. I'm thinking of taking those seven characters and making them into robots; I'm also planning on featuring a new mecha, much like the [Kimon] in the first film, but on a larger scale.

**--You were also the main director on Toei's Icarus Task Force: Jetman. How did you get on working with a television series?**

I worked on *Jetman* for about a year, but now I am putting all of my efforts into films, and am not planning on doing any more television right now.

**--Did you find the strict format of the Sentai Series restrictive?**

Well, for one thing, our time was very limited, you only had about 30 mins. time-slot to work in. It was very strict, once you got into the action, you had to fit in the commercials!

**--With the Sentai Series, there seems to be a rigid format of the heroes fighting, defeating the monster, it grows, the robot comes out, etc. How did you deal with that?**

In *Jetman*, those restrictions were there, but I tried to ignore them. I stressed my originality into the show.

**--Japanese fans seemed to realize your efforts, and Jetman became very popular, and still is. Did this surprise you?**

At first, the ratings were okay, but as the show went on they began climbing. They went from 7% to 20%, which, for these programs, was very good. So, I was really happy with the results.

**--Are you surprised that the show is still popular today, even though each Sentai show tends to be forgotten after the new one replaces it?** Despite the fact that the show ended over two years ago, and was targeted for children, I am astonished that *B-Club* and other magazines still feature articles on it three years later. It makes me very content with the show.

**--There are some fans that say Jetman is a copy of Tatsunoko's Science Ninja**

**Team: Gatchaman animated series [1972-1974; aka Battle of the Planets]. Is there any influence in the show from Gatchaman?**

No. I don't think that I was influenced by *Gatchaman* whatsoever; but, because the designs had to satisfy the toy company [Bandai], people may have gotten that impression. But, really, no.

**--When it comes to Japanese films, Americans tend to think that they are cheap, or the actors are amateurish, on account of the English voice dubbing, which is out of the hands of the director.**



As a director, I'm responsible for the calibre of actors I put into a film. Once it leaves the country, I no longer have creative control. And that's really too bad.

**--Your films are so powerful, visually, that they could probably overcome such a handicap.**

When my films are being prepared for English-speaking release, I hope that I can preview them, and have some creative control over the translations.

**--Do you feel that it is important that more Japanese films should break into the American mainstream?**

You see, when directors in Japan make films, they are not thinking about the American market, they make their films primarily to appeal to their domestic market.

Since I make Fantasy and Science Fiction films, it is easier for people in other countries, like America or Hong Kong, to go and see them, than it is for directors who make typical dramatic films.

All I can say to your readers is, please watch these films whenever you get the chance.

**--Is there any special style that you have in making a film, or any special message that you are trying to convey?**

I like to create characters and creatures that never give up. Also, when I am making a film, I never give up. So, that is what I am trying to convey in my films.

**--Is there anything you would like to say to your American fans?**

Many American fans have an image of what Japanese films, as a whole, look like. But, I urge them to go and see the films by the young Japanese directors, if they have the opportunity, they need to see what the new generation of Japanese filmmakers are doing now.

**--There are many older Japanese directors, who are still working, that do the same thing over-and-over, so there has to be a "new hope", new directors and producers, bringing in a new creativity...**

Yes, I really think so. But, I believe that this new age of directors need to be more focused in their work.

**--Do you want to work in any other genre besides Science Fiction and Fantasy?**

In the future, would like to make some Black & White films. Hopefully, the audience will accept these. I'm throwing around some ideas about stories that cannot be told in color.

I hope that this kind of project will be accepted soon, but, sometimes, projects like these don't come through at all. Motion picture companies all want color product.

**--A lot of western critics really raved about Shinya Tsukamoto's TETSUO/THE IRONMAN, which was shot in Black & White!**

I know the director of that film, personally, quite well. The only time I get to see him these days is at conventions, but, personally, we are good friends. When you come back to Japan, I will call him up, and we will all get together!

**--That we will!**

We would like to thank the kind assistance of Miyako Graham for setting up the interview, while we got the run-around from the AnimeExpo staff, and are very grateful for her assistance in interpreting for *Henshin!* Thanks!



# August Ragone's Watching!

## The Idiot, The Glutton and The Pompous



**The Idiot:** Well, well, well—Japantasy Fandom has gotten to a point where it's becoming as large as some of the other Cult Fandoms were 10-25 years ago (Japanimation, Dr. Who, and yes, even Star Trek); it's kind of a bittersweet thing to see come to the fore, since many of my peers have been struggling to attain a modicum of mainstream legitimacy for the genre over the last two (+) decades; only to have people jump on to the latest "cool thing" and turn it into another techno-geek feeding frenzy ("Who's stronger? Hedorah or Zigra?" "How much is this One Sheet worth?" "Yes, of course I've heard about the latest Ultraman series!", ad infinum), sad, indeed. I could go on and on about this, but to paraphrase Bill Shanker: "Get a life!"

**The Glutton:** With TriStar's impending **Godzilla** opus, things are looking rather bleak for Fandom. I know that millions will flock to the film, and that thousands will begin the fad of collecting; driving up the prices of the average **Godzilla** ephemera to outrageous heights and they're ridiculously high now! How can a 14-year old purchase a One-Sheet from **Ghidrah** without it costing him \$100? After TriStar's **Godzilla**, he won't be able to afford a damn lobbycard. There was a similar demand for **Godzilla** items in the '70s, and after **Star Wars** hit in '77, many sold their collections so that others could live (actually, they needed more cash to get that Advance Mylar poster). Many people "collecting, amassing, archiving" these materials (read: **HOARDING**) and "reselling" them (read: **RAPING**), is unforgivable. There is at least one individual who is trying to corner the market. How many **Godzilla vs. the Thing** inserts do you need, pal? (Would you be so kind as to save some for the blue collar stiff?) He is offering prices so high for certain Japanese paper items, that he is setting a market value. His offering prices are not even remotely based on the current Japanese market values that I have checked into. Unfortunately, long-time collectors do not speak out. They've already got what they want, and could care less about these fictitious "market values". They're not going to sell their precious collection (well, maybe the doubles, when the market goes up).

The same goes for dealers of current goods (toys, books, etc.): these dealers claim that the prices of shipping and duties, going to Japan, extra baggage costs, etcetera and so on, are services that effect their overall prices to customers...**DON'T BELIEVE IT!** These fall under Business Expenses that are ultimately Tax Write-Offs for these people. Do not pay more than what you should. if an item is listed as

¥1200, you shouldn't pay out more than \$18.00 for it (this is under the assumption that the items were purchased by the dealer at Retail; it would be considerably lower for you, obviously, if obtained by said dealer at Wholesale). **DO NOT SUPPORT** such "DEALERS" and "COLLECTORS." Let the buyer beware! Demand fair prices! Without YOU, they are **NOTHING**.

**The Pompous:** This is the proverbial Stake In the Heart for Fandom. These people will turn others off (in a number of ways), which will result in a fragmenting, and possible death for any potential towards unified, organized or vocal Japantasy Fandom. I've seen this all happen before, and I am seeing it now. People at each others' throats for the control of Fandom as we know it! How very juvenile and utterly arrogant, wanting (or claiming) a single authority for fandom: don't let anyone have their own project if they do not meet your own **agenda**—don't let **them** near any key individuals/sources that might make **their work** superior to your own. This is the lowest in absurd, fascistic, paranoiac, ham-fisted, delusional, self-righteous and frightening, megalomaniacal egotism that I have ever heard of. Fortunately, like Nostradamus, my compatriots and I have foreseen these events: as they are chronicled in the Rise and Fall of early Japanimation Fandom (circa 1977-1984). History repeats itself all too often— to paraphrase The Bible: "He has given them Eyes, yet they do not see."

This is the Fandom that fed upon itself, and collapsed through internal fighting (who should be in charge of what? Why? Not HIM!) and political upheaval (I should be the President!)— but, through it all, some survived, and those who came in at the tail-end of the battle, picked up the pieces and ran with it, starting magazines, video companies, etc. Many of the casualties did not need to be. They were undone by a series of events, caused by a unconscious and unavoidable convergence of the Three Fatimas: The Idiot, The Glutton and The Pompous. Well, now I bet that you think I'm off my nut, and I'm just blowing smoke up your rear-end? No one is more important than anyone else. Remember: we're all in the same boat.

The inevitable G-yhad is coming, Beware the Ides of March, or we may all be saying, "Et tu, Brutus?" Which could spell The End for many of you, unless the Great God Lucas intervenes and saves us all with the release of **Star Wars: The Special Edition**.

You have been warned. May the Force Be With You!

That brings us to the end of another issue of Henshin! Don't forget to send in your Self Addressed Stamped Envelope with 55 cents postage for the next exciting action-packed issue, containing all the info about your favorite Japanese Fantasy Fanaticisms, to Kaiju Productions, 1726 Divisadero, San Francisco, CA 94115.

Brought to you by August Ragone & Bob Johnson!