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SPECIAL WOMEN OF JAPANESE FANTASY ISSUE



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ERRATA:

Last issue's Ultra 7 Episode Guide failed to credit Jim Caronella's Club Dai Nippon Newsletter/Catalog (Fall '94) as a source for some of the episode titles. We sincerely apologize for this omission. Now bite me.

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Kaiju Buzz Notes

GODZILLA DOOMED

GODZILLA VS. THE DESTROYER will feature the last appearance of the current incarnation of the big G, according to insiders at Toho Studios. The script for the next outing features (among other things) a new genetically engineered kaiju, that attacks and nearly kills an old (pre-'90s) ally of Godzilla, a major fall-out between the Japanese Self Defense Forces and G-Force (after all that destruction it was bound to happen), and the re-creation of the Oxygen Destroyer, last employed to kill a Godzilla in 1954.

The new script was written by G-veteran Kazuki Omori (writer/director **GODZILLA VS. BIOLANTE '89**, writer/director **GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORA '91**, writer **GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA '92**) and is scheduled to be directed by Takao Okawara (director **GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA**, **GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA '93**, and **YAMATO TAKERU '94**) with Koichi Kawakita once again supervising the special effects.

The script is currently undergoing changes at the request of Okawara and Kawakita (this was delayed by Omori, who was out of the country working on a film in the Philippines). Many of these changes were reportedly requested after Kawakita had gone to a screening of the new **Gamera** film.

The main reason this Godzilla is being 'killed' is that both Executive Producer Tomoyuki Tanaka, and supervising producer Shojo Tomiyama have long felt troubled by the opinion that Godzilla in his current form is just too big. Effects sets (cityscapes, props, etc.) have traditionally been built on a 125th scale, however Godzilla's increased size (since the events of **G. VS. K.G.**) have resulted in the need for a scale adjustment (to 150th scale), leading to increased costs, which was really all that was bothering the money men in the first place. The 'Baby Gojira' was reintroduced with the idea of its eventually taking over the mantle of the current Godzilla. Okawara had originally proposed killing Godzilla in **G VS MG**, but was unable to get the go ahead from Tanaka, who at that time was on the brink of seeing Godzilla go Hollywood, so killing the golden G was thought unwise.

That changed when Jan De Bont's departure from the TriStar project caused some at Toho to lose face in the Japanese press. De Bont had been much ballyhooed by the studio during his visit there last September. De Bont made the rounds of the local newspaper and television press agencies on Toho's behalf in order to promote the 'Hollywood' vision of Godzilla. His subsequent split and uncomplimentary remarks with regard to the 50 year history of the existing franchise left more than a few people at the studio annoyed. Several late night brainstorm sessions later the powers that be (and the creative minds that guide them) decided that the time was finally right to take the series in an exciting new direction. **GODZILLA VS SPACE GODZILLA**'s comparative lack of success with fans and at the boxoffice has also contributed to a desire on the part of

the studio to alter the course of the series.

The penultimate scene in the new film will have Godzilla reduced to glitter (ala Rodan in **G V MG**) by the new O.D. and melted into the 'Little Gojira' who will then morph fully into a replica of the old G only smaller. Following this the 'new G' will then go on to defeat the new kaiju with the assistance of the old ally.

Meanwhile back in Hollywood, screenwriters Ted Elliot and Terry Rossio are rewriting the last draft of their Godzilla film with a mind toward trimming the more expensive scenes. While numerous effects houses will probably be involved in the eventual project, the lion's share of the effects will be handled by Sony ImageWorks (thus keeping the money in house) and will reportedly feature animatronics and animation in addition to computer graphics.

GAMERA TO SPAWN A SEQUEL

The relative success of the new **GAMERA** film has led its producers to begin plans for a follow-up film featuring the titanic turtle's encounter against a new insect like kaiju. Returning to the project are the film's original creative team of director Shiyusuke Kaneko and spfx director Shinji Higuchi. Although the cast is not yet set for the next film, you can count on seeing actress Ayako Fujitani (the daughter of unlikely American action star Steven Segal) return in her role as the girl with the psychic link to Gamera.

Live actionmeister Steve Wang (who directed **THE GUYVER**, **THE GUYVER II: DARK HERO**) called the new Gyaos design "scary", and said that the film easily surpassed **GODZILLA VS. SPACE GODZILLA** in overall entertainment value, and ranked alongside any of Toho's post '85 effects films.

The first film was shot for around 7.5 million dollars, as compared to the 10 million dollar budget of the last few Godzilla films.

The current film has returned a modest figure (under 5 million dollars after several weeks of release, the film never climbed past number five in Variety's international boxoffice totals) but has remained in the top ten in the first six weeks of release. While considered successful the film has been eclipsed at the box office by American product such as **THE MASK**, and **FORREST GUMP**. In the realm of merchandising however Gamera's much bolder return has brought on a bonanza of licensing opportunities for the resurrected film company.

The persistent rumors of Gamera eventually facing Godzilla in a battle of the titans are said to be the result of wishful thinking on the part of Daiiei's current CEO Mr. Tokuma, who has repeatedly stated such in published interviews. "It would take a lot of success by Gamera to convince the studio he deserves to enter into a film with Godzilla" said our source. "Godzilla is more than just a symbol for Toho, the old men are far from convinced that Gamera is a worthy opponent from this single film only." The next Gamera film will be shot entirely in Japan and will crank up by mid-October with post production scheduled for January, and release slated for April of 1996 (during Japan's national holiday 'Golden Week'). More as further details emerge.

AMERIGOJI (x) 2

TALES OF TWO GODZILLAS

A SYNOPSIS OF THE
TED ELLIOT & TERRY ROSSIO
SCREENPLAY: GODZILLA
FOR TRISTAR PICTURES

The film opens with a traveling shot over an Arctic landscape, an iceberg emerges from the choppy waters, a single word: GODZILLA, carved across its surface.

A group of 'Green Peace' type ecologists situated aboard a converted fishing boat dubbed the Rainbow Warrior maintain surveillance over a nearby salvage ship, that is apparently searching for illegally dumped nuclear reactor cores. Something goes wrong, and the salvagers accidentally trigger an explosion, obliterating themselves and setting the tundra itself afire. A huge fissure appears in the earth, leaking a red-black stream of fluid from the opening, bloodying the surrounding water. Inside the fissure a dark womb cavern, and deeper still, a startling discovery.

Two scientists, KEITH LLEWELLYN and his wife JILL LLEWELLYN are summoned in the middle of the night from their suburban home by the arrival of a Naval Transport helicopter, and a call from the State Department requesting their presence in the Arctic. They leave behind a teenage daughter named TINA, who is clearly used to seeing her parents called away on secret missions in the dead of night.

After arriving at a hastily constructed Arctic outpost built around the site of the womb-cavern, the couple separates; JILL to a lab in order to analyse the strange amniotic like fluid found at the site, while KEITH is taken into the cavern.

Inside KEITH gets his first and last look at a gigantic dinosaur-like creature, dwarfing all previously known specimens and seeming perfectly preserved. A tremble rumbles through the cavern, dislodging chunks of ice and rock. The generator goes off, plunging the pit into darkness. As flash light beams stab the interior, and workers scurry to regain the lights, a gigantic eye lid rolls open, revealing an orb ten feet across. A second semi-transparent protective lid slides open, showing a slit like pupil. The lights are restored and KEITH turns back to look at the creature. The open eye tracks his movement. In the time it takes for KEITH to react in shock, all hell breaks loose in the cavern.

GODZILLA wakes up, smashing upward out of the frozen chamber, destroying most of the encampment around it. Struggling to free himself, GODZILLA sends a blast of fiery breath downward blasting the surrounding terrain.

JILL, who is working in a make-shift lab set-up in a cargo plane nearby sees GODZILLA break free, gaining his footing at the edge of the pit, and starting in her direction. A Radio Operator sends out a desperate mayday, and then runs as GODZILLA nears the plane. Miraculously JILL narrowly escapes death herself, as GODZILLA'S foot crashes down just missing the cockpit where she is standing. GODZILLA'S head pivots as he scans the horizon as if expecting to see something there. The sky is gray and empty. Staggering out of the wreckage, JILL watches as the monster, with a final angry roar, and skyward blast of radioactive flame, slips into the stormy Arctic ocean and swims away.

Sometime later a fireball from space crashes into a lake in Utah. Moments later the in the nearby town of Traveller, Utah there is a sudden downpour of water, frogs, and fish. This prompts a local wilderness guide named NELSON FLEER to comment that he hates "weird shit".

The fire ball is actually an ALIEN PROBE, which sinks to the bottom of the lake and ends up surfacing in the grotto of a nearby cavern. The PROBE unfolds revealing a cluster of silver tendrils which lash out at the ceiling above it capturing and enfolding several bats.

Meanwhile, a writer named AARON VAUGHT and his partner MARTY KENOSHITA are investigating the destruction of a remote Japanese fishing village. AARON is the author of a book titled "THE WAKING DRAGON" which is a study of the dragon myth in history and its possible basis in reality. A lone surviving witness named JUNJI confirms what they have suspected (something that they link to rumors about the Arctic incident 'the year before') and even provides them with the name of the creature; GOJIRA which AARON translates as GODZILLA. At that moment they are taken into custody by Japanese officials who hand them over to a humorless American agent named PIKE, who has the annoying habit of cracking the bones in his neck, while contemplating dirty deeds. On the way back to the U.S., PIKE briefs them on what actually happened in the Arctic, and drafts them into service as part of the ST. GEORGE PROJECT. "As in the one who slays the dragon?" asks AARON.

Later at the project headquarters AARON is introduced to JILL LLEWELLYN by ADMIRAL TIMOTHY BENEDEK (the nominal military commander of the St. George Project). JILL is very skeptical about AARON'S ability to provide much useful help. She has become a driven character in her desire to find and destroy Godzilla. Meanwhile her daughter TINA, who is unaware of the true circumstances surrounding her father's death and the nature of her mother's current assignment, has become a bit of a delinquent in the midst of her new military surroundings, she has just been arrested for trying to hot wire a car, causing some degree of personal strife for JILL who is torn between her duty as a mother and a monster hunter.

While back at the 'Bat-cave' the bats have

been transformed into monstrous hybrids of the alien creature (PROBE BATS with 12' wingspans) that emerge from the cave into the night sky looking for prey.

Back at the Arctic base camp near the 'Womb cavers' the tundra trembles and an ancient alien looking structure suddenly rises from below, accompanied by shafts of blinding light, and an audio signal that jams radio communications on a global scale.

Later AARON, JILL, and MARTY arrive to investigate the structure, which seems to be made up of a previously unknown 'organic technology'. During the course of their study of the structure, AARON senses that it may go a long way toward explaining the purpose of GODZILLA, while JILL finally deduces that the fluid found at the site may have acted as an 'Atomic tranquilizer' for the hibernating GODZILLA. Meanwhile MARTY is invaded by something emanating from the structure and unnoticed by the others staggers around a bit in the background.

Back in Utah, NELSON FLEER is encountering more 'weird shit' when he finds one of his horses, mutilated and impaled on the upper branches of a tree.

Meanwhile aboard an Ocean Liner somewhere between Hawaii and the Mainland, the Ship's Captain is dancing in the main ballroom when an unusual call comes, summoning him to the bridge. In the Radar room two officers sit watching a screen cluttered with dots headed into the path of the ship. From the outer deck passengers watch the blue water change to flashing silver by the passage of hundreds and hundreds of fish and marine life of all shapes sizes and varieties. The ship's hull divides the stampede down the middle, the sound of fish thumping against the forward hull vibrating at the passage of sea life. Back in the Radar Room The Radar Screen goes blank for a moment after the fish have passed, then one gigantic dot appears on the screen moving quickly toward the ship. GODZILLA appears on the horizon, swimming smoothly in the ship's direction. With the alarm blaring as the crew rushes out the lifeboats, GODZILLA dives under the ship, his dorsal plates cutting sharply through the bottom of the hull, splitting the ship down the middle, it sinks quickly and the few survivors left bobbing roughly in the nearby waters catch a glimpse of GODZILLA, continuing serenely on toward the mainland.

Back at the Arctic outpost JILL and AARON learn of the disaster via a poorly synched video / audio transmission (it looks like a poorly dubbed character from a Japanese monster movie, the screenwriters only acknowledged nod to earlier Godzilla films). They finally notice that something is wrong with MARTY as he finally collapses. Later under medical observation it is obvious that a type of transformation has begun to happen to MARTY. As he is being shipped from the Arctic base back to the ST. GEORGE PROJECT HQ (in upstate N.Y.) JILL tells AARON that they've figured out where

GODZILLA is headed ; San Francisco.

Cut to; A massive military build-up around the Golden Gate bridge. Fort Point (just below the bridge) has been designated as the command center for a combination of air, land and sea defenses. JILL and AARON arrive and find ADMIRAL BENEDEK in command of the operation, with agent PIKE also present. PIKE is confident in the ability of the conventional weapons to destroy GODZILLA, which he likens to a 'whale', which AARON corrects as being more the size of 'three blue whales'.

"Stop you're scaring me" says PIKE sarcastically.

Naturally the conventional weapons are useless against GODZILLA but fortunately JILL and AARON have come up with a back-up plan using helicopters that spray the amniotic fluid found (in great quantity) at the Arctic site. This succeeds in neutralizing GODZILLA at the Golden Gate bridge (which is almost collapsed by his weight, resulting in a close call for AARON). JILL suggests detonating a bomb down GODZILLA'S throat, but BENEDEK against the wishes of both JILL and PIKE decides to transport GODZILLA (using several crane helicopters) across the country to the upstate N.Y. site of the St. George Project Headquarters. A sequence of GODZILLA'S air transport across the country features an amazed population reacting in ways ranging from taking pot shots at the monster to having parties celebrating his passage over their areas.

Meanwhile a small church in Traveller, Utah is attacked by the PROBE BATS, with the victims being carried back to the ALIEN PROBE'S lair in the cavern.

Back at Fort Tucarons (St. George Project HQ) at the Base Hospital, AARON visits MARTY who has by now undergone a complete physical transformation. He has become one of the creatures who built the Arctic Structure (in body if not yet in mind). AARON becomes convinced that GODZILLA was created for a purpose, to battle a specific foe.

Meanwhile at the St. George Project itself, JILL finds that the crew who built the hanger designed to house GODZILLA did not take his tail into account during its construction, leaving it to protrude from the main building. Inside GODZILLA is kept doped up on the amniotic fluid, and is imprisoned in a protective electrical grid. A special tank of the fluid has been mounted among the dorsal fins near GODZILLA's head.

While this is going on, AARON tries to figure out where GODZILLA might have been headed by cross checking unusual occurrences around the country. This quickly narrows the list down to Traveller, Utah.

TINA LLEWELLYN (the daughter) now aware of the truth (as to what happened to her Father, and why her Mother has become so obsessed with tracking down the monster) confronts her Mother and questions the purpose of destroying GODZILLA. JILL sends TINA to NYC to stay with

her Aunt. For the first time JILL seems to question her desire to destroy GODZILLA, as she stands 'eye to eye' with the monster, its heartbeat echoing in the control chamber.

AARON arrives in Traveller, Utah, and quickly deduces that the rain of frogs was the result of something impacting on the nearby Lake Ahiga. AARON hooks up with NELSON FLEER, who acts as his guide out to the lake.

While back at the Base Hospital, MARTY'S condition has worsened. ADMIRAL BENEDEK and PIKE are looking in on him, PIKE suggesting that he should be terminated. MARTY suddenly grabs PIKE'S wrist (to his horror and disgust) and asks to see JILL.

Meanwhile at Lake Ahiga, FLEER and AARON survey the damage caused by the impact of the ALIEN PROBE into the lake. FLEER obviously doesn't know what he's getting into as AARON decides they need to explore the lake itself underwater. The running joke here is that FLEER is charging an inflated 'government rate' for his services as a guide, and that rate keeps increasing, the more he begins to understand what he has gotten involved with.

Back at the Hospital, JILL meets with MARTY who has completely transformed. He explains about the ALIEN PROBE and describes it as a 'Doomsday beast' able to create a new form out of the genetic material found on the invaded planet. JILL asks how much time they have before the monster arrives on Earth and MARTY says 'It's already here.'

Back at Lake Ahiga, AARON and FLEER are in the water preparing to go diving. FLEER an experienced professional diver cautions AARON about the dangers ahead (he really has no idea himself what he is getting into) telling AARON that fresh water diving is even more dangerous than ocean diving which he had to give up. 'Why'd you give it up?' asks AARON. 'Too much weird shit' says FLEER.

They dive down to the bottom of the lake and soon find a cave entrance which they have to remove their tanks in order to squeeze through. FLEER is startled by the appearance of a submerged mountain lion corpse, badly mangled and decayed. Surfacing in the underground grotto they find more dead creatures floating in the water including a cow. Some of the decomposition seems almost of a chemical nature. FLEER begins to get nervous. Some bats swoop down on them providing a momentary scare. Then on one side of the cavern they spot what looks like a rock formation in the shape of a giant claw. Climbing higher to get a better look they discover that the giant claw is just part of an immense creature that fills the cavern.

It is the GRYPHON, with the body of a mountain lion, leather like, blood red wings, it resembles the creature of myth. This is what the BAT PROMES have created out of genetic spare parts. FLEER can not at first believe that the creature is alive, and lights a flare to study it more

closely, it is alive however, and reacts to the heat and smoke from the flare. FLEER and AARON run back to the grotto grabbing their equipment as the GRYPHON lets out a jarring scream. Its mouth opens revealing writhing snake like appendages which lash out toward the two men as they narrowly escape through the underwater cave entrance.

Back outside, surfacing on the lake, they see the GRYPHON explode out of the mountain side, its skin smoothly gleaming in the sunlight, the monster towers over the nearby trees as it lets out another scream.

Meanwhile back at the St. George Project, GODZILLA is coming out of the influence of the fluid, as workers panic trying to escape.

While at the Base Hospital, JILL still meeting with the transformed MARTY asks where the creature he is becoming came from, and MARTY replies that it was an ancient war born civilization, that lived at a time when the Earth had three moons (that's a long time ago campers) He explains that the transformation technology was their only way of communicating with any race that would come to exist long after they had gone. JILL still thinking of GODZILLA asks how they can kill him. And MARTY misunderstanding says that GODZILLA will kill the ALIEN before it has a chance to reproduce. But JILL corrects him asking how to kill GODZILLA, since only the MARTY / CREATURE alone may have that knowledge, but MARTY grabs her arm with a claw like hand, and says that she 'can't Godzilla, kill' .. and then dies.

Back at Lake Ahiga, FLEER and AARON are running up a hill, back toward the Jeep. Behind them the GRYPHON spreads its wings, power building up within them and fires an energy bolt in their direction which explodes a stand of trees nearby. They make it to the Jeep and take off at high speed while the GRYPHON takes to the air behind them. As the GRYPHON looks down upon the fleeing Jeep, it disappears momentarily beneath an overpass in the road. The creature fires an energy bolt at the jeep as it reappears on the far side of the overpass destroying it instantly. FLEER and AARON are however alive and well under the overpass.

The GRYPHON proceeds to the edge of Traveller, Utah, where it uses its energy beam to blow up a nearby gas storage tank. In moments the town is reduced to ruins by the monster. It then continues on eastward.

FLEER and AARON emerge from the smoke to survey the ruins of the town. AARON tells FLEER that he has a jet waiting and has to leave, but FLEER insists on coming along, if it means a chance to help fight the GRYPHON.

Back at the St. George Project, GODZILLA is struggling to escape, as workers race to prevent it. A news bulletin flashes on one of the operation center's monitors showing the destruction of Traveller, and shots of the GRYPHON itself. AARON radios in a warning to JILL, that the GRYPHON is probably headed her way in order to

kill GODZILLA.

GODZILLA frees himself and for a moment JILL looks at GODZILLA (and vice versa) as if for the first time understanding each other. Then GODZILLA escapes into the nearby Buzzard Bay, disappearing into the water.

AARON and FLEER arrive as satellite recon indicates that GODZILLA is now heading down the Hudson river toward a confrontation with the GRYPHON in Manhattan. JILL realizes that TINA is in danger (along with millions of other people of course). She leaves the Project to try and get to TINA, leaving AARON as the unexpected head of the St. George project. It is clear that PIKE is not interested in trying to save anyone in New York, his only goal is to kill GODZILLA. AARON however insists that something must be done to try and save the people.

JILL arrives (via helicopter) in New York, where the city is in pandemonium as a result of the impending battle. The GRYPHON wheels around the skyline looking for GODZILLA.

A command post is hurriedly constructed on Governor's Island, while in the distance the Statue of Liberty is uprooted by the GRYPHON and smashed aside. The GRYPHON settles down on the shattered base to wait.

Meanwhile GODZILLA stomps through another section of the city killing a few looters (stealing guns out of a sporting goods store) who wander into his path.

Finally the two monsters clash beside the World Trade Center towers. GODZILLA tricks the GRYPHON into attacking his reflection in one of the towers, and soon that tower crashes to the ground. GODZILLA escapes and wedges himself between two nearby buildings, out of reach from the GRYPHON. JILL who by now has found TINA realizes that the Tank of fluid still strapped to GODZILLA's dorsals is weakening him, and has stifled his ability to breathe fire. She communicates this to ADMIRAL BENEDEK at the command center (via a cellular phone she loots from a store window). AARON and PIKE listen in. PIKE just wants to see GODZILLA dead, but AARON decides to try and dislodge the tank, since GODZILLA seems to be their only hope of destroying the GRYPHON. PIKE and BENEDEK argue but PIKE is overruled.

Soon AARON and FLEER are repelling down (from a helicopter) onto GODZILLA'S back, where they begin to place C-4 charges around the tank.

Meanwhile in another helicopter, PIKE attempts to shoot down the GRYPHON, which fails. Hiding in the air behind another building, PIKE orders his gunner to shoot through the building at the GRYPHON. The gunner hesitates since it's the Empire State Building. PIKE is asking him to target. The fired rockets devastate the top of the building, but pass harmlessly by the GRYPHON on the other side, who seems to scream in triumph, but the top of the building tumbles forward crashing into

the monster and sending it hurtling toward the ground, where covered in debris it lies motionless. PIKE smiles, and when the gunner asks him "what about the people?" PIKE says "Acceptable losses". Banking around, PIKE'S helicopter heads toward GODZILLA.

Meanwhile below the shattered remains of the Empire State Building, the GRYPHON rises from the debris.

FLEER and AARON are placing the last of the charges when PIKE'S helicopter attacks their helicopter. They are momentarily dragged across the tank (as they are still attached by drop lines to their helicopter above, which tries to retreat from PIKE'S attack). AARON'S line is snapped across one of the dorsals, and FLEER almost falls to his death but is narrowly rescued by AARON.

Just as PIKE is about to launch a missile attack at GODZILLA (and our heroes) the GRYPHON appears and sends an energy bolt toward PIKE'S chopper which causes his missiles to go high destroying a water tower above GODZILLA'S head. AARON and FLEER scramble underneath the tank just in time to avoid being washed away by the resulting flood.

The GRYPHON lands in the street nearby and folding its wings back (in order to fit between the buildings) heads toward GODZILLA.

JILL and TINA are in the street between the GRYPHON and GODZILLA, and seeing the danger FLEER and AARON are in she gets TINA to hot wire a nearby fuel tanker truck (is Jim Cameron directing this sequence?), which they send crashing into the GRYPHON, who engulfed in flames takes to the sky.

After setting the last of the timers on the C-4, FLEER and AARON narrowly escape as the fluid tank is blown free. The fire damaged GRYPHON goes into an attack dive firing an energy bolt at GODZILLA who staggers but remains standing, returning the GRYPHON'S attack (for the first time) with a blast of his own destructive breath. The GRYPHON wheels away seemingly in pain and heads for the East river. GODZILLA follows, kicking the fallen tank out of his path, as he pursues his rival.

Meanwhile PIKE recovers in the shattered tail section of his crashed helicopter. Using an M16 for support he staggers out of the chopper finding himself near the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel.

From the air the GRYPHON spots GODZILLA heading into the East River and follows. On the street below, AARON, FLEER, JILL, and TINA are momentarily plunged into darkness as the shadow of the GRYPHON passes over them. They suddenly find themselves confronted by PIKE, who points the M16 at them. Just then the GRYPHON lands with a crash nearby knocking them all off their feet. PIKE fires the gun recklessly at the monster's back, who cranes his head around and spots the group on the street below. As everyone else flees toward the tunnel, PIKE continues to fire at the monster. PIKE finally

follows them into the tunnel with the GRYPHON in pursuit. The GRYPHON opens his mouth and the snake like appendages lash out grabbing PIKE around the waist, and leg. Despite AARON'S attempt to save him, PIKE is dragged out of the tunnel and into the GRYPHON'S mouth. The rest of the group takes off in a truck they find abandoned in the tunnel.

The GRYPHON having swallowed PIKE, twitches for a moment, and a new light comes into its eyes. It rolls its head back at the shoulder, cracking the bones in its neck exactly as PIKE used to do. Spotting the fallen tank of fluid nearby, the GRYPHON picks it up with a new understanding and takes to the air again, headed toward GODZILLA.

Back below AARON and the rest find themselves blocked by a jack-knifed semi at the mid point of the tunnel, so they get out of the truck in order to walk the rest of the way.

While above them in the East river GODZILLA spots the GRYPHON coming toward him through the air carrying the tank. GODZILLA cocks his head to one side as if calculating his next move and then sinks into the water up to his head as if afraid.

In the tunnel tiles start to fall from the ceiling and tiny fissures begin to open in the tunnel wall seeping water. The group begins to run.

Above, GODZILLA with his head just above the river, and the Brooklyn Bridge in the background, breathes fire at the surface of the water, creating a wall of mist over the river. He then slips beneath the waves. The GRYPHON unable to see through the fog crashes headlong into the Bridge, dropping the tank and getting tangled up in the support cables.

Below, about half a mile behind the running group GODZILLA'S foot comes crashing through the roof of the tunnel sending millions of gallons of water streaming in behind them. The group runs to the safety of a nearby red Subaru hatch back. Just as they are safely buckled in the wall of water crashes into the car sending it sailing forward with terrific force. Around them the tunnel fills with water.

Above, GODZILLA knocks the tank out of reach of the GRYPHON with a swipe of his tail. The GRYPHON tries to escape, but GODZILLA pulls him out of the sky taking a bite out of one of his wings, they both fall back into the river.

In the tunnel, the Subaru is stopped when it jams up against a crushed bottled water truck ahead. AARON is pinned beneath a damaged dashboard. The rear window begins to crack under the pressure of the water. They open the windows in order to equalize the pressure and the car slowly fills with water.

Meanwhile above them GODZILLA and the GRYPHON battle in the East river. The GRYPHON slashes GODZILLA with a wing tip, causing GODZILLA to howl in pain. The GRYPHON takes off and GODZILLA tries to fire another blast at him but the creature is too far away.

Below, the doors of the Subaru are pinned between the bottled water truck and the tunnel wall, so AARON opens the hatchback letting out the last of the air allowing everyone except himself to swim free. He is still trapped by the dashboard. JILL spots the bottled water truck and has an idea. It seems that AARON is about to drown when JILL swims back into the car and seemingly kisses him. She has in fact transferred air from her mouth to AARON'S. It seems that she has found a supply of breathable air in the empty water bottles on the nearby truck (yes, it could happen). Assisted by FLEER they free AARON from behind the dashboard and the foursome swims to safety each carrying their own bottle of air. Despite having his own bottle AARON continues to kiss JILL, which causes TINA to roll her eyes at FLEER.

While above them GODZILLA stands alone and badly wounded scanning the skies above him for any sign of the GRYPHON. The water around him is stained red with his blood. In the distance he spots the GRYPHON, who is making a high angle power dive toward GODZILLA. The GRYPHON is moving toward his target at a speed that pools back the lips from his mouth in a rictus snarl.

GODZILLA stands unmoving until the last possible moment when he leaps forward exposing his three rows of sharp dorsal fins. The GRYPHON is ripped open by its impact on the dorsals. The impact is such that as the two creatures smash into the water it rushes up over the sides of both embankments, flooding the nearby streets.

The soggy foursome emerge from the tunnels opening in time to see GODZILLA attacking what is left of the GRYPHON in the river. GODZILLA tears off the GRYPHON'S head and holds it up. A crowd gathered on the Brooklyn side cheer at GODZILLA'S victory. Suddenly (big surprise!) the GRYPHON'S eyes snap open, and the snake like appendages snap out at GODZILLA. Looking more than a little bit pissed off, GODZILLA spikes the GRYPHON'S head onto the jagged remains of one of the Brooklyn bridge's support towers. The head dies, and GODZILLA roars triumphantly, drowning out the sounds of the crowd nearby.

Back at the tunnel entrance, FLEER grabs AARON at the sight of GODZILLA'S victory and picks him up happily. AARON and JILL exchange warm smiles. Then the sound of approaching fighter jets cuts into their reverie. The military is ready to finish the job by destroying GODZILLA.

JILL spots a nearby helicopter and they commander it flying off toward GODZILLA.

Back at the command center ADMIRAL BENEDEK orders that the jets concentrate their fire on GODZILLA'S wounds. He sees the helicopter come up between the jets and the monster, and orders it to leave the area. JILL and AARON convince him that the possibility of more monsters arriving from space exists (sequels) and so he calls off the attack at the last minute. However the wash of the jets sudden retreat sends the helicopter crashing into GODZILLA'S shoulder. All seems

lost for the brief foursome on board the helicopter as it plunges toward the river, when it is suddenly caught by GODZILLA'S hand (is Hanna-Barbara directing this sequence?). GODZILLA acts the copter gently down. The group scrambles out of the helicopter and stand watching GODZILLA in awe. He always a bit weakened by the battle and finally turns collapsing into the water. It seems as if he might be dead but soon they see him swimming off into the distance. As the screen goes black we hear the roar one more time.

A SYNOPSIS OF THE FRED DEKKER SCRIPT FOR STEVE MINER'S PROPOSED GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS IN 3D

(Written in the early '80s by Fred Dekker for director Steve Miner's proposed 3D Godzilla film, the ambitious project never got much past the drawing board (done by William Stout). Miner had previously helmed FRIDAY THE 13th PART 3D. Fred Dekker also wrote and directed the cult classic NIGHT OF THE CREEPS, and MONSTER SQUAD. Several of Mr. Dekker's ideas were obviously lifted by Toho when they finally got around to doing the '84 Godzilla film, including an orbiting missile platform, an anti-nuke weapon, and evil Russians as part of the plot....)

A meteorite crashes into a Nuclear Weapons Platform orbiting the Earth causing the accidental launch of a nuclear device toward an unknown target below. A Cruise missile is launched to intercept the war head and the two bombs go down somewhere in the South Pacific. The ocean floor is ripped open by the blast and a creature emerges in the atomic afterglow.

Sometime later a Navy salvage team uncovers a dished Russian Sub in the Ocean off Mexico. On board they find documentary evidence of a gigantic marine creature that attacked the ship. They also find two top secret "dragon" missile prototypes. They are observed by a group of Russian spy's nearby. The leader of the Salvage team is COMMANDER PETE DAXTON, an experienced Naval Intelligence Officer, with an eye-patch, a leather jacket, and a no nonsense attitude. His opposite number on the Russian squad is BORIS KRUSCHKOV an old enemy with a lot of bad history.

Elsewhere a small commercial fishing Trawler catches something big in its nets, almost sinking the ship. The crew is forced to cut through the net's cables in order to save the ship. One man, TONY O'ROARKE, a scruffy drifter with a background in helicopters finds a strange object in what remains of the net.

Back on the mainland LESLEY-ANNE DAXTON, the Commander's ex-wife, picks up their son KEVIN at school and drives him to his Father's for the weekend. At the same time, a group of Government agents shows up at DAXTON'S with new orders. LESLEY drops KEVIN off and leaves before DAXTON has a chance to explain.

Cut to three days earlier, on a Polynesian

island somewhere in the South Pacific, a commando team led by a hard boiled General named McDERMOTT, survey the smoking ruins of a native village. Nearby a group of children play in a mud hole formed out of a gigantic reptilian footprint. Something huge can be heard crashing toward them through the jungle. Two of the soldiers flee in terror, as McDERMOTT looks up in horror.

Back in the present, a journalist named DANA KRYER reads a news report about the destruction of the Polynesian village and General McDERMOTT'S refusal to speculate as to the cause of the catastrophe. TONY arrives at the newspaper office with a copy of an article DANA wrote about the trawler incident. He shows her a prehistoric (yet freshly dead) trilobite that he found in the net.

DANA arranges to meet with a University Professor named BALINGER, an expert in paleobiology, who has written several books on the subject of proto-saurs, atomic powered predecessors of the dinosaurs that once ruled the Earth. BALINGER quickly dismisses the trilobite as a fake but agrees to study it further, just before he is whisked away by a couple government agents. Asked to come down to Baja, Mexico, he decides to invite his 'girl-friend' who is free for the weekend, it is LESLEY-ANNE DAXTON.

DAXTON and KEVIN arrive at a hastily constructed basecamp near the Pacific ocean. They are joined a few minutes later by BALINGER who arrives in another jeep. Lying on the beach below them is a dead reptile like creature, as big as a house.

In a conference room later that night, DAXTON briefs a group that includes both BALINGER and McDERMOTT, about the discovery of the Soviet submarine, and its apparent connection to the dead creature found on the beach. McDERMOTT clearly lying through his teeth, dismisses the animal as a possible Soviet secret weapon. Animosity develops between BALINGER and McDERMOTT. As BALINGER explains his 'proto-saur' theory, a heated debate ensues. At least one of the military scientists is of the opinion that the creature may represent the start of an invasion from outer space. As the debate continues, the scene shifts to another location, where KRUSCHKOV and a scientist named PETROVICH (the engineer responsible for the 'Dragon' missile) listen in surreptitiously. Confused over talk of the 'proto-saur' creature the Russian scientist thinks they are speaking in code. KRUSCHKOV however is already formulating the next step in his plan to retrieve the lost missiles.

Later that same night BALINGER and DAXTON are walking along outside their hotel, talking about the day's events. KEVIN is seen nearby practicing an escape routine (he's tied to a nearby column, and escapes in a matter of moments). BALINGER invites DAXTON for a drink and they are suddenly joined by LESLEY-ANNE DAXTON. Needless to say both husband and ex-wife (and BALINGER) are flustered by this encounter, KEVIN runs off, and BALINGER leaves the two alone to talk. It is clear that the marriage was broken by

DAXTON'S frequent (and dangerous) calls to duty, and LESLEY is none too happy to see her son KEVIN tagging along on his latest assignment.

KEVIN arrive at the cliff edge and looks down at the dead creature below. BALINGER shows up momentarily startling him. Bonded for the moment by their shared discomfort of the situation back at the hotel, BALINGER explains that the creature below is called GODZILLA after an old Japanese legend concerning a dragon god, the king of monsters. "Dragon?", says KEVIN, "you mean he could breathe fire?" "Not anymore," says BALINGER looking at the dead creature below.

Meanwhile further up the coast the night time calm of an off shore OIL DERRICK is destroyed by the arrival of the real GODZILLA. Alive and fully grown, this GODZILLA makes short work of the platform. As GODZILLA departs the horizon is filled with an eerie atomic glow, that fades, the derrick in flames.

After reading a news report about the derrick disaster (which is unexplained) DANA visits TONY'S apartment. Together they pay a visit to BALINGER'S office at the University. He has already been trying to locate her, given the new significance of the tritobite. Given that the trawler incident only happened three days previous, and the destruction of the Oil Derrick BALINGER begins to suspect that another creature may be out there, a theory the military (particularly McDERMOTT who knows better) are quick to ridicule. Hoping to find radioactive residue similar to that found in the baby, BALINGER gets a hold of a helicopter, and with TONY as a pilot, they pay a visit to the derrick's wreckage. Soldier guarding the site (under McDERMOTT'S command) fire at the helicopter which narrowly escapes after BALINGER manages to get a positive reading from the wreckage. As they head back to the mainland, an ARMY helicopter in lethal pursuit, GODZILLA suddenly rises out of the waves and into their path, TONY narrowly escapes but the Army chopper is not so lucky. BALINGER determined to alert the media, is stymied by lack of evidence, a McDERMOTT has revoked his security clearance, and the BABY GODZILLA has been removed to a secret location near by.

Meanwhile, later that night KEVIN is abducted by the Russian agents to be held as ransom for the lost 'Dragon' missiles. KEVIN is tied to a chair and left locked in the storage room of KRUSCHKOV'S hideout near Fort Point (below the Golden Gate bridge). Moments later KEVIN manages to escape his bonds.

At the same time somewhere out on the Bay, a sailboat is swallowed up in the open maw of GODZILLA, the Golden Gate bridge looming in the background.

KEVIN finds a flare gun in the room he is trapped in and fires it through an open ventilation shaft catching the attention of a nearby Coast Guard cutter which goes to investigate. Using a second flare, KEVIN disables his guard and escapes from the hideout with the Russian agents in hot pursuit. GODZILLA appears near the shoreline in front of KEVIN, and then slips back into the water. KEVIN is momentarily saved from capture

by the scientist PETROVICH who is against using the boy as a hostage, but KRUSCHKOV gets the drop on them. He is about to kill PETROVICH when the Coast Guard Cutter arrives. A gun battle ensues, only to be interrupted by the reappearance of GODZILLA beside the Golden Gate Bridge. KRUSCHKOV manages to escape with KEVIN in tow in a nearby skiff, but the boat is smashed in the wake of GODZILLA'S tail.

Full scale panic erupts at the sudden appearance of GODZILLA near the bridge.

Meanwhile elsewhere, BALINGER and DANA have broken into McDERMOTT'S office, where they discover proof of McDERMOTT'S knowledge of GODZILLA.

At the same time DAXTON and LESLEY rush to investigate reports of KEVIN being seen at Fort Point.

While at the Presidio troops and weapons are being prepped under McDERMOTT'S command to face GODZILLA. This is obviously the moment he has been waiting for all along.

After avoiding capture by Soldiers acting on McDERMOTT'S orders, BALINGER hijacks a ride on the back of an XM-1 Tank headed toward the bridge and the main battle.

Below the bridge at Fort Point, DAXTON and LESLEY are faced with the news of KEVIN'S death.

Meanwhile above them the battle begins. The conventional weapons only serve to enrage GODZILLA who begins smashing the bridge.

DAXTON narrowly saves himself and LESLEY from falling debris.

BALINGER confronts McDERMOTT, who tells him that he kept the monster a secret because he was afraid that 'candy-assed' scientists like him would want to study the monster instead of just destroying it. BALINGER is led away under armed guard, while McDERMOTT calls in a major air strike against GODZILLA who is now heading toward downtown San Francisco.

GODZILLA (causing untold destruction) wanders the city, tearing off the roofs of various water front warehouses as if searching for something. Walking across some tracks he derails a train. In the next warehouse he finds what he is looking for, the dead BABY GODZILLA. The King of the Monsters looks very sad for a moment, and then as jets sweep into the scene in attack formation, he rises up seemingly even bigger than before, ready to destroy the whole city. Using one of the train cars as a bat he smashes several jets out of the sky.

Not far away DANA becomes trapped in the flaming ruins of the upper floors of the newspaper building. She finds a parachute in the wreckage of an F-16 that has crashed through the wall of the office and uses it to drop to the ground several dozen stories below.

Meanwhile as the jets retreat, giving up the battle, DAXTON finds BALINGER and together they assess the possibility of destroying GODZILLA with the Russian 'Dragon' missiles. With the help of the (by now in custody) PETROVICH, they formulate a plan. The 'Dragon' missiles it turns out were specifically designed for use against nuclear weapons. According to BALINGER'S 'proto-saur' theory GODZILLA has an

atomic based metabolism, so the missiles should have a negative effect on him.

Later at the Presido's helipad, McDERMOTT at first refuses to co-operate with the plan which calls for him to let DAXTON call the shots for awhile. He is countermanded by a superior officer who is sympathetic to DAXTON's plan. McDERMOTT however continues his challenge of DAXTON'S authority, prompting DAXTON to snatch the General's hat off his head and riddle it with bullets, telling him that next time he'd 'leave his head in it'.

LESLEY worried that DAXTON may be killed carrying out the attack on GODZILLA tries to dissuade him and BALINGER (who understands the physiognomy of the monster best, volunteers. DAXTON (still pissed off at this point) tells LESLEY that here she has an opportunity to make a choice between him and BALINGER. Which of course angers LESLEY.

Just then KRUSCHKOV suddenly shows up with young KEVIN in tow. HE commandeers the helicopter carrying the 'Dragon' missiles. KEVIN manages to escape before the helicopter takes off, and runs into his mother's arms. DAXTON (after seeing that his son is ok) leaps up and grabs the landing gear of the helicopter and is carried aloft.

In the air he gets the jump on KRUSCHKOV and punches him in the face with a force that can be felt in the back row of the theatre. The two continue to struggle and DAXTON ends up back outside the chopper hanging onto the landing gear as KRUSCHKOV leans out to cut him. Suddenly GODZILLA rears up into the path of the helicopter, as the pilot pulls back on the joy stick to avoid the monster, KRUSCHKOV struggles to avoid falling out the open cockpit. DAXTON grabs him by his jacket and hauls him out into the night air.

KRUSCHKOV falls into the hand of GODZILLA who looks at him quizzically for a moment and then fires a blast of atomic breath in his direction, now crispy fried he pops the dead Russian into his mouth like an "M&M" (this is in the script I swear!)

At the same time DAXTON orders the helicopter pilot to make another pass on GODZILLA. While below the Military continue to fire mortars at GODZILLA, since McDERMOTT never ordered the cease fire. Just as DAXTON fires the first of the remaining 'Dragons' at GODZILLA a mortar explodes close by throwing off his aim. The helicopter tries unsuccessfully to avoid the monsters swipe and ends up crashing on a nearby roof top.

On the ground below, BALINGER, LESLEY and KEVIN have followed in a jeep. GODZILLA knocks over a nearby electrical tower, a portion of which traps KEVIN. GODZILLA looks down and appears to recognize KEVIN from their previous encounter. He lifts the wreckage, freeing the kid, who scrambles to safety. KEVIN yells to GODZILLA warning him to get away before he's killed. GODZILLA seems to understand the tone if not the actual meaning of KEVIN'S warning and turns back toward the bay.

Meanwhile on the roof where the chopper crashed, the pilot lies dead, while a bloody DAXTON climbs out of the burning wreckage holding the

remaining 'Dragon' missile. He limps clear just as the craft explodes.

Later on the street below, DAXTON commandeers a police cruiser and heads back to the Presido. While nearby, GODZILLA continues to cut a wide path of destruction as he heads back toward the waterfront.

Elsewhere, the bruised and miserable trio of BALINGER, LESLEY and KEVIN, stop on their way back to the base, and pick up a dazed looking DANA who just happens to wander by.

At the base, DAXTON is seen bloody and wounded, dragging the remaining missile behind him, looking for all the world like 'Christ with the cross'. He enters the command center where McDERMOTT is busy issuing orders. Handing the missile off to an enlisted man, DAXTON gets face to face with McDERMOTT and after a moment of silence punches him in the face. They both collapse to the floor just as BALINGER, LESLEY and KEVIN show up, amazed to find DAXTON alive.

It turns out that there are no pilots left on the base as McDERMOTT has just sent them all off in the latest round of attacks against GODZILLA who is back in the Bay. In any case the only remaining helicopter is an experimental prototype called the Super X (just kidding, it's really called an S-9 Hornet), and no one could fly it without special training.

Enter TONY (who up to now has only been glimpsed a couple of times drinking in a bar somewhere). Finally with a chance to prove himself, he picks up McDERMOTT'S damaged hat and putting it on says "Let's make that S.O.B."

While out on the Bay an unfortunate Cobra Blackhawk Helicopter is blown out of the sky by GODZILLA.

DANA gives TONY a tearful kiss for luck and he takes off, with BALINGER as his gunner. As they head toward GODZILLA they pass the now retreating squadron of Blackhawks. GODZILLA scrambles up onto Alcatraz Island to face this final attacker. TONY dodges a blast of atomic breath, and sweeps in toward the target. On the shore a tearful KEVIN watches the final attack. BALINGER tears in his eyes as well, lines up the sights of the missile launcher, says: "Sorry", and fires the remaining 'Dragon' down GODZILLA'S throat. The monster swallows and immediately goes into convulsions, and with one final aimless skyward blast, dies. In the East the Sun is rising.



SPACE WOMEN IN THE KAIJU EIGA

An Appreciation by Marshall Crist



Kaiju Eiga's Queen of Space, Kumi Mizuno

Space women in the kaiju eiga. Let the phrase roll over your tongue. Allow the images of malicious Kilaacs, docile, identical-looking X-ite servants, and benevolent, prophesying, Martian princesses reverberate in your mind. Their existence begs the question: Why? There is no simple answer, and yet, if you look inward, perhaps you will understand in a way that does not rely on logic. Space women.

Let's take a walk down space woman memory lane. Early kaiju eiga was a void barren of extraterrestrial females. *THE MYSTERIANS* (1957) particularly illustrates this, telling, as it does the story of the male survivors of a catastrophe on the planet Mysteroid. The women of Mysteroid, perhaps because of their fallout-induced infertility, are seemingly regarded as

superfluous to those in power (among both the aliens and those at Toho) and do not even appear in the film. But this would change.

GHIDRAH THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER (1964) was perhaps the first Japanese giant monster movie to attempt to portray a space woman. In it an Earth princess is miraculously saved from an assassination attempt, but suffers a bout of amnesia. In place of her memory is the belief that she is a Martian. She begins to make frighteningly accurate predictions about the activities of Earth's monsters. The exact nature of this transformation remains vague; for once the filmmakers didn't feel the need to explain everything in minute detail. Is the princess' mind under the domination of real Martians? Is she of mixed Earth/Mars ancestry, her genetic memory stirred by the arrival of Mars' destroyer, King Ghidorah? Or is it all just a bizarre fantasy brought on by the shock of the attempt made on her life? The usually melodramatic Akiko Wakabayashi plays the princess as a cypher, upon which viewers can project their own rationalizations.



Akiko Wakabayashi, at peril.



"CASARI ANCA" Toho style with Nick and Kumi.

The depiction of space women would make a major advance in **MONSTER ZERO** (1965). Fan favorite Kumi Mizuno essayed the role of Namikawa, the X-ite who would betray her planet for love. Unlike the other women of Planet X (all portrayed by Mizuno) Namikawa was able to break free from the computers that controlled her and offer Earth a clue to the X-ites' Achilles heel, before being martyred by the leader of Planet X. Decked out in a marvelous silver and black space uniform, Ms. Mizuno also sports the phoniest, most alluring wig worn by a Toho actress since **ATRAGON's** Mu Emperess. Despite fine turns in other noteworthy genre films, Mizuno never equalled the combination of passion and pathos that she brought to her space woman role. One must admit, however, that the film's scenario shamelessly panders to the male fantasy that a woman might become so smitten as to change such a fundamental aspect as planetary alliance.

In 1967's **THE X FROM OUTER SPACE**, the tables were turned and Earth women finally made it into outer space. True to gender stereotyping, two female astronauts must resolve their love triangle, but first there are low gravity aerobics, shower scenes, and a giant reptilian chicken with ping pong ball eyes on the loose. Peggy Neal's character helps save the world a couple of times before bowing out of her romantic entanglements.

DESTROY ALL MONSTERS (1968)

is not only considered by many to be the penultimate monster movie, it is also one of the finest examples of space women at their most evil: the Kilaacs. This silver bathing cap and cloak clad race used



The Kilaac Lender (Kyoko Ai).

Earthlings as their pawns and showed no mercy. The gender of these invaders takes on some interesting implications. Asian cinema is often accused of being misogynistic; certainly Japanese pornography seems inordinately interested in the debasement of women. In this context, **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS** seems rife with examples of male anxiety.

The scene of one young woman's earrings being torn from her ears is unusually brutal for a kaiju epic of this period. It is a scene of extreme interpersonal violence by a man against a woman (albeit perhaps justified) and is a far cry in tone from the silly monster decapitations and dismemberments of the Gamera series. (The humiliation of the woman is heightened as photographers lean forward for grisly close ups, like the stereotypical camera toting Japanese seen so frequently in Western "humor.") Another questionable scene occurs when the extremely phallic XY-



"Umm brains!" (from GAMERA VS. GUIRON)

3 assault ship enters the Kilaac "cave" and penetrates their domed moonbase with the vehicle's pulsing laser ray. You don't have to be Freud to figure that one out.

Daiei would meet the challenge and present evil space women the following year in GAMERA VS. GUIRON, perhaps as an intentional reversal on GAMERA VS. VIRAS' all male invaders from the year before. Guiron's two mistresses are bad indeed -- they intend to eat the brains of two Earth boys in order to absorb their victims' knowledge. The horrifying nature of the scene in which one boy is prepped for brain removal is far more disturbing than the excessive gore during the monster fights. Combine this with the fact that in the U.S. version, the alien women are dubbed with the same nasal, blase voices as one of the boys' mothers, and one can begin to see GAMERA VS. GUIRON as one of the most odd representations of castration anxiety in children's entertainment since *I.R. Puff'n'stuff*. (Even Guiron's head is knife-shaped.)

Daiei would again approach the topic of evil space women in GAMERA VS. ZIGRA (1971). In it an Earth astronaut is brainwashed to think she is from the planet Zigra. She begins by barking routine invasion threats in her obligatory form fitting spacesuit, from the most patently fake, two-dimensional spaceship set imaginable. Then she switches to a stolen bikini and chases

two kids around an aquatic park as acid rock blares. The enormous camp charm of these scenes is almost indescribable, yet curiously, the film is not highly regarded, even among Gamera fans.

Pretty much the final word on the subject of kaiju eiga space women (unless you count the delightful revisionist Mothra fairies from GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA, 1992) came by way of GAMERA SUPER MONSTER (1980). Obviously someone at Daiei liked space women! In this film we're offered three space super heroines hiding out on Earth, with one evil space woman in pursuit. Actually the good aliens are pretty bland, except for the oddly butch leader. They befriend a young Gamera fan, who in turn becomes a target of the invaders. The bad alieness is rather ineffectual, and eventually has a change of heart and sacrifices herself to preserve the safety of her new friends. (Oh, those turncoat, Earth-sympathizing, ex-bad girl aliens -- the price they must pay for realizing too late where their alliances should have been placed.) The film's implications are Oedipal, with Gamera replacing the young protagonist's absent father. The boy inhabits an incestuous fantasy-scape with the surrogate-mother aliens, leaving the real world altogether when Gamera dies. So, why space women? Ask any young monster fan. Because they're cool!



A scene from GAMERA VS. ZIGRA

KAIJU KUT-OUTS

KUMI MIZUNO

BIG
FUN!

© DAN
REED - IDEA
AND RON
WILBER - ART
1994



LAB TECHNICIAN
FROM "FRANKENSTEIN
CONQUERS THE
WORLD."



PLANET X ALIEN FROM
"GODZILLA VS. MONSTER
ZERO."

ISLAND GIRL
FROM "GODZILLA
VS. THE SEA
MONSTER."



CUT-OUT BONUS -
ISLAND NATIVE
MACHETE.



TOHO'S FANTASY FEMME FATALES



WOMEN •

Femme Fatales. Maidens. Sisters. There has been a veritable parade of young actresses in the Toho pantheon of fantasy films since the 1950s; obviously, they have either played important, pivotal or prominent roles in these filmic stories — elemental to the structure of the Toho universe. And more important than one would be lead to believe at a first viewing, or casual following of the films.

But female characters in the Toho films are much more complex than the mere "romantic interest" or "damsel in distress," who proliferated western output from the '50s through the '60s, and so should not be taken for granted. This is thanks, in great part, to screenwriters such as Shinichi Sekizawa and Takeshi Kimura (both very different writers, but both have penned very

strong female characters) and directors such as Ishiro Honda — women with concrete convictions and iron wills, laying an unconscious foundation into the mettle of the genre, a foundation that has left a lasting impression on viewers worldwide. Sometimes the actresses themselves have leapt off the screen, beyond their characters, and have continued to haunt audiences long after the final frame has run through the projection gate.

Emi and Yumi Ito, the twins who essayed the "Shobijin" (Little Beauties) of *Mothra* in a trio of films (all directed by Honda), were also known as the world-famous vocal act "The Peanuts" for over twenty years. They originally were signed with Watanabe Productions, the biggest talent agency in Japan, and scored a No. 1 hit in January, 1959 with their debut single "Kuroi Hanabera" on King Records. This was of course the beginning of a long recording career.

After the release of *MOTHRA* Stateside in 1962, The Peanuts became quite the sensational celebrities in the US; they released an album on the Columbia label, "The Peanuts Around the World," and made a number of television appearances — most notably on "The Danny Kaye Show" (where they were billed as "Special Guests"). So popular was their performance, they returned to the show several times, and Emi and Yumi were invited to guest on "The Ed Sullivan Show," where they appeared a number of times, along with "International Showtime" (hosted by Jim "Mr. Magoo" Backus). The Peanuts were the first, and most internationally known, of the Toho fantasy film women.



The Toho fantasy films have always featured strong female performances. Here are a few that have left their mark on the hearts and minds of fans everywhere. (* photo source)



Momoko Kochi
(***GODZILLA, HALF HUMAN,**
THE MYSTERIANS),



Kyoko Azumi
(BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE),



Yumi Shirakawa
(RODAN, *THE II-MAN,
THE MYSTERIANS,
THE SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN,
THE LAST WAR, GORATH,
THE ADVENTURES OF
TAKLAMAKAN),



Kaoru Yachigusa
(MADAME WHITE/SNAKE,
***THE HUMAN VAPOR),**



Mayuri Mokusho as Yasuko Inouye in
GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN
Pictured with Masaru Chinkai
as pilot Koji Kobayashi



Kyoko Ai
(DESTROY ALL MONSTERS)



Yuriko Hoshi
(THE LAST WAR, WHIRLWIND,
*MOTHRA AGAINST GODZILLA,
GHIDRAH, THE THREE HEADED
MONSTER), Pictured here with
Akira Takarada



Bihari Maeda
(SON OF GODZILLA)



Tomoko Ai
(TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA)

Yuko Azano
(THE WAR IN SPACE)



Kaoru Yumi
(CATASTROPHE: 1999, * ESPY)



Megumi Odaka as Miki Sengawa
(all the Godzilla films since '89)

If one of your favorites has been left out, my apologies this essay has a special kind of Toho Woman in mind. Women with the ability to bend steel and boil blood.

AKEMI NEGISHI





Ishiro Honda & Akemi on the set of King Kong Vs. Godzilla

(Born 3/26/34)
Akemi Negishi was first discovered as a dancer by western director Josef Von Sternberg, and was cast as a lead in his 1953 shot-on-location film **THE SAGA**

OF ANATAHAN (with a score by Akira Ifukube). She was singled out, not only for her ample charms, but also for her exotic beauty. More importantly, she is remembered for her sheer intensity in each role she was assigned. Even though she only appeared in two genre films (**HALF HUMAN** and **KING KONG VS. GODZILLA**), the young actress made quite an impression on her audience -- merely a cipher in **KING KONG VS. GODZILLA** (Honda, 1962), she managed to hypnotize male viewers with only her raw physicalness, as the native woman who dances for Kong (the lucky apc).

But, it is her first genre role that was her most memorable and intense... **HALF HUMAN** (1955). Ishiro Honda cast Negishi in the film, after having worked with her on the previous year's romantic tragedy **FAREWELL RABAU** (where she played an island girl who falls in love with Zero Pilot Akihiko Hirata). **HALF HUMAN** finds Negishi as "Chika," a young Ainu woman who dares to reject the laws of her tribe in worshipping a monster snowman as a god, and fights the creature in order to save Akira Takarada from its clutches.

This role is most noteworthy in as much as she is constantly fighting -- her tribe/the monster -- and must suffer in the process -- torture, ridicule, banishment, and ultimately, death -- Chika, as fleshed out by Negishi, is the first and one of the singularly intense of the Toho Women. It is unclear, as of this writing, why Honda did not use Akemi Negishi in more of his films, genre or otherwise.



Akemi as Chika the beautiful Ainu Girl

MIE HAMMA



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Mie getting cozy with Rhodes Reason KING KONG ESCAPES



(Born: 11/20/43) Mie Hama began her career as a model -- and was sought out by Toho as part of their "Three Pet" contest, and was hired along with Yuriko Hoshi to the studio's roster of actresses. She is conversely cute and sexy, and has been known to take on some daringly brazen roles, as well as girl next-door parts.

One of her initial films was **THE YOUTH AND HIS AMULET** (Hiroschi Inagaki, 1961), the serio-comic of a Japanese demigod who comes to the aid of a young boy. Her next genre role was **KING KONG VS. GODZILLA**, playing "Fumiko," the sister of TTV Cameraman "Sakurai" (Tadao Takeshima) -- the first of several "damsel in distress" roles she would play in the next handful of genre films she participated in: **SAMURAI PIRATE**, **WHIRLWIND** (Hiroschi



Mie in **KING KONG VS. GODZILLA**

Inagaki, 1964) and **THE ADVENTURES OF TAKI-A-MAKAN**.

Hama soon received an exciting and scene-stealing role, a character torn by conflicting loyalties, a character that embodies all of the parts that Hama had played: The mysterious "Madame Piranha" in Honda's **KING KONG ESCAPES** (1967) -- one of the most complex of all Toho's women. Aside from a number of spy, action dramas and comedies in which she appeared in the mid-to late '60s -- **ESCAPES** remains Hama's meatiest role, and she tackled the part with gusto: at first, Madame Piranha is cold,



Eisai Amamoto with Mie in **K.K. ESCAPES** calculating, detached and vile... as she realizes the scope of what she has brought about, she becomes vulnerable, sympathetic, and ultimately, tragic by the end of the film. An actress Honda was able to employ well -- almost as well as his most favorite female thespian, Kumi Mizuno. Hama then went onto international screens as "Kissy Suzuki," Bond's woman in **YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE**.

As a note of interest, Hama has continued acting to this day. In films, television, and even commercials -- probably the most continuous acting career of all the Toho Women. You can also see Mie Hama and Akiko Wakabayashi "au naturel" in a Playboy pictorial on **YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE** and "the Bond Girls."

AKIKO WAKABAYASHI

©COLBER 95



Kaiju Review

Yuriko Hoshi interviews Akiko: GHIDRAH



(Born: 12/13/39) Akiko Wakabayashi is sort of an enigma... beautiful and mysterious, sultry yet elegant -- she graced only a mere handful of (mostly) superior genre entries. She entered Toho in the late '50s after trying out for the part of "Princess Yuki" in Kurosawa's **THE HIDDEN FORTRESS**. Aside from a bit part in **BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE** (Honda, 1959), she made her genre entrance as "Tamiye" in **KING KONG VS. GODZILLA**, a minor role as Mie Hama's best friend -- obviously, her skills were not fully realized in that part, but she was not squandered for long.

It was in **SAMURAI PIRATE** (aka **THE LOST WORLD OF SINBAD**; Senkichi Taniguchi, 1963) where she really "stood out" -- playing a peasant girl with enough cleavage to drive a wizened wizard (Ichiro Arishima) into a near fit of lust. Next, Wakabayashi starred as the femme fatale moll of a diamond thieving gang in **DOGORA THE SPACE MONSTER** (Honda, 1964) -- her character ends up with a belly full of lead, when she double-crosses the gang boss over a

cache of "a girl's best friend." Her outfits in the film are standouts: slinky black cocktail dresses and leopard-print dresses.

Wakabayashi went on to essay her most memorable part, that of "Princess Salno," later that same year, in **GHIDRAH THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER** (Honda). Here, Wakabayashi plays a dual-role, in which she reverts to her suppressed Venusian heritage (Martian in the US version), crossing Japan to warn the people of imminent doom at the hands of King Ghidrah; this was her most impressive assignment in a genre film.

Her last genre appearance was in the



Akiko with Toshiro Mifune: TAKLAMAKAN

quasi-sequel to **SAMURAI PIRATE**, which was released in 1966: **THE ADVENTURES OF TAKLAMAKAN** (Senkichi Taniguchi). You can also catch Akiko Wakabayashi in a number of spy/comedies from Toho, included the Woody Allen spoof **WHAT'S UP TIGER LILY?** and the 007 opus **YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE**.



Akiko at the wheel, while Fumi Amemoto holds a gun on Robert Dunham: DOGORA

KUMI MIZUNO



©WILBER-94

Ishiro Honda gets a feel for directing the 'true Diva' of Toho films



suffering from amnesia in **GORATH** (Honda, 1962). This was her first large part in the genre production, and she played it empathetically -- first suffering the death of her betrothed (Iirao Kirino) when his spaceship is consumed by the rogue star Gorath, until Kanai -- a college sweetheart -- comes back into her life. **GORATH** set Mizuno on the road to Goddess status.

Mizuno literally sent male members of the audience into a frenzy as "Maimi," a most selfish, vain and seductive bitch as there ever was -- she uses anyone to get what she desires, toys with men who succumb to her charms, and then rubs that fact into the very faces of those who helped her. Evil and vile, yet alluring and hypnotic -- a siren who leads several men to their doom... their noose wound with lust. The film; **MATANGO** (Honda, 1963).

She turns the tables on us, to play a fanciful and playful part -- a woman pirate, who has a soft-spot for "Saemon Luzonsuke" (Toshiro Mifune) in **SAMURAI PIRATE**. The more her character plays up to Luzon, in the grand comedic tradition, the more he ignores her -- a wonderful turnabout for Mizuno. The following year, 1964, she appeared in Inagaki's fantastic, **WHIRLWIND**, opposite Raigoro Ichikawa, and a cast of Toho regulars.

(real name: Maya Igarashi; born 1/1/36). Well, what can one say about the true Diva of the Toho film? Many things. But the most complimentary of which came from director Ishiro Honda, "Mizuno was amazing; when she stepped into a role, she actually became the character she was playing!"

One of her first genre roles came in 1959 with director Hiroshi Inagaki's tale of ancient mythological Japan, **THE THREE TREASURES**; a film that was a star-studded celebration of Toho's 1000th production. Her next genre role was that of "Takiko Nomura," the beleaguered girlfriend of "Tatsuo Kanai" (Akira Kubo), a space pilot



Kumi and Toshiro Mifune: **SAMURAI PIRATE**.

In **FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD** (Honda, 1965), Mizuno plays "Sueko," a scientist and romantic interest to American star Nick Adams, as "Doctor Bowen." Although her character stands out as sympathetic to the Frankenstein boy, it is somewhat a "normal"

character, as opposed to some of the more stand out roles she has played. Even so, as Sueko, Mizuno shines... brightly.

Her most memorable and famous character was brought to life later that year in Honda's **MONSTER ZERO**, casting her as the tragic "Ms.

Namikawa" of World Education

Corporation -- who in reality is a member of an invasion plot from Planet X. At first, somewhat reminiscent of her character from **MATANGO**, but as the film unspools, she soon falls from the grace of "the Controller" (Yoshio Tsuchiya), as she falls in love with the man she is sent to spy on (Nick Adams). Namikawa then becomes torn between duty and her emotions, finally giving the people of the Earth the lynchpin in which to defeat the invaders. But at the cost of



FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD

her own life.

There has been quite a bit of speculation on both sides of the Pacific, as to the connection about the rumors of a love affair between Adams and Mizuno, his divorce shortly thereafter, and finally his apparent suicide several years later. There is no conclusive evidence that has surfaced to support the rumors of a love affair, but many people believe that Nick loved Kumi.

"Akemi" was her next character in **WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS** -- a proverbial carbon-copy of her **FRANKENSTEIN** character, which



GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER

makes sense in light of the fact that the films were originally meant as direct sequels, and would have featured the original trio of human characters. Toho got its foreign lead in the guise of the then-argumentative and temperamental Russ Tamblyn, as "Dr. Stewart."

A change of pace was in store for Mizuno in her last (so far) genre role as "Dayo," a captured Infant Islander, in **GODZILLA VS. SEA MONSTER** (Jun Fukuda, 1966) -- a part originally intended for actress Keiko Sawai, who played a party goer at the Shirane Lodge in **FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD**. It is not known, as of this writing, why the casting change was made to include Mizuno. No matter the arguments pro and con on the film itself, Mizuno stands out in brown makeup and tropical wear (read: bikini) -- but all she does pray for Mothra to awaken to rescue her fellows in bondage, on Letchi Island, under the whips of the evil Red Bamboo. But, as always, even in a film like this, Kumi Mizuno is a sight to behold.

The most fan-friendly of the Toho actresses, she regularly makes television appearances, and has been a presence at fan events -- she has even served as the narrator on the 1986 Toho Video documentary "Toho Spfx Outtakes Collection," and was a guest on the memorial show for the late Ishiro Honda. Her most recent film appearance of note, was in the late '80s film, **THIEVING RUBY**, playing Itiroyuki (MESSAGE FROM SPACE) Sanada's mother.

Lasting impressions. Women with iron wills and soft hearts. These are the complex and strong, female characters forged in the furnaces of the Japanese film industry. May the women of Toho Film live eternal... and hail the next generation of ladies of the Japanese Fantasy Film!

-August Ragone



Kumi in her most famous role from **MONSTER ZERO**

Ron Wilber's Kaiju



Eiji Tsuburaya

JULY 7, 1909 - JANUARY 25, 1970

Legends



THE LEGACY OF EIJI TSUBURAYA TO THE WORLD OF JAPANESE FANTASY FILM AND TELEVISION IS SO GREAT IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE THAT WORLD EXISTING WITHOUT HIM.

IN 1954 HE LED THE EFFECTS TEAM AT TOHO IN THE CREATION OF THE MOST FAMOUS MONSTER TO EVER COME OUT OF THE EAST: GODZILLA.

JUST AS GODZILLA HAD CHANGED THE FACE OF JAPAN'S FANTASTIC CINEMA, THE CREATION OF ULTRAMAN WOULD DO LIKEWISE FOR JAPANESE TELEVISION.

THE TRUE LEGACY OF EIJI TSUBURAYA EXISTS IN THE SENSE OF WONDER HE HAS PROVIDED TO FANS FROM AROUND THE WORLD.

POWER WOMEN

Appreciating the Female Stars of Japanese Live Action Television

By Kevin Grays

When Bandai America Inc. released one of their first MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS Press Kits, one of their press releases of February, 1994, noted that, "It's a phenomenon that everyone is talking about! What was initially conceived as a traditional male action toy line, is turning the heads of many industry watchers. Young girls are watching the show -- and young girls are playing with the toys! In monitoring the first few weeks of the MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS TV show, researchers found that a whopping 40% of the viewing audience was female. 'This has been attributed to the equal importance the female characters share with their male counterparts. A role that was written into the first script and has continued throughout the series.' 'This is also true of the original Japanese television programming, which gave

inspiration (and footage) to the vision of the MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS.

Japan may not be a country that immediately pops into our minds when we think of nations where women have had a history of achieving equal opportunities with men in the general society. However, in the fictional universe of Japanese Fantasy entertainment, a variety of impressive female characters have always been envisioned by the writers of the television programs and portrayed by a number of talented actresses. Back in 1966, Tsuburaya's original television classics, ULTRA Q and ULTRAMAN introduced two particularly well known regular female characters who joined their male teams mates in various dangerous situations.

The character of Daily News photographer, Yuriko Edogawa led her to frequently face the mysterious creature challenges that her male co-workers would try to flee. And likewise although there were times when she was needed to remain at science

headquarters to operate her communications console, Special Science Party Patrol officer Akiko Fuji was always eager to accompany the male officers on even the most dangerous missions. Both roles were pioneered by actress Hiroko Sakurai who would portray a variety of diverse characters in the Tsuburaya television universe. Tsuburaya's Ultra Series



Hiroko Sakurai as Akiko Fuji
(pictured with the Science Patrol)



Mitsuko Hoshi
as Yuko Minami
her destiny as a
Lunar Princess

highlighted a variety of strong female characters, like TAC (Terrible-monster Attacking Crew) officer Yuko Minami (Mitsuko Hoshi) of 1972's **ULTRAMAN ACE**. Her role was just as important as that of TAC officer Seiji Hokuto (Keiji Takamine) in the earlier half of the series when it took the combined touch of their Ultra rings to initiate the transformation into Ultraman Ace. In the latter half of the show, she fully realizes her developed cosmic consciousness and increased powers, brought to the surface when her true identity as the descendent of a race that inhabited Earth's moon is revealed. Eventually, she returns to the lunar dimension of her ancestry, transformed like a goddess, in this modern interpretation of the classic Japanese myth, **TAKETORI MONOGATORI**, about "Kaguyahime - The Shining Princess (also known as The Moon Maiden)." Powerful female Ultra beings also appeared in the Ultra Series, including one of the Ultra civilization's highest figures of honor, The Mother of Ultra. Introduced in **ULTRAMAN TARO** (1976), she is the great healer of the Ultra warriors, the wife of the commanding Father of

Ultra, and the actual birth mother of Ultraman Taro. In 1980, an Ultra woman warrior called Yuria was featured in **ULTRAMAN 80** to help the title Ultraman in the concluding episodes of that series.

In regards to actual physical action, the female characters of Toei television can't be beat (literally!). With 1973, came the series **KIKAIDER 01** which featured the powerful female android, Mari, who could transform into Vijinder. Mari was played by Etsuko Shiomi, an exceptional martial arts action actress who may be familiar to some as Sue Shiomi from such English dubbed films as **FEMALE ASSASSIN**, **SISTER STREETFIGHTER**, **SURE KILL**, **KARATE LADY**, etc., who was also one of the best known female members of JAC. The JAC (Japan Action Club)



Etsuko Shiomi as Mari on **KIKAIDER 01**

was founded by the legendary Japanese action star, Shinichi Chiba (known in the west as "Sonny" Chiba), of whom Shiomi was a big fan. JAC became a major force in developing actors and stunt crews particularly in the genre of Toei superheroes during the 70's. Their rigorous training in the martial arts, choreography, acrobatics and stunt work produced some of the most memorable and visually exciting action programming perhaps ever seen on television. They may even have been too good. Such intricately choreographed and explosive sequences drew the attention of conservative critics even in Japan, as well as concerned parental and television watchdog groups who would eventually petition TV Asahi and Toei against the shows. Even through all of this chaos and controversy, powerful fighting female characters continued to emerge from Japanese television. Young American audiences may just recently have become exposed to such action girl heroes as those seen in the **MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS** or **V.R. TROOPERS**, but

Toei's landmark series of sentai shows have always featured young women who are just as capable as their male team members even if some of them may be better recognized for their general physical talents and skills than their actual acting abilities.

Yuki Yajima was a particular JAC actress who appeared in Toei's second Space Sheriff series, 1983's **SPACE SHERIFF SHARIVAN**, which starred JAC sensation Hiroshi Watari in the lead role of Den Iga (Sharivan). Iga's main female assistant, Lily, was played by Yumiko Furuya, and Yajima was introduced into the series as space warrior agent Bell Helen, who risks her own life to aid the young Space Sheriff in the battles against the supernatural forces of Mador and Devil Emperor Psycho (Saiko). Yajima also originally starred in the 6th Super Sentai series, **SUPER ELECTRON BIOMAN** (1984), as photographer Mika Koizumi, who transforms into **Yellow Four** of the Bioman sentai team. Her character is killed in the early half of the series in the team's constant war against the evil forces of the Gear empire, reported from behind the scenes as a result of Yajima's decision to retire from JAC over financial matters. By the 1980's, JAC was near bankruptcy as the controversies over their TV violence eventually decreased their services and job assignments from television producers.

In 1983, Sonny Chiba went on to form the new JAC Training Center to specialize in the training of stunt men, keeping JAC alive but in the face of disastrous financial difficulties. As the JAC was forced to diversify to survive, the company expanded into other areas of entertainment like live plays and amusement park stage shows, incorporating dance, singing, and other performance arts into its curriculum.



Yuki Yajima as **BIOMAN**



Another JAC actress to make a strong impression on television viewers in Japan was Naomi Morinaga, especially with her performance in the 3rd Space Sheriff series, **SPACE SHERIFF SHAIKID** (1984), as Annie. The fierce independence and lethal combat skills of the yet charmingly feminine young Annie totally crush the stereotype of the passive Japanese woman who always keeps her place several steps behind the man. In fact, many consider Annie to have been a more exciting character than her male lead, Dai Sawamura, Space Sheriff Shaider himself, who was portrayed by actor Hiroshi Tsuburaya (Grandson of the great Eiji Tsuburaya). Morinaga also was one of the female warriors to star in Toci's 1986 series, **DIMENSIONAL WARRIOR, SPILVAN** (or "Spilban", as the Japanese 'v' and 'b' are interchangeable when translated into English). Here, she was Helen, who could transform into Helen Lady, one of two female assistants to Yosuke Jo (Hiroshi Watari) who is Spilvan. The

other, original, woman warrior, and the previously captured sister of Yosuke Jo, was called Diana (Makoto Sumikawa) and she could become Diana Lady. Footage and costume designs from this series were

used by Saban to create the currently syndicated **V.R. TROOPERS** (in combination with footage and costumes from Toci's **SUPER MACHINE METALDER** of 1987). In **V.R. TROOPERS**, the single female heroine who transforms, the Underground Voice Daily photo journalist Kaitlin Star, is played by Sarah Brown. Coming from the prestigious Los Angeles Country High School For The Performing Arts, Brown has also directed performances of such western classics as **THE CRUCIBLE** and **ANTIGONE**, and she was the hostess for the European **The World of Entertainment** series. She has a background in gymnastics and dance.

The lead female actresses in Saban's **MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS** actually share some interesting parallels to their Japanese Toci counterparts. Amy Jo Johnson, who plays Kimberly, The Pink Ranger, started training in gymnastics when she was only seven years old. In her teenage years, she went on to compete in international tournaments held in Europe. She was also a finalist in the Miss Teen Massachusetts contest and studied at both the Lee Strasberg Studio and The American Musical and Dramatic Academy of New York. Her character, Kimberly, one of the most popular girls in Angel Grove High School, possesses a strong will and is very independent. Amazingly, her Valley girl image and insatiable love for shopping have already been over-



emphasized and attacked by some American critics as presenting a negative stereotype of American girls, despite the overwhelmingly positive admiration she is receiving from young female fans everywhere (not to mention the number of young and not-so young male viewers who enjoy watching her).

Thuy Trang, who portrayed Trini, The Yellow Ranger, was born in the war ravaged land of Vietnam from which she and her family were forced to flee at the war's end. Her family immigrated into the United States and settled in Los Angeles. She has pursued a degree in Civil engineering in addition to her acting and martial arts training. Her role as Trini is characterized by a gentle, intelligent, rational personality of determination. Her character is closer to that of a loner than the socially popular Kimberly, although the two became best friends. The role of Trini is no longer a major one in the continuing adventures of the MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS.

As the series has progressed, she, along with Jason (Austin St. John), and Zack (Walter Jones), were selected from thousands of contestants to attend a world peace summit in Switzerland. There, they join a special team of other teens chosen from other

countries to contributed their own ideas for dealing with the international problems of pollution, hunger, education, poverty, and cultural barriers, with leading international scientists, politicians, and academics. (In reality the three actors' desire for a larger piece of the Ranger revenues led to their replacement on the series-Ed.)

The powers of The Yellow Ranger were transferred to Aisha, a lively young African-American girl who is among the new students to move into Angel Grove. The role of Aisha belongs to Karan Ashley, whose background included, modeling, dancing, and even a five year stint with the band 'Krush'. Their single "Lets get together" was featured on the soundtrack of "Mo Money". Ms. Ashley has also made other television appearances including Walker, Texas Ranger (another show targeted by media watchdogs as being too violent).

In those scenes of The Yellow Ranger that were taken directly from DINOSAUR SENTAI ZYURANGER (1992), the stunt actor

Reiko Chiba



in the actual costume was portraying a male character from the original Japanese series. In *Zyuranger*, The Yellow Ranger was The Tiger Ranger, the transformed identity of Boy (Takumi Hashimoto), the 15 year old knight of the Daimu Family. The Pink Ptera Ranger, 17 year old Princess Mei of the Lishia Family, was played by Reiko Chiba. Chiba is also a popular young model in Japan, and has appeared on the cover of such magazines as *B-CUT* (1994, Volume 103, June). She has also been featured in a revealing collection of photographs by Masahige Ogata which were printed in a special photo album book completely devoted to her called *FIRST VOYAGE*, published by Kindaichiga sha and copyrighted 1993 by Roman Co., Ltd. and T & Wave Co., Ltd.

Saban's decision to create a team with two female members is nothing revolutionary for the Japanese Sentai series at this time. Coincidentally, the Sentai series which preceded *ZYURANGER*, the *BIRDMAN SENTAI JETMAN* (1991), featured two female super heroines in its cast. Kaori Rokumeikan, the cultured and charmingly stylish daughter of The

Rokumeikan Estate who becomes The White Swan and develops an attraction for Jetman leader Ryu Tendoh (Kotaro Tanaka) while having to literally slap away the abrasive advances of the antagonistic Black Condor, Gai Yuki (Toshihide Wakamatsu), was affectionately portrayed by actress Rika Kishida. The younger Blue Swallow, Aiko Hayasaka, the daring and occasionally brash teenage member of the team, was played by Sayuri Uchida.

One particularly unique feature of *JETMAN* was that this time, the sentai was also commanded by a woman, a very strong, professional, highly capable and especially efficient director. Commander Aya Odagiri was the managing director of the Earth Defense Operations' Project "J" of The Sky Force. The major focus of Project J was the development of the Birdnic Wave energy which would empower its selected agents with increased super abilities. Ryu was one of the original Sky Force officers chosen to be the subject of the experiment, however, as he was being energized by the rays which are to give birth to his Jetman abilities, the unknown evil of Vyram emerged from another dimension and attacked the orbiting Sky Force base. Commander Odagiri escapes with Ryu just before the base explodes, sending steams of the Birdnic Wave energy through terrestrial skies and down to Earth where the four other individuals now destined to become The Human



Bird Sentai are struck. Odagiri takes the initiative and the responsibility for training, and providing guidance to the newborn team. Mikiko Miki is the actress who brought to life the character of Commander Odagiri, and she portrays another strong, even shocking character in **5 STAR SENTAI DAIRANGER** (1993) as the mother of Ko Koshinsei. Ko (Hisashi Sakai) is a 10 year old boy who possesses supernatural chaotic force energies deep within him which the evil empire of Goma wants to take control of. Ko's mother, aware of the presence of evil that would try to claim her son some day, went so far as to brand his arm with the symbol of The White Tiger to protect him when he was just a 4 year old child. An act that would be interpreted as severe child abuse. Ko turns out to be the prophesized inheritor of the White Tiger sword, when he is able to

remove it from its bedding in stone. Thus, with his own internal power, he becomes the legendary Kiba Ranger, before Goma can get control of the sword or destroy him. With his troubled childhood and separation from his mother, Ko is basically a juvenile delinquent, so when he becomes Kiba Ranger, he is a wild, uncontrollable force, even for Goma. He takes a liking to Lin, so he gravitates towards the Dai Rangers, who eventually become like older brothers and sister he never had (the issue of child abuse and delinquency in Japan are interwoven into the mythical fantasy of **DAIRANGER**).

Though they were separated, Ko's mother continues to do all that she can to save her son, eventually sacrificing her own life against Goma to free him from their evil influence so that he can use his

powers as Kiba Ranger to join Dairanger in the war against the Goma forces.

In the U.S., the Kiba Ranger costume is that of Tommy (Jason David Frank). In **MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS** when Zordon and Alpha convert his powers into the new powers of The White Ranger, from his former Green Ranger (Dragon Ranger from **ZYURANGER**) identity which was originally unleashed by Rita Repulsa (Bandra in **ZYURANGER**) to use against the Power Rangers.

In the original Japanese series **DAIRANGER**, Chinese mythology played a particularly important role. All of these Rangers were chosen because of



Sayuri Uchida, the Blue Swallow of JETMAN

the high levels of "ki" -- spiritual powers or supernatural internal force -- that they manifest, to become warriors of the Dai Clan and suppress the resurrecting threat of the Gonsu Clan before a prolonged war between their forces runs the risk of delaying the peace of the Great Dragon Deity, Daijinyu (Serpent-Terra in **MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS**). When disturbed, the great Daijinyu would come to end the turmoil and restore peace in the galaxy by destroying the earth! The single female member of the team in Lin Tenspacei, as played by Natsumi Takahashi. Rin is an exchange student from China attending university studies in Japan. She is the niece of Master Kaku (Osamu Nakatane) and she possesses the greatest degree of power in the strength of her spirit, of the Dairangers. She becomes the Pink Phoenix Ranger of **DAIRANGER**.

The universe of Japanese TV has had its share of persistent villains. One of the most prolific actresses to portray some of these most memorable villainesses has to be Machiko Soga. American kids know her as Rita Repulsa from the earlier seasons of **MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS**. These scenes were, of course, taken right out of **DINOSAUR SENTAII ZYURANGER** in which she was called Bandra (pronounced as "Bandoruh"), and just re-dubbed into English for the American audience. Despite the new, not always in sync, voice, the character made a definite impression. In a recent edition of Starline Publications' **TEEN DREAM'S POWER HEROES AND VILLAINS** Magazine, it was reported that, "Thousands of young fans all over the world agree that the original empress of evil, Rita Repulsa, should put in an appearance," when mentioning their reactions upon hearing about the making of a **MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS** movie. And in a recent commercial for the **POWER RANGERS** Sega games, she is dubbed as uttering the famous "Sega!" shout at the end. Soga has a career that reaches far back into the decades of Japanese TV. From the American Sorceress, Iquana, in Toho's NET series of 1972 called **RAINBOWMAN**, or the witch, Belbara, in Toei's **MAGIC CLASSROOM** series from 1976, to Queen Hedorian of **THE ELECTRONIC SENTAII DENZIMAN** (1980) who also reappears in **THE SOLAR SENTAII SUN VULCAN** (1981) or Queen Pandora of the **DIMENSIONAL WARRIOR SPIELVAN** from 1986. Machiko Soga knows just how to combine that certain amount of humorous sadistics with villainous intensity in her various roles. Her characters may be evil, but she brings forth such enjoyably eccentric personalities in them that audiences have come to love her portrayals. By the time

that she was playing the wicked Bandra in **ZYURANGER**, she was being treated as a mothering figure of badness with a concluding storyline that had Bandra converting her own young son, Kai, into an instrument of evil to use against The Daimur Sentaai, having called upon the forces of the great Satan (to occur in **POWER RANGERS**) spirit. She is finally overcome with grief when his defeat ends in his death. Bandra does, however, get to hold the newborn child of Griffores (Goldar in **POWER RANGERS**) and Lamy (Ami Kawai presented as Scorpina in **RANGERS**) at the conclusion of their defeat.

The role of women in the worlds of Japanese fantasy and science-fiction television is much more complex than the mere image of predominantly male teams who just happen to have one or two female members along for the ride, to do the tea service, or to answer the telephone and convey the messages to the men of authority. Japanese market research has shown that one of the keys to commercial success lies in reaching the female market, especially within the current demographics of the recent decade.

Unfortunately, critics of the genre who don't understand any Japanese or who have only seen half an episode of an entire series (or both) on which to base opinions have drawn premature conclusions about what they have repeatedly labeled as cheap programming aimed only at juvenile male audiences. As much as any fiction may present the prejudices of its creators, so too exist the presentations of genuine dreams and hopes for better worlds and societies where heroes and villains won't have their potentials limited by race or gender. And despite the prevalent attitudes in the west towards Japanese television, some of these incredible little worlds of televised fantasy really do have a wonderful abundance of the latter.

-Kevin Gray



Machiko Soga in one of her many 'evil empress' roles, here as Queen Pandora of the Warler Empire from **DIMENSIONAL WARRIOR SPIELVAN**

HALF JAPANESE

CONSIDERING THE AMERICAN VERSION OF JUJIN YUKIOTAKO

by Chris Bradley

To Japanese sci-fi purists, the original versions of the early Toho genre films are preferable to the modified U.S. versions. Of course they're ultimately right. Though directors like Ishiro Honda might not be considered auteurs, their films still have their own integrity, which is disturbed by the paste-up job inflicted on them by some American film studios. Nevertheless, some of the American editions can be condemned too much. It's easy to slip into the view that film importers and their audiences were too ethnocentric to accept a story without white American lead characters. There's doubtlessly some truth to that. But an even more plausible explanation for the editing practice is that it was probably easier for small studios (and generally it is small studios in question) to film insert sequences and use voice-over narration throughout, than to go to the trouble of painstakingly translating and dubbing a vocal track from the original. In the fifties and sixties -- the age of Roger Corman -- science fiction films had to be churned out so rapidly that adding a few quick extra scenes and a voice-over track to a Japanese film could seem the sensible way to go. A number of early kaiju epics have little or no dubbing in the Japanese footage, substituting instead a narrator to tell the Americans what

they're watching.

Results vary. At its best, narration can create tension as in the original American GODZILLA. At its worst, the device leaves you with films like THE

CREeping TERROR or THE BEAST of YUCCA FLATS. But in the fifties it was so popular that even in extensively dubbed Japanese movies (RODAN, GIGANTIS) the protagonist's voice narrates wherever dialogue is absent.

Unfortunately, the anxious, urgent narrator winds up getting on the viewer's nerves.

Of course, voice-overs and the addition of American footage were not universal norms at this time for Japanese monster films. While Universal-International cut KING KONG VS. GODZILLA and added cheap-looking U.S. footage (look at Michael Keith's world map in the "news scene" and you'll see what I mean), Columbia Pictures released H-MAN, MOTHRA and BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE essentially intact. While Cory Film Corporation released a vivisectioned VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE, American International Pictures presented a number of Toho films as they found them (WHAT'S UP, TIGER LILY? is a



TAKING THEIR CUE FROM THE BEATLES, THE TOHO MONSTERS RESPOND TO THE U.S. VERSIONS OF THEIR EARLY FILMS.

big exception). Even Henry Saperstein's AIP/Toho monster movies which feature Americans like Nick Adams and Russ Tamblyn were, of course, collaborations from the start.

Generally speaking, it was the small studios that created the butchered versions of these films. Even AIP, though relatively small, was growing rapidly in the sixties, and Universal, though relatively large, was by the time of KING KONG VS. GODZILLA's 1963 release phasing out its once vibrant science fiction production in favor of things like Doris Day comedies. But the re-cut GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS was a product of Joseph E. Levine's then newly-formed Embassy Pictures, [later] a showcase for Italian sword-and-sandal movies. HALF HUMAN, which we'll get to in a moment, came from Distributors Corporation of America (DCA), one of many prolific low-budget studios of the fifties. Cory's version of VARAN has already been mentioned, and is a good example of a barely watchable hodgepodge.

Once again, original versions of these movies are of more interest than profit or expense oriented re-editions. However, one can go overboard in dismissing some of the U.S. versions as worthless. The Raymond Burr GODZILLA, for example, is actually very cleverly done, and its producers obviously took pains to make their own footage look at home amid the original material. New shots are woven into old using doubles for the Japanese characters, rather than alternating long blocks of new and old footage as in VARAN. Raymond Burr's acting and his grim narrative tone also recapture some of the dark quality of the original that might have been lost when the film was ideologically sanitized for Eisenhower-era America.

Although it isn't even a match for the American GODZILLA, I would argue that the American HALF HUMAN doesn't deserve all the defamation it has received either. I have never seen a favorable review of this one, although the many bad ones often contain the qualification that the Japanese film it's based on doesn't look so bad. It's not hard to make that judgment when you see the Japanese footage alongside the

unimaginatively staged American insert footage. The Japanese film, JUNJI YUKIOTAKO, was released in 1955 and was Ishiro Honda's immediate follow-up to GOJIRA. It's about a yeti who lives in the Northern Japanese mountains with his son (like many film and TV dads of the fifties and sixties, he appears to be a widower). The film features a number of familiar faces, including Akira Takarada and Momoko Kochi (Ogata and Emiko in GOJIRA). The plot is simple and familiar. Some murdered skiers and a few large footprints in the snow lead to a scientific expedition to the mountains where it is surmised the "monster snowman" lives. Sooo the creature wanders into the expedition's camp to caress the sleeping Kochi's cheek, and is chased off by Takarada, who falls into a gorge. An Ainu girl (Akemi Negishi, see page 21) finds him and brings him to her village. (The Ainu characters are made up to look deformed and the acting makes



IT'S ABOUT A YETI THAT LIVES IN THE NORTHERN JAPANESE MOUNTAINS WITH HIS SON (LIKE MANY FILM AND TV DADS OF THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES, HE APPEARS TO BE A WIDOWER).

them seem mentally defective. Because of this sign of an old prejudice, Toho withdrew the video from distribution, as was reported in KR #6). After some business among the Ainu, we learn that a greedy showman (the same actor who plays the native chief in KING KONG VS. GODZILLA) wants to capture the monster and takes a couple of henchmen up to do it. They cage the creature and his little son, but they escape on the road and in the confusion the youngster is killed. Father Yeti goes berserk, killing the "show people," slaughtering the Ainu village (except for the same girl from before) and seizing Kochi from the science expedition still in the area. Her colleagues (including Takarada, who has returned) follow, led by the Ainu girl who knows the way to the monster's cave. There Kochi is rescued and the monster plunges into a sulphur pit while locked in combat with the Ainu girl, dragging her down with him.

JUJIN YUKIOTAKO is an impressive fifika science fiction movie, even if it does seem a little more derivative from American ape films than GOJIRA seems from such movies as BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS. The yeti costumes look good -- especially in black and white. They're much better than the monster suits in the same year's GOJIRA NO GYAKUSHU (GIGANTIS), and especially better than any other ape suit ever used in a Toho production. The matte composites are generally awkward, but since the monsters aren't "giant", there aren't many of them. The cavern set is spooky except for a few floppy rubber bats on strings, and the mountain scenery, both real and artificial, is nicely captured. Possibly the most interesting and creepy thing to look at is the Ainu makeup, which gives those characters the look of radiation victims.

With all this going for it, you'd think the film was a winner -- but prior to its 1958 American

The greedy showman (Yoshio Kosugi), gets his ticket punched



release DCA director Kenneth G. Crane and script supervisor Francis Steens decided that it still needed some long scenes of American science professors sitting in a room talking. The star of these tacked-on American sequences is John Carmidine, whose character ("Dr. John Rayburn") is presumed to have been marginally connected with the events of the Japanese story. He has just returned from Japan, bringing the preserved corpse of the baby yeti with him (we learn this about halfway through). Carmidine spends the film explaining to two of his colleagues what happened in Japan, resorting to voice-over narration when flashback scenes from the Japanese film appear. The two "colleagues" are only in the film as a dramaturgical device: to give Carmidine someone to whom to tell his story, and to interrupt what is really Carmidine's feature-length monologue. This they do with aggravatingly long-winded questions, which either get deferred until later or present an excuse to get back to more Japanese footage. Not a Japanese word is dubbed, though sometimes Carmidine explains what the characters are saying to each other (a la CREEPING TERROR).

The American storytelling device does have its drawbacks. The original story's continuity is, of course, disrupted. Certain things in the Japanese original go unexplained; for example, there is no reason given for the deformity of the "native tribe" in the mountains, though Carmidine does refer to them as ignorant and savage. Though the Japanese explanation is not particularly praiseworthy, at least it's an explanation. Some elements of the framing sequences themselves are not well thought out either. When the scientists adjourn to the laboratory to learn the results of another doctor's examination of the baby snowman's corpse, they get only a few brief sentences out of him before he has to rush off



Suitmation actor Tomonori Obashi takes a break on the set of JUJIN YUKIOTAKO



Akemi Negishi vs Chika, the Ape Girl

to some other engagement. Sorry, doctor -- you've chosen to examine the only known specimen of a prehistoric ape man, but I guess you've got better things to do. The coroner in this scene, by the way, is played by Morris Ankrum, another ubiquitous presence in laughable fifties sci-fi movies (such as *THE GIANT CLAW*, *GIANT FROM THE UNKNOWN*, and the not-so-laughable *EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS*). Probably the worst thing about the framing scenes is the repetitive speculation by the scientists about the psychological makeup of the monster. The scriptwriter was obviously out of his depth, and probably knew it.

Nonetheless, the American *HALF HUMAN* still provides plenty of entertainment of its own. John Carmine saved more than his share of bad movies on the strength of his performance alone, and this is one of them. He was at least one of the hardest working men in show business, working in films from the early thirties all the way through the early eighties -- despite advanced age and an arthritic condition that is excruciating to look at, let alone live with. He always threw all of his energy into a part, even when it was only for a series of cheaply filmed inserts for someone else's original film. That meretricious professionalism led to his general reputation for hamming it up, which he certainly does in *HALF HUMAN*, to our benefit. When narrating over Japanese footage he gets to speak great lines like, "the wind was the voice of the mountain screaming" in his trademarked deep and ominous voice, and when, at the movie's end, his colleagues express disappointment at the disappearance of the last of the monster's species, Carnadine gives a rousing speech on science's duty to keep seeking knowledge of the unknown against all odds -- against swelling music, a gleam in the actor's eye. You have to respect his diligence as an actor as he

wrings his vocal intonations for all they're worth, to try to make the labored scientific dialogue sound interesting.

In the end, your enjoyment of *HALF HUMAN* is determined by what you want from these movies. If you're a fan of "so bad they're good" movies, if you get more entertainment value out of *GODZILLA VS. MEGALON* than out of *GODZILLA VS. THE THING*, then you'll probably have more use for *HALF HUMAN* than for its original source. If the opposite is true, you'll probably feel a duty to despise it. In any case, American fans of Japanese sci-fi films should feel lucky that more of them didn't get cut and pasted in this way. This sort of adaptation was commonplace in the fifties and sixties, whatever a foreign genre film's country of origin, and importing horror and sci-fi titles on the cheap was something more than a fad. Joseph E. Levine specialized in it (though he was later associated with such "highbrow" productions as *THE LION IN WINTER*), and American producer/director Jerry Warren was famous for recutting movies from places as diverse as Mexico and Lapland. (As it happens, Warren also made his own yeti film, *THE MAN BEAST*, which sometimes played theatrically in tandem with *GODZILLA*...) So in context, it looks like the Japanese monsters suffered but lightly under the editing binge going on all around them, and *HALF HUMAN* can still be great fun if you're not in too serious a mood to overlook the insult done to the obviously superior original. If you can't overlook the insult, then see it at your peril.

- Chris Bradley

ULTRAMAN, THE ULTIMATE HERO

Episode Guide



by Robert Dugg
Special Thanks to Lenell Bridges
and Jill Sylvan

ULTRAMAN THE ULTIMATE HERO, produced by Tsuburaya Productions in association with Major Havoc Productions Inc., is the tenth entry in the Ultra series.

Filmed entirely in the United States, the series consists of 13 episodes.

The storyline: the evil Baltan aliens invade Earth, reviving evil monsters and aliens! The Worldwide Investigative Network Response Team (WINR) is created in order to combat the invasion. Ultraman, having followed the Baltans to Earth, chooses WINR member Kenichi Kai to become his human partner. He gives Kai the new "beta capsule", a device that will transform him into Ultraman in times of great crisis.

What follows is a basic episode guide to the 13 episodes. The original Japanese titles have been translated in English as closely as possible (but may be open to alternative interpretation). Also, when possible, I have tried to include special notes or fun facts regarding each episode. Enjoy!

#1) THE GOLDEN PURSUER

The evil Baltan aliens invade Earth! While the WINR team battles the creatures, member Kenichi Kai is summoned into Ultraman's ship. There, Ultraman informs Kai that he has cloned the Baltans to Earth. Together they must fight for the good of the Earth and Kai receives the beta capsule.

#2) THAT NAME IS ULTRAMAN

The WINR team receives reports of a giant monster attacking local campuses. The WINR team finds out the creature is

Kemular, a large, burrowing creature that emits poisonous gas. (Note: The WINR computer says Kemular was last seen in China in 1976, leading one to believe he survived his original 1960's encounter with the Japanese science patrol's Ultraman!)



#3) FLY TO THE FORBIDDEN MONSTER WORLD

The WINR team is sent to a remote island where reporters are trapped because of the giant monsters Red King and Chandorsh. While hiding in a cave the reporters find the friendly monster Pigmon who would like to leave the island alone! (Note: One



of the reporters is played by actor Jeffrey Combs of *Reanimator* fame.)

#4) MESSENGER FROM THE DARKNESS

Kenichi Kai is sent to investigate strange seismic activity at a local mountain range. He is captured by



a race of underground dwellers who plan on using their creature Telesdon to enslave the planet. (Note: The city Telesdon attacks must be made out

of reinforced steel. Many of the shots depict his tail smashing into the buildings with no effect.)

#5) LIGHTNING WAR DEFENSE MISSION



Uranium trucks are being attacked by the creature Gabora who happens to like eating the stuff. The WINR team tries to stop the creature before

it attacks a nuclear power plant. (Note: The driver of the uranium truck at the beginning of the episode is a famous sei-ri actor. Does "Dangert Will Robinson" ring a bell? If you guessed Bill Mumy, put yourself on the back!)

#6) RETURN FROM THE UNIVERSE



It is discovered that the astronaut Jumbie, horribly transformed into a monster by an accident, has returned to earth to contact his daughter to tell her he is alive. (Note: This is one of the more serious episodes that deals with Ultraman's dilemma of protecting innocent

people and weighing the existence of Jumbie who had no control over his accident. One of the series' best episodes.

#7) RED HEAT REVENGE

Loggers are frightened when the forest they are working in suddenly bursts into flames. The WINR team finds the monster Zambora can cause fires to start at will.

(Note: As Zambora attacks a city, we hear people screaming but see no one running from the city! Are they invisible? Also, no physical contact is made between Ultraman and Zambora in their confrontation!)



#8) INVASION CIRCUIT

Computer programmers are mysteriously disappearing into their computers. It is found out that the computer "virus" attacking the people are actually the evil DA-DA

invaders who have invaded the Internet! (Note: At the end of the episode, the camera pans to a computer that turns itself back on and laughs leaving one to believe Ultraman hasn't seen the last of the DA-DAs!)



#9) REVIVAL: TWO BIO MONSTERS

A student archeological dig uncovers two strange artifacts. Upon further investigation, it is discovered the artifacts are actually time capsules that hold the creatures Aborn and Banilla who happen to be natural enemies.

(Note: This episode is the closest entry in the series to being a "direct" remake of the original episode "Devils Come Again.")



#10) TWO HUMAN HEROES

An oil refinery repeats something is draining all the oil reserves. The WINR team investigates the local



lake and finds the star fish creature Pestur is behind the missing oil. (Note: In one of the worst shots in the series, Ultraman throws Pestur into the air with one arm(!) and destroys the creature.)

#11) THEY BROUGHT TO LIFE GIGANTIC MONSTER A



museum uncovers a gigantic monster determined to be a Goburamos or Gobura for short. During a rainstorm, Gobura revives and walks away.

The WINR team tries to capture the out of control monster. (Note: As Gobura attacks a city, we finally see people running away from the rampaging creature and it actually turns out to be a quite effective scene).

#12) POWERED ASSASSINATION PLAN

A strange object crash-lands near WINR headquarters. As Kenichi Kai investigates the object, the monster Doraku appears and Kai transforms into Ultraman. As Ultraman tries to destroy Doraku with his spacial ray, the creature emits a strange beacon. The beacon is relayed to an asteroid where it activates a familiar foe. Ultraman finally manages to destroy Doraku but a strange object is now approaching Earth.



#13) FAREWELL, ULTRAMAN

The strange object that Doraku activated crash-lands into the WINR headquarters. Unleashing the demented alien Zeton. Kai, still injured from his encounter with Doraku, is summoned by Ultraman again. Ultraman states that Kai cannot fight any longer due to his injury so Ultraman will face Zeton by himself. Ultraman then appears before Zeton and attacks the creature. The creature manages to damage Ultraman's warning light and he is greatly weakened. As Zeton approaches the WINR headquarters to attack it, Ultraman summons the rest of his energy and blasts the creature with his spacial ray, destroying it. Having



destroyed the creature, Ultraman's energy is now gone and he falls helpless. The WINR team manages to destroy the Ballun ship and Ultraman's fellow brothers come to take Ultraman back to Nebula M-78 to replenish his energy. The Earth is once again safe from alien invasion. The End.

Ultraman Ultimate Hero

1994, Producers -- Kazuo Tsuburaya, Shigeru Watanabe

Executive Producer -- Noboru Tsuburaya

Production Designer -- Aaron Osborne

Director of Photography -- Don E. Fumfroy

Carlos Gonzalez Barreto

Editor -- Nina M. Gilbert

Mechanical Design -- Mahiro Mueda, Shinji Higuchi, Toshio Miike

Ultraman and Monster Costumes -- Kevin Hudson

Special Effects Supervisor -- Joseph Viskocil

Produced by -- Julie Avola

Directed by -- Kuig, Wälder

Starring -- Kane Kosugi, Harrison Page, Robyn Bliley, Sandra Gailard, Rob Roy Fitzgerald. (L to R)



ULTRAMAN GREAT vs. ULTRAMAN POWERED

One Fan's Opinion
by Andre DuBois



It appears that the foreign interpretation of Ultraman is not having much luck. The American show has not been picked up for distribution yet, well, it deserved to be forgotten. Remaking the original series was a pretty stupid idea to start with, at

least the Australian show offered us something new and different. Just for the fun of it let's have the two new Ultramen slug it out and see who wins.

ULTRAMAN DESIGNS: First point goes to Powered, although the design itself is not better on Powered than Great. The suit construction is much better - rubber it is, rubber it should be.

MONSTER DESIGNS: That also goes to Powered, the monster suits are unbelievable. Most of them are even better than their original counterpart, unfortunately they did not succeed on the best monsters - Baltan is interesting but weird, Gomora looks sick and Z-Ton is simply awful. U Great monster designs are interesting but not too exciting.

MONSTER ACTORS: Here I go for Great - not that they are particularly exciting but they are not statues at least. U Powered is so inept that it's quite unbelievable. The monsters are just as bad. The Red King No. 3 episode features the most boring monster acting in the entire Ultraman series.

ANTI-MONSTERS SQUAD: In design I go for W.I.N.R. over U.M.A. The jets and vehicles are very nice; the costumes for the squad members are also better but the characters, except for the lovely girls, look alike and are uninteresting; I'd say that even Ultraman Taro's ZAT team were more charismatic. And worst of all; Ultraman's alter ego Kane Kosugi. Kosugi has got to be the worst actor ever in an Ultraman series. As far as actors go, the Australian show is a thousand times better.

THE STORY: Once again I go for Great; at least they have stories. Powered is nothing more than a badly rewritten version of the original show. The drama is nil, all in all nightmarishly bad.

THE BATTLE: As disappointing as Ultraman Great was - it's a wrestlingmania festival compared to the unbelievable, non-exciting so-called action fight of U Powered. The Shame of M-78, the anti-violence on

television group should check that one out; even they would fall asleep. King Wilder has got to be the worst director of all time (move over Ed Wood) to screw it up so badly on the most important thing in an Ultraman episode - the battle scene. No drama, no action, nothing, absolutely nothing. In the entire series he used a grand total of three different rays. He almost never gives any kick or punch beside the Ultra Push.

After the overbearing pretentious attitude of America to laugh at Japanese shows for so many years, here was the time to put your money where your mouth is and they failed miserably; not only is it inferior to the original 1966 show, but it is the worst entry in the entire 25 year-old series. That's what I call putting your foot in your mouth.

As a matter of fact, the only good things in this show were all Japanese. The monster redesigns and the W.I.N.R. mecha and suit design were all done by Japanese. And the music also by a Japanese wasn't bad although that too was vastly inferior to the Australian show; most of the action themes are nothing but an obvious rip off of Barry Gray's Thunderbird themes.

It's extremely disappointing that America is not improving its quality in Japanese imports. In the '60s a lot of those shows were being bought and dubbed in English, not always very well, but at least they were dubs. Now nothing is imported anymore; if something has success somewhere else, we simply buy the rights and cut it to pieces to make it all-American. Or even worse - we completely remake it. Personally I don't believe that the public is that close-minded; it is the people in power that make those decisions all the time, and unfortunately we, the fans, can go after the original and compare, and sadly enough there is not even one example where the American version was better. Gridman was a good opportunity to improve upon the original, since the drama part of the Japanese show was pretty bad on its own, but they screwed it up even more, and as a result even the sfx scenes were weakened in the end. The success of Power Rangers should show those clowns that the people do enjoy the type of action pack super hero monster mayhem Japanese style. Let's face the truth: kids are not watching Power Rangers for the American parts; what they want to see is the Rangers in action and the giant robots slug it out with the monsters. And the toy manufacturers are going nuts over the sales; this had been going on for more than 25 years in Japan, and they are just discovering it today.

At least in the animation realm, a breath of fresh air was given by the animated Batman, if only it could continue in that vein. For now, Ultraman our hero from M-78 is forced to land in the land of the rising sun, to be treated the way it should be. Let's all hope that this will change someday.

Andre DuBois



How I Learned To Stop Grimacing and Love TNT's ULTRA SEVEN

by John "Love it or leave it"
Marshall

Like a lot of geeks, I always wanted to see Ultra Seven in English. I would fantasize about being magically whisked away to Hawaii, where I would forego the palm trees, sand, surf, and other natural beauties -- and spend all day in a hut with a TV set, watching the "Hawaiian" Ultra Seven. I even had a girlfriend a few years ago who had vacationed in Hawaii in the early seventies. I showed her some Ultra Seven-related photos, to see if she recognized anything. "Oh, him I know!" she exclaimed, pointing at Eleking. "Are you sure?" I inquired, "After all it was a long time ago and you were just a young girl."

"Excuse me?" she asked. I back-pedaled fast and turned on that irresistible boyish grin, my chief weapon. "Oh, no, I meant, you were very young then and you might just be thinking of something else."

Her little nose crinkled in annoyance. "Oh, no, I remember that monster," she said, again pointing an extensively-manicured finger at the photo. "His antennae would spin around like this." She then proceeded to twirl her fingers around her head like someone doing the "he's crazy" routine, only each finger was rotating counter to the other. This of course was an exact duplication of what Eleking's antennae seemed to do.

Well, from that point on, things were different between us. My jealousy of her ate away at me like radioactive ash from Biollante's hile duct. I could never get over this -- this advantage she had over me, this secret knowledge that she had seen something I had never seen and probably never would. We broke up fourteen months, twelve days and thirteen hours and seven minutes later.

I spent the next few years in a gloomy fog, curled up at night with my little Bandai Ultra Seven model next to me. Every day the dreary routine was the same. I'd wake up, glue the model back together, and trudge off to the den for another long day of watching Ultra Seven in a language I did not understand.

And then Kip Doto talked TNT into putting Ultra Seven back on the air (says Kip) and then they had it redubbed in Canada and then they stoned it for 6AM EST and then they showed it for a couple weeks and then it was gone again.

But was it my salvation? Well, I was certainly salivating.



You see, I didn't have cable at the time (and don't again now, there's a pair o' ducks for you). A friend of mine, Paul Levitt, was getting up at 5AM each day to tape the show. To do it, he drove through the snow and ice of the worst winter New Jersey had ever seen, dragging his best Beta machine to his parents' house (because he didn't have cable either), and taping the all-new, in-English Ultra Seven. Unable to contain myself, I called him later that day and asked him how it went.

I couldn't stand the suspense. "So, how was it?" I asked. "Oh, pretty funny, I guess," he said. "Funny?" I asked. "Uh, yeah, sort of," he replied, "They kinda joked it up." My inner alarm bell rang. I have several such bells. There's the "She won't look as good as she sounds over the phone" bell, and the "You won't be getting any more writing assignments from us" bell, and the "Tires aren't meant to last 150,000 miles" bell that too often rings when I'm on the freeway at two in the morning. Well, this was the "They didn't know what they had so the crotchmuckers camped it up" bell.

With some hope I asked, "Oh, you mean like on Spectreman?" "Well," came the devastating reply, "more like Dynaman."

A little part of me died inside.

When I finally got to see the redubbed Ultra Seven, I was more than unhappy. I was angry. You all know the story, so any comment I could make about how I felt, I can reduce to tossing out lines from the TNT version, such as "American trash!" and, "Gee I just hate being crushed by the weight of that rock!" If you've seen TNT's Ultra Seven and are an Ultra-series fan, you know what I'm talking about.

But then, a few weeks later, while watching "The Brave One" for the first time, I had a transcendental experience. I was watching the scene at Ultra Garrison Headquarters, when Dan Moroboshi suddenly pieces together the mystery of the "Zantar Battlebot." "The Zantars are scavengers. They have no cars of their own, so they steal ours. And they need the humans for chauffeurs."

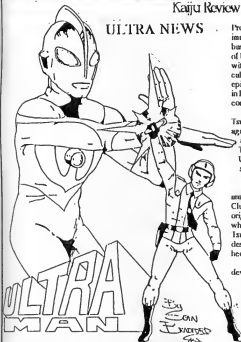
"Now that," I howled, "was inspired!"

After several more particularly-good episodes including the uproarious "Moon-Stuck," "The Quakemasters," and "Death On Wheels" (from space!), I realized that the seat-of-their-pants dubbing job by Cinar had, however accidentally, produced a real classic of "What the Hell?" television. When in top form, Viests Vrans and Rob Roy and the gang could be really funny.

(Side note: What is it about the name "Rob Roy" that, when appearing in conjunction with Americanized Ultra Series, is always a sign of utter awfulness?)

So I went back and watched the earlier episodes again. Some were still pretty awful, but the majority were pretty darn funny. Now I watch TNT's Ultra Seven all the time (on tape obviously). And besides, if I want it "straight," I can always watch it in Japanese like I used to. They (TNT) never did show the redubbed Eleking, so the memory of my favorite electrical slug remains pure and unsullied. Ahh. And, you know, those buildings really do look happier in the desert...

ULTRA NEWS



While it appears that American fans will miss out on seeing their favorite red and silver superhero show up on U.S. TV screens anytime soon, it seems that internationally Ultraman (and his kin) are more popular than ever.

Ultracom's 13 episode **ULTRAMAN, ULTIMATE HERO** has so far failed to find any one interested in picking it up for syndication here. In the U.S., the show has begun airing on Japanese television. Called **ULTRAMAN POWERED** in Japan (aka 'Blue eyed Ultraman'), the show which started broadcasting in April has so far recieved lukewarm reviews in Ultraman's traditional stamping grounds. First released on video in Japan last year, the major complaint of most Japanese fans seems to echo that of their American counterparts; too slow, not enough action. While the best thing to come out of the series was the redesigned monster suits and improved Ultra designs, the show itself has (so far) failed to spark much support amongst long time adherents.

Meanwhile **ULTRA SEVEN** has regained the spotlight in Japan thanks to the success of two recent telefilm productions broadcast last year on NTV that brought the character out of retirement and into the '90s. **ULTRA 7 BIG SOLAR ENERGY PLAN** and **CHIKYU SEJIN NO DAICHI**, featured the return not only of several familiar faces from the original show (including Koji Moribungo as Dan Moroboshi, Ikichi Ishii as Furuhashi and Yuriko Hishimi as Ann Yuri) it also re-introduced two of Ultra 7's most popular foes to a '90s audience; Eiking and the Alien Pit. The fan response was as great that Tsuburaya Eizou (the film production arm of Tsuburaya

Productions Ltd., that produced the tele-features) immediately began making plans for a new Japanese based Ultra series that would introduce a new version of Ultra 7 called **Ultra Seven 2-I**, who would team up with another earthbound brother from Nebula M78 called **Ultraman Nexus**. The show is planned as a 52 episode series and is intended for broadcast sometime in late '96 or early '97 with actual shooting to commence later this year.

The few plot details that have so far emerged from Tsuburaya reveal that the brothers will be pitted against a new 'evil alien Warlord' who will oversee an army of kaiju intent on conquering the Earth.

There will be a new scientific task force similar to the Ultra squads seen in previous incarnations of the series, and at least one of the brothers will be a member (in human form) of this team.

Plans are also reportedly underway for still another Ultra hero to be created specifically for the Chinese market. As previously reported in *KR*, All the original Ultra shows are being broadcast in China where they have become a huge hit, prompting Tsuburaya's interest in creating a show specifically designed for this massive market. More as details become available.

Meanwhile it seems that Russians have also developed a taste for the heroes of Nebula M78.

Reportedly the animated series **ULTRAMAN JONIAS** has spawned a cult following; in the former communist state. The entire 52 episode run of the series has been made available to MTK channel 3 in Moscow, where it has been described as a ratings success, prompting rumors about the possibility of further Ultra series coming to Russian TV.

Back in the U.S. the only title currently available in legitimate video release (live action) is **ULTRAMAN, TOWARD THE FUTURE** the Australian co-production that actually enjoyed a brief run in syndication back in '93. While Ultracom has apparently made a valiant effort to get their **ULTRAMAN, ULTIMATE HERO** into syndication they are now confronted by a market already crowded with product of Japanese origin (although in many cases significantly altered for American audiences) that includes a second season of Saban's **VR TROOPERS**, **MASKED RIDER** (produced by Saban for Fox Television's Saturday morning line-up this Fall), and at least three new syndicated re-workings of highly successful Japanese cartoons; **SAILOR MOON**, **DRAGONBALL Z**, and **PRINCESS TIENKO**. It seems that Ultracom's 13 episode run of **ULTRAMAN ULTIMATE HERO** is destined for video release through their own video distribution arm.

In Ultraman related product news; **PLACO Products Company** has announced plans to release a new series of Ultraman figures for the U.S. market this Spring. Intended for collectors the figures are approximately 17" tall, and will feature the likenesses of the original Ultraman, Ultra Seven, Ultraman Taro, and the more recent Ultraman Great (Toward the Future). The figures are expected to retail for \$19.95 each, and will be handsomely packaged in boxes featuring a history of each character along with their individual statistics.

Ultra info provided by Bob Dugg, Erenell Bridges and August Ragone. Art by Sean Bradford.

GO NAGAI'S TERROR ZONE

Series Review by Max Della Mora



Go Nagai has conceived not only some of the most famous and original characters in the manga and anime world, just enough to mention DEVILMAN, MAZINGER Z or GREENGLIDER among many others, but has been active as well as in the live action productions but without obtaining the same success. Indeed, his live action characters are almost unknown even to his fans.

BATTLE HAWK is the first example. A 26 episode serial produced by Nagai and Dynamic (Nagai's own company), it has as central characters three brothers able to transform into the super heroes Battle Hawk, Big Hawk, and Queen Hawk. They have middle ages like costumes and are vaguely similar to the previous serial AKUMAIZER 3 and CHOJIN BIBIUN (they aren't Nagai's serials but have been inspired, very probably, by Nagai's cartoon DEVILMAN). Armed with giant axes, the three heroes defend the earth against the evil monsters of the Kyooni No Okite (Law of the Demon) army. The serial was aired on Tokyo Channel 12 from October 4, 1976 to March 28, 1977.

Almost simultaneously TV NET

aired from October 7, 1976 to July 31, 1977 another offspring of Nagai's genius: PRO WRESTLING STAR AZTECAIZER. Produced by Tsuburaya, AZTECAIZER is again a sort of demon with a flaming crest similar to a cross between Mazinger and El Santo, the famous Mexican masked wrestler. The serial ran just 26 episodes. Curiously, even though the two serials have the Nagai name, they are considered by Japanese fans just as minor productions, now forgotten, and worst of all not officially available on video. Better known to the U.S. audience is X BOMBER which doesn't have real human characters but puppets in the THUNDERBIRDS style with lots of spaceships, a remarkable giant robot; the Big Dai X (an actor in costume) and good spfx but it is obviously heavily influenced by STAR WARS.

Mid '80s. Horror mania explodes in Japan as well as in the U.S. Various companies produce original short features (usually around 30-50 minutes) for the home video market. A prime example is the infamous GUINEA PIG an ultra gory serial, that was popular with gore fans of all nations.

Go Nagai, a big fan of horror movies (how could he not be?) produces two videos titled: NAGAI GO NO KOWAI ZONE - GO NAGAI'S TERROR ZONE (another interpretation of this could be 'Scary Zone'). The first tape, distributed by BANDAI on August 25, 1989 is subtitled KAI ONI, (the strange ghosts). Nagai himself introduces the tape dressed in an impeccable Transylvanian suit arrayed with a black cloak. At his shoulders are some models of the dear Devilman.

ONI GA (The Hungry Ghost), directed by Nagai, presents a young girl obsessed by her diet so much that she refuses to eat any food that her

mother offers. But at night the girl is wracked by terrible spasms, a dragon (yes! a dragon in perfect Ghidrah-style!) bursts forth from her insides, devouring all food in sight, table included. The day after, the girl, smiling, weighs herself after having worked out her anorexic fears. Decidedly horror-humorous, the episode is followed by short sketches (of dubious taste) with characters such as a gay werewolf, and an exhibitionistic vampire.

The second episode features a completely different tone, and is directed by Hikaru Hayakawa who directed other medium features as **UBAWARETA SHINZO/THE EVIL HEART** and **AGIJI KIJIN NO IKARI/AGI FURY OF EVIL**. The episode is titled **YOMIGAEU YAMI** (Resurrection From The Dark) it's a classic mystery set in the style of the classic Japanese ghost stories. A young bride spends most of her time alone in a house while her husband is away at work. The woman understands very soon that there is something weird in the old house and the old family servant (Eisei Yamamoto, better known as Doctor Who in **KING KONG ESCAPES**, among numerous other roles in both Toho movies and Toci serials) does little to alleviate her fears. The young bride is particularly frightened by a painting of a horrible demon. It turns out to be her own true image. She turns into the monster and kills her husband.

While the Nagai segment is shot on video, Hayakawa's is shot on black and white film underlining the reference to '60s classic kaidan eiga (ghost movies). The same happens with the second tape released on August 24, 1990, subtitled **SEN ONI** (War Spirits).

Go Nagai again is the host taking us toward the first episode titled, **CONCRETE REVENGER**. A gang of punks viciously assault two lovers. The boy, Jun, is tortured and while still breathing gets immersed in a barrel of concrete, watching helplessly as his girl is

raped. But later Jun comes back to life as a "concrete zombie" who massacres all the punks and saves the girl. When the two lovers meet again, the concrete crumbles and the body of Jun reappears safe and sound. Quite gory, the best moment of the episode is when the gouged out eye of Jun, worn by the leader of the punks as a sort of bloody pendant, "sees" what is happening to the girl, igniting Jun's fury and return to life.

Strange blood drinkers are in the second episode by Hayakawa titled **KYUKETSUKI KARI** (Hunting Vampires). Set in a secluded mountain cabin where a group of skiers have taken refuge from a snowstorm. One of them badly injured by a fall. Paranoia and suspicion soon take over the group after the man dies. On his neck there is a strange hole and all of his blood has been sucked out. Who is the vampire? A girl finds out the answer; the vampire is an impalpable and nebulous ghost but she will be its last victim.

While The Nagai episodes are quite naive (even if offering ample doses of naked bodies, the two female characters spend most of their time stark naked), Hayakawa displays great style and capacities to create suspense with few elements. His episodes are more psychological horror stories (but **KYUKETSUKI KARI** in no way spares the blood letting) than gore shorts as Nagai's are. The result is a strange mix that won't fail to satisfy those viewers with a taste for such material..

Nagai, after **KOWAI ZONE**, in 1988 appears as a special guest in the live action version of his character **KEKKO KAMEN** (Wonder Mask) which features a bizarre heroine, completely naked except for a mask with bunny-like ears and a red cloak! **KEKKO KAMEN** has two sequels (1988 and 1993) but Nagai is credited only as the "creator of the original character."

REVIEWS

JAPANESE SUPERHEROES (AMERICAN STYLE)

By Christopher Elam

The last year and a half has seen the development of a new trend in superhero TV series. U.S. producers are attempting to imitate the Japanese superhero programs. Several of these American shows are footage from actual Japanese shows, much to the irritation of some long-time fans. In this article, I will review all of these new series. I have omitted **ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO** (aka **ULTRAMAN POWERED**) for two reasons: (1) it hasn't been released in the U.S. as of this writing and (2) I haven't seen it yet.

TATTOOED TEENAGE ALIEN FIGHTERS FROM BEVERLY HILLS

My thanks to Jason Marcantel for supplying me with the tape I used to review this series, which is essentially a speedtrip-off of both **MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS** and **BEVERLY HILLS 90210**. I was really dreading watching this show because no one I had met had anything good to say about it. However, I must reluctantly admit that I enjoyed **TATTOOED TEENS**. Try not to laugh too hard.

I don't get me wrong. **TATTOOED TEENS** (I refuse to write the full title unless necessary) is pretty stupid. The FX are laughably bad and remind me of Sid and Marty Kroff's 70s efforts. My favorite is the "tattoos," which look suspiciously like the temporary variety easily obtainable from vending machines. None of the footage used is lifted from Japanese productions. As a result, the show isn't as flashy as its competition. For some strange reason, though, I found this exercise in ridiculousness involving and appealing.

The plot? Four "typical" Beverly Hills teens are recruited by a glob of smoozy suit named Nimbor. He turns them into giant superheroes dubbed "Galactic Sentinels" and they battle the phony-looking monsters of one Pauper Goggyanus. In times of dire crisis, they combine to form a giant knight called Nitron. When not saving the universe, our hapless heroes must deal with the trials and tribulations of life. You get the idea.

I cannot adequately explain why I like **TATTOOED TEENS**. Maybe it is because the program has reached what I hope is the highest possible level of camp. Perhaps I have some deep-seated psychological condition. Regardless, I will recommend the show, but remember that I am the only person I know who likes it. Proceed with caution.

MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS

Well, the second season is in full gear. The Green Ranger has become the White Ranger and Sabu has included enough mecha from **GOSHI SENTAI DAIRANGER** to keep Bandai swimming in money. The feature film is coming soon and it might be out by the time you read this. This has been a busy year for those wacky Rangers.

Probably the most shocking development of the year was the sudden departures of Austin St. John, Thuy Trang, and Walter Jones, reportedly in a dispute over money. They've been replaced by three new actors who are decent fighters, but are a bit weak (to say the least) as thespians. It remains to be seen if the kiddies of America can accept new people replacing their old heroes. Of course, this is par for the course in Japan, where the shows themselves change every year.

Stories and fight choreography have reached a level where they are almost the equal of the Japanese incarnations. Also, the three remaining "old" Rangers (Amy Jo Johnson, David Yost, Jason Frank) have really shown me a lot of acting ability, especially during the period where they were carrying the show essentially by themselves. Two others worthy of note are Paul Schrier and Jason Narvy (Bulk and Skull). They have become truly hysterical in the last few months and their antics are the highlights of some episodes.

Yeah, **POWER RANGERS** is still clean, mindless fun. What did you expect?

SUPERHUMAN SAMURAI SYBER-SQUAD

Success inevitably breeds imitation. So, when Sabu has a huge hit with **MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS**, DIC Entertainment created **SUPERHUMAN SAMURAI SYBER-SQUAD** in emulation. As most of you know, this series incorporates footage from Tsuburaya's **DENKO CHOUJIN GRIEDMAN**. Of course, that fact is relatively unimportant compared to the big question: Is **SYBER-SQUAD** any good?

In my opinion, no. It is **POWER RANGERS** done badly in nearly every respect. While I've never seen **GRIEDMAN**, it must be superior to this mess. DIC appears to have duplicated the format of the Japanese original, but not the quality. The music is terrible. The stories are stupid. No one gives a decent performance, not even Matthew Lawrence (as hero Sam Collins) or Tim Curry (as the voice of head villain Kilokahn). In fact, a lot of the acting is downright amateurish. And then, there's the kiss of death: the "humor" isn't very funny.

As far as the FX go, they are very flashy and exciting. I didn't expect any less from the masters at Tsuburaya. Too bad those awful voice actors

dubbed those parts too. And why was Gridman renamed Servo? He sounds like he should be on MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATRE 3000!

If you've never seen GRIDMAN and you're a hardcore Tsuburaya buff, this show might be worth your time. Otherwise, don't bother.

VR TROOPERS

VR TROOPERS is Saban's attempt to rip off their own show. It utilizes footage derived from two different Toei series, JIKUU SENSIII SPUILBAN ('86-'87) and CHOJINKI METALDER ('87-'88). Unfortunately, VR TROOPERS is nowhere nearly as entertaining as POWER RANGERS, much less the "Uchu Keiji" style shows on which it is based.

Oh, the Toei FX are certainly awesome and they're edited together rather effectively. Even the U.S. produced stuff looks OK, although it doesn't match up too well. The acting isn't very good, but it's nowhere nearly as inept as in SUPERHUMAN SAMURAI SYBER-SQUAD. The music is, in a word, grating. It makes me appreciate those anti-classic tunes from POWER RANGERS and SYBER-SQUAD. Still, I could overlook the show's deficiencies if it wasn't lacking something else.

That "something else" is a sense of humor. This show is way too serious. Japanese shows can pull off playing this stuff straight due to the high quality of their actors and stories. Alas, the U.S. versions are nowhere nearly as well executed and require a light touch to succeed. The people involved in POWER RANGERS seem to realize the show isn't great and play it for laughs. Amazingly, the same company appears to have missed this crucial (in my mind) point regarding VR TROOPERS. While I have trouble believing a show featuring bad guys named "Stugs" and a guy that talks with a pseudo-Jack Nicholson voice is intended to be serious, that appears to be the case. The mind boggles. Ultimately, my lack of involvement in the stories and characters led me to be very bored.

VR TROOPERS airs in syndication in many markets, but not in my area. It's also available on several outrageously overpriced videotapes (SLP speed, one episode per tape). My review is based on two of those tapes, so perhaps my opinions are not entirely fair. If you can see VR TROOPERS on free TV and you think you might like it, I say go for it. But don't say I didn't warn you.

In conclusion, here are my rankings of the four shows covered. Keep in mind that this list is only my opinion. You may feel much differently.

- (1) MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS (Fox)
- (2) TATTOOED TEENAGE ALIEN FIGHTERS FROM BEVERLY HILLS (USA)
- (3) VR TROOPERS (Syndicated)
- (4) SUPERHUMAN SAMURAI SYBER-SQUAD (Syndicated)

- Christopher Elam

SENTAI BUZZ CLIPS

MASKED RIDER COMING TO FOX

SABAN and Fox Children's programming has announced the addition of MASKED RIDER to the Fox Saturday morning line-up this fall. The series is being re-worked POWER RANGERS style using existing footage from KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX and KAMEN RIDER BLACK. The story line is entirely different however from the original Toei superhero show. In an effort to address criticism leveled at Saban for too much violence in POWER RANGERS, the Kamen Rider saga has been abandoned in favor of a "family sitcom" styled show concerning the misadventures of a space born orphan and his newly adopted 'Californian' family. The show will reportedly incorporate footage of the Shadow Moon character from KAMEN RIDER BLACK (a suit for this character is said to have been shipped to Saban's stateside production unit).

MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGER MOVIE

Opening June 9th, the MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGER film has already been generating quite a bit of buzz among fans of the series. The film was originally scheduled to be directed by Steve Wang of THE GUYVER fame but Wang left the production over disagreements in creative control. Bryan Spicer who has been involved with the television version was tapped to replace Wang.

Wang did manage to leave his touch behind however having recruited some of the same stuntmen who work on the Japanese version of the series to handle the 'in costume' fight scenes for this film. Variations on the new Ranger uniforms (first developed by Wang, who had previously re-worked the Batman costume for BATMAN RETURNS) are present in the film and from what we've seen in the trailers they look great. The main villain is called Ivan Ooze and the film features a combination of animatronics and computer graphics to bring the monster effects to life.

Fox is confident that the film will be a huge success, and plans are already in the works for a sequel.

VR TROOPERS HEADS INTO SECOND SEASON

Already sold to a reported 80% of the American syndicated market the second season of Saban's VR TROOPERS will feature footage from the Toei series SPACE SHIRIFF SHANDER ('84). The series has steadily gained in popularity here in the U.S. and Saban has begun efforts to distribute the show world wide. A toy line has been selling briskly in stores, and the show has spawned several video cassettes as well.

Saban has reportedly purchased the exclusive worldwide rights to all Toei Sentai shows past, present and future.

art by Dominick Tucci



PICTORIAL HISTORY BOOK OF GODZILLA

Supervised by Yuji Nishimura (M-1)
Written by Masami Yamada
ISBN-09425-059-4 Yen 3800
Published by Koichi Sato / Hobby Japan Co. Ltd.

This beautiful, must have, hardcover photo reference is crammed with hundreds of excellent stills in its slick 200 pages; a deserving and superior follow-up to Daishen Kaiga's *Godzilla First & Second*.

Nishimura and Yamada (with Hobby Japan) obviously put this volume together with the modeler in mind—but don't let that put you off: this is a VERY SERIOUS volume for the Godzilla enthusiast and the comparatively minimal text gives the Japanese language impaired reader little reason to avoid this book.

The first 24 pages features a color section showcasing each Godzilla film per page with two devoted to the men who made the pictures; the tone then breaks into live chapters denoting the different eras of Godzilla history: The Dawn, Golden Age, Maturity, Revival & Renewal, all fully illustrated with a healthy portion of rare, and never before published stills— all set within a smart and dynamic lay-out, allowing close-up study of minute Godzilla detail.

The Pictorial History of Godzilla is an essential addition to your Japanese fantasy library, and at Yen 3800 it's not too expensive (despite import mark-ups). It's an important book to own, well packaged and jammed with photos.

-August Ragone



GODZILLA MUSEUM

Masami Yamada
& Yuji Nishimura
ISBN-09366-295-3
Yen 2000
Aspect Ltd. (200 pages)

I hate fighting over material items, like this beautiful "companion" to the out of print *Godzilla Chronicles* (Takeshobo, 1993, see KR #5 for review). Both authors worked on the aforementioned *Pictorial History of Godzilla*, with both projects being designed and laid out by Eisai Shimada of Banamar Globe Studios. Needless to say this is a beautiful reference book pertaining to all manner of Godzilla/Toho ephemera and arcana—worth all the blood that was spilled

at my local Kinokuniya.

The book is neatly organized into four sections; the first 64 pages color pages take you on a tour through the various "zones" of Toho Fantasy film material (each zone is denoted by a photo showing the number of a different Toho soundtrack): "Production", "Advertising", "Movie material I & II", "Show Widow", "Release", "International" and "Bloom". This last section showcases a cornucopia of Toho paper goods—enough to make any collector turn green with envy—to which Nishimura and Yamada show off their spoils (sigh).

The second is the elicited (and obligatory) filmography of Toho SF / Monster films—fortunately saved by an interesting lay-out and beautiful still selections; the third covers the fictitious media (mostly newspaper stories—illustrated with reproductions of the mock newspaper front pages seen in the Japanese versions of the films (as well as items like Frankie Sakai's Press ID from MOTHRA), spiced with fictitious asides and anecdotes by equally fictitious reporters! All sandwiching mini photo profiles of actresses like Kami Mizuno.

This is followed by a section on Toho Mecha, including Toho Art Department blueprints—which leads into a section on the evolution of Godzilla's physiognomy through the present—taking us to the final section a photo and text detail of the color section, "zone" by "zone".

As soon as I saw this book I knew I had to have it; I'm sorry about the guy who unfortunately ran his face into my fist, while I was trying to yank this copy of "Godzilla Museum" from out of his grubby mitts—but this essential work was worth every drop of his blood.



art by Mike Ortiz

TETSUKO KOBAYASHI

REMEMBERED

The Empress of Mu is dead.

Actress Tetsuko Kobayashi passed away on December 9th, 1994. She was 53 years old.

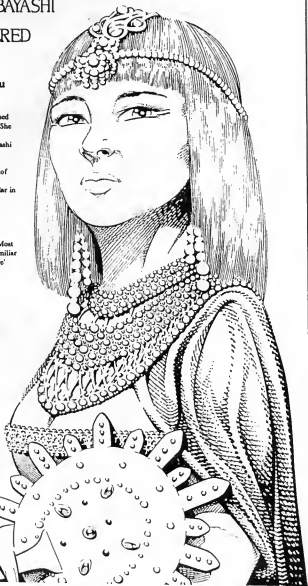
The Tokyo born Kobayashi (3/12/41), always wanted to become an actress. She had appeared in a stage production of *Hamlet* while still in her early teens. Soon she became a regular in the Television drama *SEINEN NOKI* in 1961. Her film debut followed in 1962-- that's when Toho fantasy film director extraordinaire, Ishiro Honda spotted her for a special role. Most fans of Japanese fantasy are familiar with the late actress' sole 'genre' role as the exotic and iron-willed ruler of the submarine empire in Ishiro Honda's 1963 spectacle *ATLANTIS*. A role she essayed at the tender age of 18. For her part, Honda allowed the young thespian to devise her own make-up in developing her regal character.

She continued acting throughout the 1960s, and semi-retired during the '70s, only to make a come back in the 1982 tele-feature *FUKISUIDO*. Her last theatrical role was in the film *GEKKO NO NATSU* in 1993.

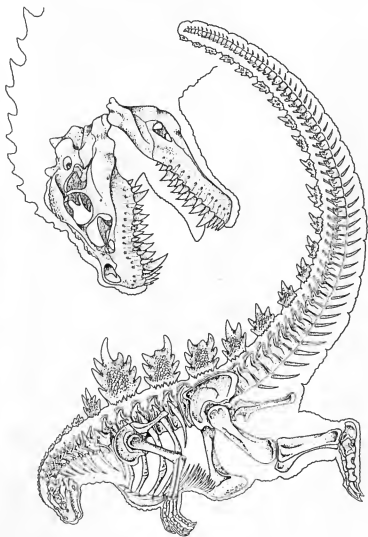
**LONG LIVE
THE EMPRESS
OF MU!**

August Ragone

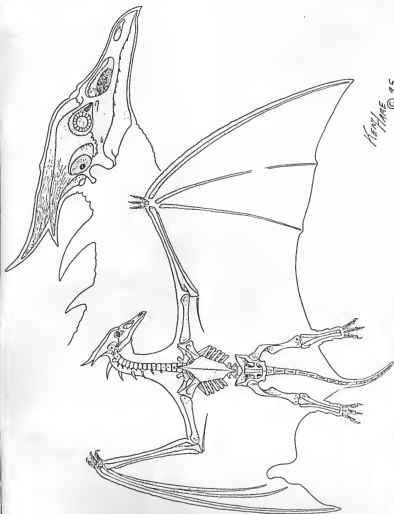
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KEN HARE'S KAIJU



SKELETON ART



PLUG SECTION

The latest issue of **MONSTER ATTACK TEAM** has arrived. It is a 'fun looking' issue and features a Sentai



MONSTER ATTACK TEAM MEGA ISSUE 5

ULTRAMAN POWER! (D) director King Wilder, news on Ultraman, Godzilla and more! Issue five is called a 'double issue' and costs \$6. (postage included). Send check or money orders to Ed Holland c/o 911 Bernard #12, Denton, Texas 76201-7152

As the MAT slogan says: "Let's Fight Monsters, I, etc really Fight!"



assistance of a powerful being called **Ultima Woman** in the course of their battles against evil aliens, robots and giant monsters. In a twist on the typical 'Ultra' hero transformation, two members of the Astro Squad, Rick and Timmy must achieve orgasm (together) in order to summon **Ultima Woman** to battle (even more fun than a Beta Capsule!) Ron's love of Japanese Monster Culture comes through in every page of this comic. **ULTIMA-WOMAN** features some very erotic material (this is an X-rated comic) and is not in any way intended for minors. Each issue retails for \$3.50. An age statement is required. For more information consult your local comic shop or write to Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle Washington 98115. Highly Recommended.

The latest issue of Damon Foster's **ORIENTAL CINEMA** features an in depth guide to the history of Gamera on the big screen. Also included are the

Series history by August Flapone, an interview with the propmaster of **POWER RANGERS**, by Ed Holland, Ultraman episode #28 plot synopsis, and Alien Da-Da feature by Kevin Grays. A look at kaiju related music by Michael Keller, a synopsis of the new Gamera film, a short interview with

ULTRAMAN POWER! (D) director King Wilder, news on Ultraman, Godzilla and more! Issue five is called a 'double issue' and costs \$6. (postage included). Send check or money orders to Ed Holland c/o 911 Bernard #12, Denton, Texas 76201-7152

As the MAT slogan says: "Let's Fight Monsters, I, etc really Fight!"

Ron Wilder (creator of **DOMINO LADY**, and **THE OCELOT**) whose art work has appeared frequently in these pages has just completed work on the first two issues of a new series for Eros Comics called **ULTIMA-WOMAN**. A three part mini series which features the adventures of the 'Astro Squad' who come to rely on the protection and

assistance of a powerful being called **Ultima Woman** in the course of their battles against evil aliens, robots and giant monsters. In a twist on the typical 'Ultra' hero transformation, two members of the Astro Squad, Rick and Timmy must achieve orgasm (together) in order to summon **Ultima Woman** to battle (even more fun than a Beta Capsule!) Ron's love of Japanese Monster Culture comes through in every page of this comic. **ULTIMA-WOMAN** features some very erotic material (this is an X-rated comic) and is not in any way intended for minors. Each issue retails for \$3.50. An age statement is required. For more information consult your local comic shop or write to Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle Washington 98115. Highly Recommended.

The latest issue of Damon Foster's **ORIENTAL CINEMA** features an in depth guide to the history of Gamera on the big screen. Also included are the

(annual) round-up of news and reviews on all things Asian and fantastic. Damon has just launched a new publication called **HEROES ON FILM** that covers a wide variety of hero films and television series from around the world. For more information check out your local magazine stand or write to Dandelion Publishing, P.O. Box 969, Centralia, IL 62501

KUNG FU GIRL is an excellent magazine written and published by Keith Allison. It features detailed coverage of HK 'action' genre related films, but also includes features on both animated and live action Japanese films and shows. Keith writes about the history of HK action films with a crisply professional style not commonly found in a too medium crowded with women hating homophobes, who tend to spend too much time talking about themselves rather than the genre at hand. \$4.00 (postage included). Write to **KUNG FU GIRL**, 1215 SW Fourth Avenue, Gainesville, Florida 32601. Well worth checking out.



Just out is the **SIGHT & SOUND JAPANESE AND HONG KONG IMPORT LASER DISC CATALOG VOLUME 4**. With a great Godzilla cover by Kevin Grays, this 420 page tome provides a most excellent reference guide to all manner of Asian film and video titles. Chapters are broken down in a variety of ways including; genre, availability of subtitles, widescreen features, country, etc. Cast, credit listings, and capsule synopses are provided throughout the volume. Selling for \$39.95 this catalog is mainly intended for serious laser disc and CD collectors, but serves well for Asian pop culture fans looking for a new (English language) reference book for their film libraries. Write to Sight & Sound, 27 Jones Road, Waltham, MA 02154 or call [617] 894-8633 for more information.

CINE RAIDER, published and edited by Richard Akiyama of Honolulu, is a digest sized zine that celebrates the wild world of HK film. Its coverage goes far beyond the typical John Woo retrospectives, to include an abundance of HK ephemera designed to delight even the most discerning HK film fanatic. This is a great zine, and well worth checking out. Subscriptions may be had for \$12. for 3 issues. Write to Richard Akiyama, P.O. Box 240226, Honolulu, Hawaii 96824-0226.

Kaiju Review accepts no responsibility for these publications, this information is provided in the spirit of logrolling, saving the people who do more than just watch, in the hopes that those who like to read about this stuff (as opposed to helping their fellow man, and making the world a better place to live) will sit up and take notice.

Japan's Hard Times

The first part of 1995 has been a tough period for some of our friends in the land of the Rising Sun. Between earthquakes in Kobe / Osaka, and previous gas attacks in Tokyo, the public confidence of that proud nation has been a bit ruffled. But true to character, Japan is already on the mend. The re-building of Kobe is underway (although the true Kobe seems gone forever) and the police have been quick to round up suspects in the terrorist attack.

Those of you who would like to contribute to the relief effort being carried on in the Kobe area are strongly recommended to do so directly to those agencies that are responding to the crisis there.

Two agencies that are assisting in this effort are the AMERICAN RED CROSS (indicate that your donation is to be targeted to the Kobe Relief effort, and mail it to The American Red Cross, P.O. Box 37243, Washington D.C. 20013) and AMERICARES (this relief agency was on the scene in Kobe within days of the quake with several tons of food, medical, and shelter supplies, they can be reached at 1-800-486-4357). Remember to earmark all donations toward the Kobe Relief.

GODZILLA PROJECT

Two L.A. based artists Nancy Uyemura and Guthryn Brehm have proposed creating a Godzilla Memorial / Museum in L.A.'s Little Tokyo district. This idea emerged from a series of meetings held by the Little Tokyo Community Redevelopment Agency. It is hoped by the artists that the project might receive support from elements of the entertainment industry, including hopefully Toho itself.

"We thought it would be really fun to have Godzilla and another monster on the building, perhaps several stories high, having a laser battle on weekend nights", said Uyemura, "You hear that people don't want to go downtown at night. But perhaps they would feel safer in the light, and there would be plenty of light in a laser battle."

Sounds good to us.

CONTEST

Last issue we published a selection of entries for Kaiju Review's first annual Krazy Kaiju Art Contest. We asked readers to vote on their top four favorite entries. As determined by readers votes the following prizes will be awarded:

First Prize went to Roy Ware. Mr. Ware has won an official Toho crew jacket from the film *Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla*.

Second Prize went to Jeff Holleran. Mr. Holleran has won Trukuda's soft vinyl Godzilla kit from the film *Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla*.

Third Prize went to Bob Johnson. Mr. Johnson won a Bandai Real Action Godzilla kit.

Fourth Prize went to James Cho, who won a Bandai King Kong figure.

A special random voter's prize went to Dominick Tucci. Mr. Tucci won a Bandai Psychodroid Remote control Godzilla / Mothra kit.

Congratulations to all the winners and our thanks to everyone who participated in this contest.



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Space Women in the Kaiju Eiga
Ultraman Ultimate Hero Episode Guide
Complete Synopsis of the TriStar Godzilla Script
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