

NO. 9

Kaiju Review

The Journal of Japanese Monster Culture



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This issue of Kaiju Review is dedicated to the memory of the late television and film professional Minoru Yamada (photographed on the wrap of production for GIANT ROBO, front row center w/ hat) who in his all too short a time spent on Earth helped to shape the vision of Japanese live action fantasy that still delights its fans today. Thanks for the memories Yamada San.

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KAIJU BUZZ NOTES

TSUBURAYA PRO. SHOPS NEXT ULTRA SERIES

Tsuburaya Productions has created an eight minute pilot for the next Ultraman series, to be called **ULTRAMAN NEOS**. The series which will be set and filmed on location in Japan is the 10th installment of the Ultraman saga that began airing on Japanese television in 1966. NEOS is planned as part of the 30th Anniversary celebration taking place next year. Interestingly the story line to the new series will also feature a second Ultra brother; Seven 2 1 (that's two one, rather than '21') who will appear on the show on a semi regular basis.

The project is being produced by **Koichi Takano** (who worked under Eiji Tsuburaya on **THE MYSTERIANS** ('57) and later joined the team at Tsuburaya Pro. handling effects duties on **ULTRA Q**, and many of the Ultramen series that would follow. Takano will be chiefly responsible for overseeing the production of all aspects of this new show along with co-producer **Kazuo Sagawa**.

Hiroshi Maruyama, who came from a background in the Fuji TV art department bested a wide range of fellow contenders in an art directors' competition sponsored by Takano, with his original design for the two new Ultra heroes.

Suits and Mecha for the series were built by the **GOZZO GROUP** effects company (which counts **Shinji Higuchi** as a member) under the direction of **Mahiro Maeda**. Maeda's previous Ultra experience included final design of the suit, monsters, and mecha for Ultraman powered as created by **Mahiro Maeda**.

Tsuburaya veteran **Shinichi Ooka** acted as director of photography on the eight minute pilot, with stunt actor **Hiroyuki Okano** wearing the Neos suit.

Rumored to be returning after a long absence to the world of Ultramen is actress **Hiroko Sakurai** who played **Akiko Fuji** of the Science Patrol in the original show (as well as **Yuriko Ebogawa** in **ULTRA Q**). She would play the commanding officer of **Hi-Tech Earth Alert Rescue Team (H.E.A.R.T.)**. It is not known at this time if her character will be Fuji, or someone else. Another member of H.E.A.R.T. will be a character named **Kei Kagura**, who will come into possession of the Estraller device that initiates the change to Ultraman Neos in times of dire emergency. Interestingly enough Ultra Seven 2 1 has a similar device called the Arcorazer, which will be teleported across space

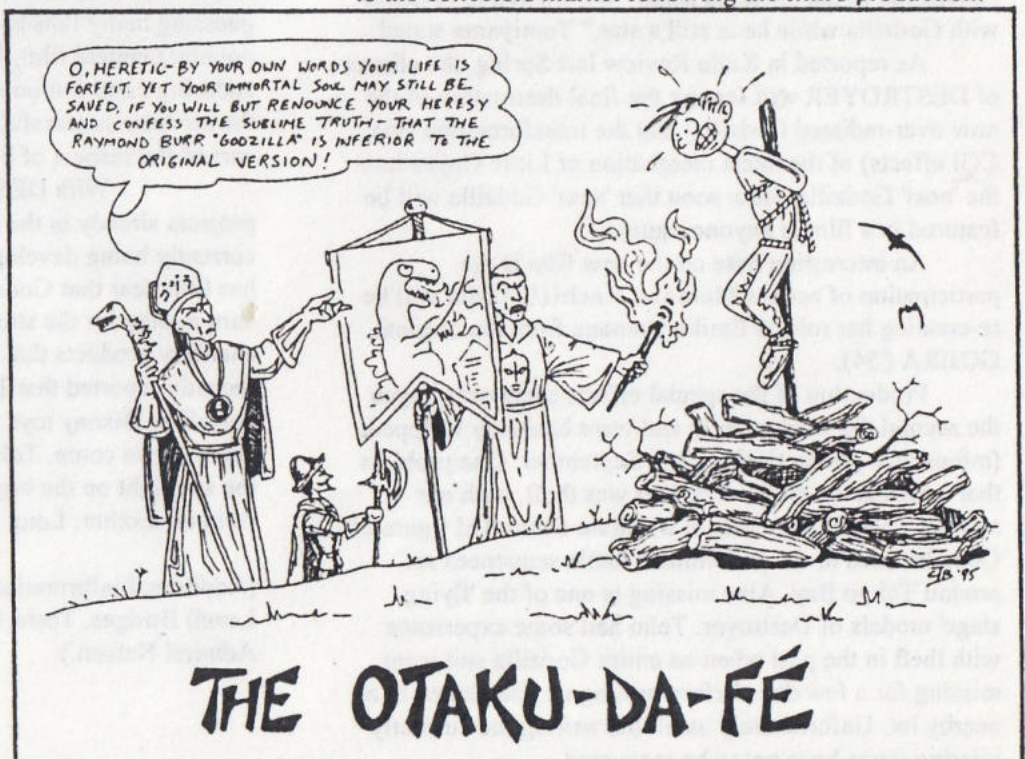
and into the hands of different Earth people as the need arises.

The main villain of the piece is the Alien Zamm who will be calling on a wide variety of deadly dai kaiju, to aid in his plan to conquer Earth. First up is **Drengelan**, 93,000 metric tons of monster hurt, with two beam weapons guaranteed to mess up any Ultraman's three minutes on Earth.

Interestingly enough the original plan for this series was to feature a group of five different Ultra Brothers fighting against evil in a variety of galactic settings, with principal photography to be done in Canada. It was rumors of this (along with the Gonzo Group's involvement in the project) that led to false reports in the fan media about the next Gamera film lensing in the great white north. Those plans were scrapped in favor of shooting in Japan owing to money considerations and the relative lack of desire on the Japanese crew's part to work in Canada.

GAMERA GETS NEW ENEMY

The next Gamera film which is currently in preproduction will feature a new alien menace tentatively to be called **REGION** (pronounced REG EE ON). Described by a source at Daiei as being an insect like creature intent upon over running the Earth with its deadly off spring. The main creature is being referred to as **Queen Region** (as in the Queen Alien) with the smaller creatures also called **Region**, and resembling **Creature Core** versions of the **Face Huggers** from the **ALIEN** films. Kaiju Review has learned that **Yuji Nishimura** of **M1** has contracted to produce over a thousand soft vinyl castings of the smaller **Region** creature for use in a scene where the aliens swarm over a crowd of people caught in an indoor garage. The scene will be accomplished using a combination of CGI effects and the on camera models. Word has it that **M1** will be making the figures available to the collectors market following the film's production.



On a related note; Yuji Nishimura has recently purchased one of the key 'flying' models of Gamera used in the last film, along with a head from one of the suits. Don't be surprised if licensed castings of these items become available from M1 before long. On a final note regarding M1, (until the review article on page 6 at least) Kaiju Review sends a warm congratulations to **Yuji Nishimura** and long time companion **Michi Kominato** who were married this October. Best of luck and happiness.

MMPR AIRS IN JAPAN

Tokyo's TV Asahi started broadcasting **Saban's MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS** on October 4th (95). Too early as of this writing to gauge how popular the show might become, but die hard Ranger fans (both of them) have assured us that this show has had a cult following in Japan since word of Saban's version first made it back to the Toei sentai otaku. Apparently the novelty of seeing American producers combine action footage from the Japanese shows with mundane acting, and adolescent level dramatic values, had proved irresistible to the Japanese fans of the original versions. While this may put a minor crimp in the collector to collector trades that have been going on between Japanese and American fans, not to worry since the show is already into its third season here, and the movie will be available on tape in the States long before it gets to Japan.

GODZILLA FOREVER

Over the Summer the American media was flooded with reports about the pending demise of the screen's one and only 'true' King of the Monsters; Godzilla. Surprisingly, the generally circumspect **Toho Co.** issued an official press release (signed by Executive Producer **Shojo Tomiyama**) that the company had "run out of ideas". Tomiyama stated that **GODZILLA VS. DESTROYER** would, "definitely and positively" be the conclusion to the Godzilla saga. "We wanted to finish with Godzilla while he is still a star," Tomiyama stated.

As reported in Kaiju Review last Spring, the climax of **DESTROYER** will feature the final destruction of the now over-radiated Godzilla, and the transformation (via CGI effects) of the latest incarnation of Little Gojira into the 'next' Godzilla. How soon that 'next' Godzilla will be featured in a film is anyone's guess.

An interesting note on the new film is the participation of actress **Momoko Kochi** (63) who will be re-creating her role as Emiko Yamane from the original **GOJIRA** ('54).

Production of the special effects sequences began the second the week of July and were basically wrapped (minus post production) by late September. One problem that plagued the studio this year was theft, with our sources revealing the loss of a remote controlled figure of Godzilla used in the penultimate battle sequences set around Tokyo Bay. Also missing is one of the 'flying stage' models of Destroyer. Toho had some experience with theft in the past when an entire Godzilla suit went missing for a few days before turning up abandoned in a nearby lot. Unfortunately as of this writing the currently missing items have yet to be recovered.

Reports have been circulated about a possible **King Ghidra** film being prepped for 1999. Insiders at Toho assure Kaiju Review that if such a film actually gets past the drawing board stage, it is highly unlikely that King Ghidra would get the film all to itself; he would be a natural adversary to the 'next' Godzilla.

Whether or not that film would be created at Toho studios is another matter. The once expansive studio property (and facilities) has dwindled over the years thanks to the incredible land values in Japan (and especially in the more affluent residential areas such as where Toho sits). This has led to a very real consideration on the Company's part as to which is the more efficient revenue generating asset, making movies or brokering property. It is telling that the famous water tank used in so many 'Godzilla at sea' shots at Toho, has been filled in to make room for additional parking.

However the end of actual shooting on the Toho backlot in no way means the end of Toho's contributions to kaiju eiga. It simply means the studio has just started to move more in step with the way most features are created these days. The great majority of films are now made using outside contractors, (studio facilities, SPFX shops, independent directors etc.), who handle the day to day production of a film, leaving only the financing and distribution of that film up to the studio backing the project. This is already the norm for Toho who typically farms out the creation of effects components to independent companies. An example is the Tokyo based firm called **Cinema City** which created many of the CGI effects seen in **GODZILLA VS. SPACE GODZILLA**, **GAMERA**, and the upcoming **DESTROYER**.

With the critical success of Daiei's Gamera film, some have ventured the opinion that in the future Toho may contract that company to produce special effects films such as the rumored King Ghidra project. Yes and I'm sure that next we'll see Disney farm out a Mickey Mouse cartoon to Warner Bros. Even if **Shinji Higuchi** (**GAMERA** '95) were to take over the SPFX chair from **Koichi Kawakita** tomorrow (which is about as likely as a real dai kaiju actually stomping Tokyo), it would still be, and always will be a Toho film. Despite the second guessing many fans have had in light of the hugely popular Gamera film, Koichi Kawakita has made an enduring contribution to the Godzilla mythos, by bringing the monster successfully into the 90's, and has more than earned the respect of his peers.

With **DESTROYER** on the way, and new projects already in the pipeline (like a new monster series currently being developed by Toho's TV division), Toho has little fear that Godzilla will lose any of its ability to earn money for the studio any time soon. With all the ancillary products that bear the Godzilla copyright (It was recently reported that **Trendmasters'** Godzilla toys are outselling Disney toys at Toys R Us stores in the U.S.) and more to come, Toho will be more than willing to keep the spotlight on the big G for many years to come in one form or another. Long live the King of the monsters!

(Additional information provided by August Ragone, Lenell Bridges, Toshi Okazaki, Gordon Graham, and Admiral Nelson.)

Minoru Yamada Remembered



山田 稔

Director Minoru Yamada is gone. I took a deep breath after seeing the notice in the obituary section of Kinema Jumbo magazine -- I thought I had read it wrong; but, it was true. The sad thing is that fans of this genre outside of Nippon really never have seen or recognized his work - let alone appreciate his impressive filmography -- until his memory will be faded at best back home.

Born June 6, 1926 in Tokyo; after graduating from university he joined Toho Studios and later moved on to Toei Tokyo Studios. In 1965, his directorial debut was the made-for-television feature, ONE GENERATION OF HORSEMEN; by 1966 he helmed episodes of the LIL DEVIL (Akuma-Kun) teleseries, which was a starting point of the Toei Superhero aesthetic.*

Next came the seminal GIANT ROBO (1967) in which he directed 8 of its 26 episodes.

*CAPTAIN ULTRA -- a Japanese version of Edmund Hamilton's CAPTAIN FUTURE pulp novels followed in 1967 (5 episodes); a show which had several episodes helmed by the recently-parted genre specialist Hajime Sato (TERROR BENEATH THE SEA).

It was during this time that Mr. Yamada began working on the phenomenally popular crime/action dramas KEYHUNTER starring Tetsuro Tamba and Shinichi "Sonny" Chiba (later both in MESSAGE FROM SPACE) and THE PLAYGIRLS (upon which CHARLIE'S ANGELS was based).

In 1971, he returned to genre programs with KAMEN RIDER, in which he directed 35 of the shows 98 episodes -- his superhero output of the '70s totalled over

200 episodes spread across a dozen and a half shows -- he became regarded as a premiere KAMEN RIDER director, and handled all of the theatrical featurettes.

Added to the mix of crime dramas and superhero adventures, Mr. Yamada also helmed a number of children's shows like MAGIC TEACHER ('72), THE MAGIC CLASS ('76; with Machiko Soga) and THE INVISIBLE DORI ('78).

As the Sentai Series spiraled into the 1980s, so did Mr. Yamada, calling "action" on over 150 segments for 11 Sentai shows -- in between directing episodes of SPACE SHERIFF SHAIDER ('84), before retiring after SUPER BEAST TASK FORCE: LIVEMAN wrapped in 1989.

Since the Toei Hero renaissance of the mid-'80s, a good many books have been published, re-examining the period of the early-to-mid 1970s -- scant little has been printed of interviews with Mr. Yamada, aside from sidebars and capsule commentary; I hope that someone, somewhere has done more exhaustive, or at least lengthy, interviews with the late Superhero master.

There are many more brilliant (non-Toho) genre film people out there who are slipping through our fingers... we need to appreciate and acknowledge these men and women before they fade into the past.

Without fanfare, Minoru Yamada passed away as a result of cancer on August 25, 1995.

He was 69 years young.

August Ragone

Kaiju Kit Illuminations

By Ryan Mitchell



M1 (M-Ichigo) is a company which has released many quality products over the years. The company was founded by Yuji

Nishimura and Michi Kominato. Yuji is a collector himself of many Toho movie props and rare toys from the '60s and '70s. He is the author of numerous books and articles relating to the kaiju eiga (and collecting) such as **THE GODZILLA TOY MUSEUM**, and the recent **PICTORIAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GODZILLA**. Yuji is probably the most famous Japanese expert on Godzilla and Ultraman known to fans outside of Japan.

M1 makes several appearances each year at American conventions, where their tables provide some of the most unique items found on the dealer circuit. It is really a company to reckon with - whether they release a vinyl kit, resin kit, plastic kit or toy - they always come up trumps! At the moment I have the Godzilla Skeleton, 62 1/1 scale head, Godzilla Jig (Astrogozdi), Atragon, and 50cm '64 Moth Godzilla -- I will look at these products in this review.

Godzilla Jig

This superb kit was released in the early '90s and is recommended to all collectors of Godzilla kits, toys, etc. for a number of reasons - firstly, the sculpt is flawless, as you would expect from none other than **Yuji Sakai** - the guy who sculpts 99% of Kaiyodo's Godzillas. Secondly,

who can resist a kit of the classic Godzilla Jig from one of the best Godzilla entries, **MONSTER ZERO** ('65), and lastly it's on scale with Kaiyodo's 1/250 scale G's - the kit is molded in grey vinyl, comes with a metal rod (to spear the poor thing between his legs which will in turn make him appear to be jumping) and a small vinyl planet X base. The box artwork is great (get that box displayed!). With this kit, follow the instruction or else! The most tricky thing when putting this together is the rod (getting it fixed and secured); you also need to fill the base to stop the whole thing from falling over - a little putty work is also required, but worth mentioning - the kit goes together better than most. This one is still available at a price of 4000 yen (about 40-50 dollars); expect to pay twice that amount though, because of dealer mark-ups. Just a great looking kit. Buy now!

Godzilla '64 50cm

Available in resin, vinyl, or rubber kits - Certainly one of the best renditions of the famed Mosura Goji. This is also the biggest kit available of a '64 Godzilla. Thank M1 for bringing out a kit that measures a little bigger than its advertised 50cm (52 cm.). First brought out in resin (at 80,000 yen, \$800-900) for purists and rich people alike! Released early '95 in vinyl or rubber (23,000 yen, \$250-300), sculpted by Yuji Sakai (again!). The kit is broken down very well (for its size) and minimum putty work is required. The rubber one really needs a wire skeleton inside to hold the thing up - but don't try posing it too much (it goes out of shape and begins to look wrong). If you want one and see a soft vinyl one a little cheaper than the rubber one, go for it! Great box art work (clever!).

怪獣大戦争 ゴジラ

組立説明書

ソフトビニールキット

〈組立てる前に〉

パーツを袋に開いて確認して下さい。
パーツ数は全部で21パーツです。+ピアノ線
パーツの組みはドライヤーか熱湯で加熱すると元に戻ります
パーツをカットした部品の交換には応じられませんのでご注意ください。

〈組立てについて〉

パーツの不要な部分はカッター・ナイフ等でカットして下さい。
接着には瞬間接着剤を使用して下さい。
袋に開いて組み立てて下さい。
気味やパッチングラインはパテ等で整えます。

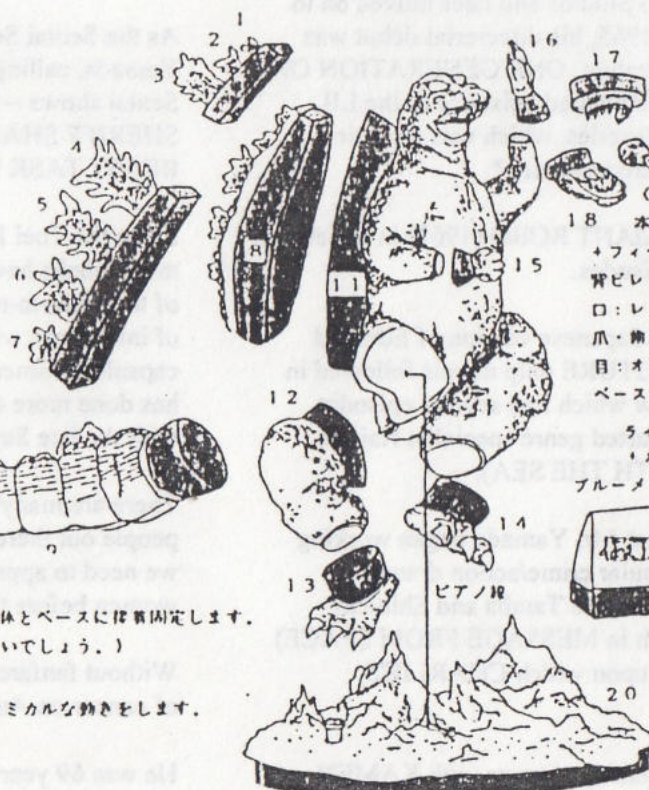


口底のピアノ線は、ペンチ等で1/1を折らずに曲げ、本体とベースに接着固定します。

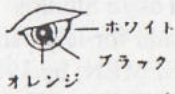
(背ビレパーツは着脱に、ピアノ線を固定した方がいいでしょう。)

ベースに、石膏又は、キャストを試すと安定します。

+ピアノ線の代わりに、スプリング等で固定するとコミカルな動きをします。



●目の色



〈塗料について〉

18 本体：ジャーマングレー
+フィールドブルー+フラットベース
背ビレ：シルバーのドライブラシ
口：レッド
爪・歯：アイボリー
目：オレンジ、ブラック
ベース：オリーブドラブ。

ライトカーキのドライブラシ
+ガンステンレス。
ブルーメタリックパウダーのドライブラシ



図面の■の部分、は、不用部分ですので
カッター等で切り取って下さい。

©東宝 M1

原型製作：酒井ユウジ



Godzilla Skeleton

New release but now sold out! Limited to 400 worldwide. Sculpted by Takayuki Takeya of Creature Core fame. The kit is not of a '54 G Skeleton but a rendition of what is possibly a G '93 (Mecha Godzilla or RadoGoji). I told a friend that I just bought a Godzilla skeleton, "The insides of Godzilla," and he said, "What, you got a kit of a man?" Anyway, jokes aside, I know I'm sounding a bit boring by now but it's another winner cast in 54 white resin parts and standing 30cm by 55cm long. This kit is a high quality piece (the casting is near flawless) on a scale of 1-10 for sculpt and casting I give it a 9+1/2. Dowel work is required and you also need time and effort to put the thing together - certainly not recommended for beginners. If you can still get one, expect to pay \$400+ (it cost 35,000 yen in Japan). Comes with full color box art work, stained wood base and name plaque - says Godzilla Skeleton in both English and Japanese. Watch out for recasts, folks!

Godzilla 62 Head 1/1 Scale

Another winner - great sculpt from Yuji Sakai comes in either soft vinyl or rubber - the kit is broken down into five pieces - putty work is required around the jaw area - pity you can't wear it as a mask! Expect to pay around \$200-250; comes bagged.



Atragon sub

Plastic kit - Re-issue of the Taki 1964 kit. Not too accurate, but passable. Certainly the cheapest way to own an Atragon (1200 yen, about \$20-25), you get two kits in one box (build one - leave the other mint in box - ingenious!). The box art work is a winner - making this a must have item - you also get a plan of the insides of Atragon!

More info on M1 Products

For 17,000 yen M1 has just released a re-issue of the Kaiyodo Build-up Biollante and Godzilla 1/400 scale in the same box in vinyl - consider that when Kaiyodo released their Biollante in '90 it cost 12,000 yen - the Godzilla cost 3500 yen extra - so I reckon you're getting a good deal with the M1 version. M1 will release a vinyl '64 diorama of Godzilla at Nagoya Castle 1/350 scale and in the future a 1/1 scale '64 vinyl head! M1 has just released another re-issue of the Build-up '89 1/1 vinyl G head (30,000 yen).

M1's toy line includes the following - Ultra Q Namegon, Ultra Q Garamon (with meteor egg), Ultra Q Ramon, Ultra Q Kemuru Jin. All mentioned are very toy-like and reminiscent of (or taken from) the Bullmark toys of the '60s. They all stand around 10-11" tall and are around 3000 yen each.

M1's Ultra range includes the following - Resin cast Ultraman and Ultra 7, also soft vinyl Ultraman 1971. All look great and are in flying poses plus a little bigger than the Billiken types - around 12,800 yen each if still available.

Coming up next from M1 ? Expect to see some special items that relate to Ultraman's 30th Anniversary next year, including a possible statuette of Eiji Tsuburaya himself, Toho film related; Look for an upcoming figure kit based on MATANGO, and as mentioned in this issue's Buzz Notes, M1 will be releasing authentic replicas of props from the new Gamera film.



Godzilla '64 50cm

KOLLECTING KAIJU

by Mattel Jones

We road tested the P.W. Gamera and found it to be a suitable opponent for the big Space Godzilla (DX) walker released last year. In head to head trials (with fresh batteries) Gamera was able to stop Space Godzilla in its tracks every time. The Plasma Walk Gamera has been officially reported as sold out in Japan, but a few are likely to still be kicking around. This is Kaiju Review's number one choice for best Gamera toy this year. It retailed in Japan for 4980 Y, but expect to pay at least \$90. for one mint in the box Stateside.

ULTRAMAN PHONE CARDS

One item that has become very popular in recent years among collectors are prepaid telephone cards.

They have already been in great demand in the U.S. and have so far featured everything from Star Trek, to the local NFL franchise (and beyond).

Using these cards to promote Japanese genre characters is old news in Japan, where Godzilla phone cards have proved highly collectible. Now an American firm called **Teleworld International** has made an arrangement with **Tsuburaya Productions** to bring out a set of ten cards featuring Japan's most famous super hero; Ultraman.

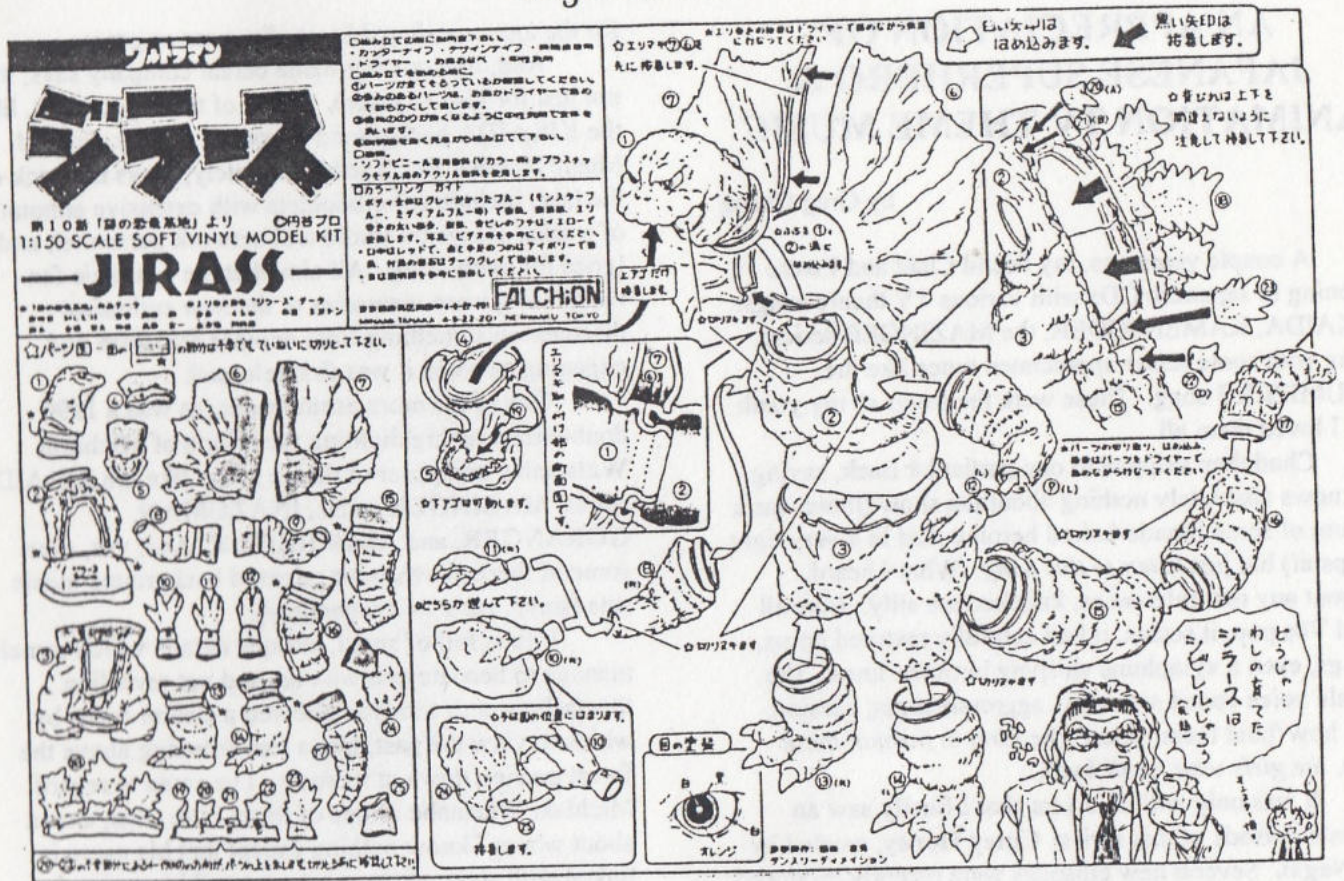
Some of the most classic

PLASMA WALK GAMERA

In response to the demand for 'real action' toys brought about by Tokyo Marui's successful RC Godzillas, Bandai has released a wide variety of walking roaring monsters, including Godzilla, Space Godzilla, King Ghidora, and Gamera. Two types of 'action' Gameras exist (at this point) one is the REAL ACTION kit which stands 20cm, the other is the PLASMA WALK GAMERA (25cm) so named because in addition to walking and roaring it also emits a red glow in the mouth simulating the action seen in the film. Unlike the smaller kit version the P.W. Gamera has a hard plastic shell and molded teeth. The body is cast in rubber and mounted on an ABS servo frame. In short it is a much more durable looking toy, and makes the former version look like a weak sister by comparison.

moments from the original 1966 show (which will celebrate its 30th anniversary next year) are depicted on these cards. See Ultraman face favorite foes such as Red King, Baltan, Z-Ton, Jirass, and others. See him perform the awesome Spaceium Kosen and more. These cards are limited to 5,000 copies of each, which means they won't be around for long so order yours today! For more information call Teleworld International at 1-800-434-499 (in the U.S.) (International # 1-800-434-8692).





JIRASS

The kit company Falchion has released a soft vinyl kit version of the Jirass monster featured in the tenth episode of the original ULTRAMAN. This kaiju was created using a combination of Godzilla suit materials left over from SEA MONSTER ('66) with the simple addition of a reptilian frill, and some fresh paint. This sequence gave fans a glimpse of what a battle between Ultraman and Godzilla might have looked like (especially after Ultraman tears off the frill), and wound up as one of the more poignant moments of that series. Although Jirass never appeared in another Ultra show, his popularity among fans has continued to this day, and this kit is only the latest in a long range of items to feature the character.

The kit is cast in soft vinyl and is constructed of 25 pieces. It is in comparable scale to already existing figures of Ultraman A from Billiken and Kaiyodo. The kit goes together easily with minimum putty work required. It is suitable for moderate skill level kit builders. While some collectors may pick up this kit hoping to simply build a EbiGoji, be advised that the scratch work involved will be extensive, with the end result most likely being a

stunted neck. The

kit retails in Japan for around 68. Y and should cost under \$140.

in the U.S. A perfect addition to your Godzilla figure collection, despite the mixed heritage.

Shinobu Matsumura's TYRANNOZILLA

Matsumura, who more recently sculpted the 1/400 scale Fire Rodan kit (also for Kaiyodo) has taken the proposed concept of a more Dinosaur like Godzilla and brought it to life in resin.

Credit for the original concept of this unusual version of Godzilla might properly belong to artist William Stout, who first developed a more T-Rex styled Godzilla as part of the concept art he created for Steve Miner's proposed re-make of Godzilla in 3D (see KR8 for more info). While Matsumura's design bears more than a passing resemblance to Stout's work, the artist brings his own sensibility to the sculpt, creating a truly unique Godzilla collectible. Cast in resin, the figure comes in one piece. While the figure is advertised as ready to paint, the one sent to KR for review was in need of some minor putty work in order to fill in a few small air bubbles on the torso area. The figure measures 17" in length and is about 7 1/2" tall.

This kit is available from Monstrosities Inc. for \$225. Write to them at P.O. Box 1024, North Baldwin, N.Y. 11510-0924, and ask for their catalog of Dinosaur and Godzilla kits.

(Special thanks to John Carlson, Toshiki Okazaki, and Bob Dagg)

Reader's are encouraged to send information and reviews of new and upcoming kaiju related collectibles. Write to Kaiju Review, 301 East 64th Street, NYC 10021.



AN APPRECIATION OF JAPANESE SUPERHERO & ANIMATION TV THEME MUSIC

by Greg Chang

A couple years ago, my friend Chad and I were listening to Japanese CDs with various TV theme songs: KIKAIDA, KAMEN RIDER, the MAZINGER series, along with some lesser appreciated tunes like the AKUMIZER 3 song. These were the songs of my youth and I loved them all.

Chad then skipped to one particular track, saying he knows absolutely nothing about the show (there was a picture of some blonde-haired heroine clad in a very tight jumpsuit) but just *listen to this song*. What I heard, without any real references, knocked me silly. Like all good '70s pop, it seems, it had carefully textured horns, strings, even a xylophone chirping between lines. The female voice cooed sexuality, aggressiveness, passion. And how 'bout them lyrics: *The girls in fashion these days, the girls with small butts...*

It was only until this year that I finally saw an original episode of this series: *Cutey Honey*, created by Go Nagai. Several new episodes were recently produced (available on subtitled videotapes), enhancing the violence, theme song (souped-up guitar and drum tracks) and, of course, Honey's naked body.

I'm not a huge fan of anime or animated heroes but now I like the show and even the new series. I credit this to the ingratiating song which opens every episode. I've since come to realize that a good Japanese superhero show begins with a good song. It doesn't always work that way but it seems to grab ahold of the view somewhat tighter than even the hero him/herself.

It's like when KIKAIDA swept through Hawaii like a hurricane. Anyone who knew anything about the show could at least hum the song, even take a stab at the actual lyrics. (What they actually *meant*, well, let's not ask for the moon!) I lent a video to a friend so his 3 year old cousin could sample a few episodes. Within a week even the kid -- a second-generation Korean growing up in a very Korean household -- was mouthing something like, "Swishh on! Wah! Tuh! Thah!" And there was no mistaking that tune: short, to the point, and sprinkled with enough English words to keep things interesting.

I used to record episodes of KIKAIDA on a kiddie Panasonic cassette recorder, trying to capture for myself what I knew and loved. In the days before VCRs, I was hungry to preserve the moment. The indirect result of this was that my ears became more attuned to the sound effects, dialogue (thus picking up a few Japanese words and phrases) and the music tracks. It doesn't seem that strange that while other guys in school had extensive toy collections (the plastic Kikaida-on-motorcycle was a big item), I was content with media: books and records. That which survives.

A whole generation later there has been a boom of reissues of these songs, thanks to digital audio technology and consumer interest. Check out a rack or two in Japan and you'll see how prolific the genre is, for both live action and animated. There must be a dozen compilations of the KAMEN RIDER and ULTRAMAN series. Other shows not as massively popular are also preserved

for the ages, cataloged by studio, year or genre.

And, like one big-name cereal company says, it's not just for kids anymore. Many of these packages, like the KIKAIDA background music set ("Back Ground Music Number Recorded Completely," says the back of the box) include color booklets with extensive annotations of tracks, essays by studio and network personnel, and lyrics for every song. All aimed at the nostalgic fan recapturing warm memories or the new enthusiast discovering something from another era, fresh and engaging as when it was first released.

One of the more astute packages was a 1990 double-disc set highlighting the efforts of Michiaki Watanabe, composer of theme songs like the KIKAIDA series, MAZINGER series, INAZUMAN, GORANGER, and AKUMIZER 3. And, yes, even some of these shows have released background music sets (sorry, each sold separately).

Life is full of small, oblique details which somehow manage to become one with us, and not revealing themselves until time has allowed a clearer focus by which to view the past, like a tree hovering above the forest peering down at its roots. I've come to regard Michiaki Watanabe as one of those little cogs, a man about whom I know nothing except that his name is linked with some of the most memorable music of my youth. I used to pass endless minutes in class or standing in line replaying a song from an old 45 or humming the melody which always accompanied a fight sequence.

I've always wondered if Watanabe -- or any composer of the genre -- knew the impact of his work, scribbling down tuned for a kiddie show, and how it will probably survive into the next millennium. I've heard KIKAIDA 01 used in marching band routines, known someone who -- twenty years ago -- announced his presence at the neighborhood playground by singing the HAKAIDA song, discovered friends who knew the words to the KAMEN RIDER song (*Rider Jump! Rider Kick!*), and I have even sung "GORANGER" at a karaoke bar.

Interestingly, some of these songs made it to America as well. I remember watching dubbed episodes of ULTRAMAN on Ted Turner's old Superstation which opened with the original music track intact, something I still marvel at today. It was a helluva way to open the program, even with its so-so English lyrics ("*Ultraman, here he comes from the sky / Ultraman, watch our hero fly!*") The dubbed ULTRA SEVEN series in Hawaii got a fresh re-make of the title song done by Masato Shimon, a giant among singers of the genre (KAMEN RIDER, KIKAIDA01, INAZUMAN, et al.). Back then I used to snicker at the rendition, with the off-key English lyrics ("*We know him by another name / The planet man Dan*") and the seemingly overdramatic delivery of whoever was singing. Of course I cut Shimon a little more slack today, that being possibly his first ever release done in a language other than his native one. (If there's one thing TBS should have picked up in its ULTRA SEVEN broadcasts it is this version of the title song. At least they used some of the original music in the background from time to time.)

People who are familiar with Shimon's credits will acknowledge that he's one of the all-time greats (he's also had a "mainstream" top-10 hit in Japan), as well as a few others whose names grace countless songs. But, in my opinion, there is only one King, a singer who has affixed

his name to dozens and dozens of TV soundtracks. His name is **Ichiro Mizuki**.

This is another gifted individual about whom I know zilch. Details about the man are completely lost on me. But I do know the man can sing, and I am not alone on this one. His credits are preserved on compact disc in a truly comprehensive retrospective with not one, not two, but three volumes. Double-disc volumes.

Mizuki is the defining vocalist of '70s superhero TV. He takes lyrics and melody, and his rich voice turns them into something vivid and meaningful. Whether it's the **HAKAIDA Song** (*My mission, my destiny, is to destroy Kikaida*) or **GREAT MAZINGER** (*I do not shed tears/because I am a robot, I am a machine.*) he somehow manages to become the character of the show. He doesn't save every song (or series) and that humongous compilation must contain its share of filler. Still, there had to be some reason he got all that work in the '70s and '80s.

It's hard to describe to someone less appreciative of Japanese superhero themes how good some of them are. Either you recognize some of the tunes mentioned here or you've never seen the shows before, and I'm a kook. Music, particularly in a foreign language, can be pretty alienating. Which makes it all the more difficult to explain to others how you can be into songs with lyrics you can't translate without a good Japanese-English dictionary.

Sometimes I wonder if there really is a barrier which separates me from truly enjoying these songs. After all, over half the time, I'm just hearing what seems like random Japanese words and phrases strung together. I can identify the characters of most song lyrics and have access to a marvelous electronic dictionary. But it's not the same, is it? There are so many nuances indigenous to the Japanese language and Japanese culture which are way, way over my head. So what's the use, right?

I feel not. It's almost a blessing I don't know what I'm singing. This way, everything I hear sounds somewhat legitimate, like a "regular" song. (This is not to say that all Japanese pop music is good; in fact, a lot of it sucks, especially the new wave of singers who try to sing Japanese songs with coarse, Americanized accents. I'm sure today's superhero songs have followed this trend, but I don't watch those shows anyway.) Anyone who knows Japanese may think of a song like, "Go, Go Kikaida" as being the intellectual equivalent of a Barney hymn -- but not me, and don't you tell me otherwise. I may sound silly but please let me believe that these aren't just kiddie songs.

I went to a karaoke joint in Osaka earlier this year and was bowled over by the anime section of the songbook. A friend and I sang as many tunes as we knew the lyrics to. Another guy was with us from Kyoto, where he teaches English. He knows Japanese and was a little bored during our extended medleys. At one point, he looked at me doing "Great Mazinger", grinned, and asked, "So... how do you know these songs?"

That's how it seems with us believers -- either you get it or you don't. If you know the songs I speak of, by all means, upgrade your old record collection. You won't believe how great some of this music sounds after all these years. If you hit a big music shop in Japan, you're bound to find a shelf packed with stuff (though it seems that live-action shows take a backseat to anime) with songs you're familiar with.

And even songs that you're not. I bought one

such package earlier this year which includes tunes from shows I've never even heard of. However, two bonus gems revealed themselves: The opening and closing theme songs to a series called **FU-UN LION MARU**, a short-lived series lasting for barely five months in 1973. I already had a visual reference because I had some posters of the character from long ago. The design looked good and the monsters fairly creepy. I don't know what kind of show it was, but now I'm curious. The closing song in particular ("Ikuzo Lion Maru") is terribly catchy and evocative of the best of '70s pop, combining horns, keyboards and uncomplicated vocal harmonies in a simple musical package.

I'm hooked; it's easily the best theme song of a show I've never seen. What's it sound like? Chad said it's like a Carpenters single, which is a better description than I could ever make. Allow me to credit the singers: **Meiji Wada**, accompanied by the **Young Echoes**, Wada, along with **Shinobu Nakamura**, wrote the song. (The opening theme, sung by **George Hama** and the **Blue Angels**, is also good.)

Still looking for specific references? Here's a list of series with good or great theme songs. It's by no means definitive, just a few favorite tunes. Let the discussions begin:

"Ultraman no Uta" -- **ULTRAMAN**

"Ultra seven no Uta" -- **ULTRA SEVEN**

(Theme Song, Don't know the title) -- **GIANT ROBO**

"Let's Go! Rider Kick" (both versions), "Rider Action,"

"Kaette Kuru Rider" -- **KAMEN RIDER**

"Tatakae! Kamen Rider V3," "Hashire Hurricane," "V3 Action" -- **KAMEN RIDER V3**

"Set Up! Kamen Rider X"

"Moero! Kamen Rider" -- **SKY RIDER** (The **KAMEN RIDER** series has been unusually blessed with good theme songs.)

"Yuke Rainbowman," "Aitsu no Namae wa Rainbowman"

"Go Go Kikaida," "Bokura no Kikaida," "Hakaida no Uta" - **JINZONINGEN KIKAIDA**

"Kikaida 01," "01 Rock" -- **KIKAIDA 01** (The entire **KIKAIDA** soundtrack, most of it sung by Masato Shimon, is essential.)

"Cutie Honey," "Yogiri no Honey" -- **Cutie Honey**

"Mazinger Z"

"Ore wa Great Mazinger" -- (One of Ichiro Mizuki's best works)

"Tatakae Inazuman," "Chest! Chest! Inazuman" -- **INAZUMAN**

"Diamond Eye," "Raikou March" -- **DIAMOND EYE** (Not much of a show, but a great theme.)

"Yuusha Raideen," "Ore wa Akira da" -- **YUUSHA RAIDEEN**

"Tatakae! Denjin Zaboga"

"Uchuusenkan Yamato" -- (Doesn't really belong in this genre but I consider it a classic anyway. American audiences heard an English version in the adaptation, "Star Blazers.")

"Susume! Goranger," "Himitsu Sentai Goranger" -- **GORANGER**

"Shouri da! Akumizer 3," "Susume Zaidabekku" -- **AKUMIZER 3**

"Jakka Dengekitai"

"Battle Fever J" (The last "team" show whose members could actually be distinguished from one another, before the "Power rangers" generation took hold.)

REVIEWS

THE MAN BEYOND BIONICS



"INFRA-MAN"

THE ULTIMATE IN SCIENCE FICTION

INFRA MAN

Alternate English Titles: **THE SUPER INFRA MAN**, **THE INFRA SUPERMAN**. A Shaw Brothers production released in the United States in 1976 by Joseph Brenner. Director: Hua-Shan.

Producer: Runme Shaw. Screenplay: Yi Kuang. Musical Director: Chen Yung-Yu. Special Effects: Yuan Hsiang-Jen. Makeup: Wu Hsu-Ching. Cast: Li Hsiu-Hsien (Danny Lee) as Raymar/Infra Man; Liu Hui-Ju (Terry Liu) as Princess Dragon Mom; Wang Hsieh as Professor Chang; Yuan Man-Tzu as Chang's Daughter (Mei Mei); Lin Wen-Wei as Chu Ming; Huang Kin-Lung (Bruce Le) as Sergeant (Hsu Long)

Let's get one thing straight, guys. This movie is not Japanese. It was actually produced by Hong Kong's Shaw Brothers. It amazes me that this simple and rather obvious fact still confuses a number of people. While **INFRA MAN** is clearly influenced by Japan's superheroes, those outlandish trappings have been fused with Hong Kong's kung-fu movie genre. I hold the slightly blasphemous opinion that **INFRA MAN** is somewhat better than its Japanese cousins.

The plot is simple. The Earth is under attack by hideous monsters commanded by the not-so-hideous yet wicked Princess Dragon Mom (don't you love that name?). Opposing these invaders is an elite task force headed by Professor Chang. Chang uses his brilliance to turn one of the task force members into the all-powerful Infra Man, who proceeds to kick monster butt. As you've probably guessed, the plot is just an excuse to hurtle us from one battle to the next. There are hints here and there of drama, but they're very minor. **INFRA MAN** is really concerned with only one thing: blowing your mind with non-stop action.

As mentioned before, **INFRA MAN** is very similar to Japanese superheroes. Infra Man himself is very reminiscent of Ultraman and his assorted Ultra Brothers. His color scheme and name (as in, "infra red and ultra

violet") recall Tsuburaya's champions. He also has a beam weapon pose nearly identical to Ultraman's "Spaceium Kosen." Infra Man can also grow giant to battle his foes. Curiously, he only exercises this power once and then in the middle of the film, not at the end. Finally, to complete the comparison, the task force that assists Infra Man is very much like such groups as the Science Patrol, TDF, MAT, etc.

Infra Man also has a lot in common with the "henshin" heroes popularized by Toei. First, we have his appearance (again). The large bug eyes bring to mind such heroes as the Kamen Riders and Inazuman. Second, we have our hero transforming by saying a phrase and doing a fancy pose, a la everybody in the Toei stable. Third, we have a seemingly endless array of martial arts confrontations. Having drawn all these parallels to Tsuburaya and Toei shows, I still think **INFRA MAN** is a bit superior. I like it mainly for its flashy yet paradoxically no-nonsense approach.

The cast does a competent job with what are essentially stereotype characters. Li Hsiu-Hsien is fine as Raymar, Infra Man's alter ego. He later went on to play the human hero in the Shaws' giant ape flick, **GOLIATHON** (aka **THE MIGHTY PEKING MAN**, 1977). Some of his other films from this period are **THE SAVAGE FIVE** and **BRUCE LEE: HIS LAST DAYS**. Today, he's known as Danny Lee and he still appears in many films, notably John Woo's **THE KILLER**. Another familiar face on hand is Huang Kin-Lung, better known as Bruce Le to all of you fans of his countless chopsocky efforts. His part as the sergeant who chases the renegade agent Chu Ming is relatively small. It is Terry Liu as Princess Dragon Mom who creates the most memorable character. Her delightfully over-the-top performance is easily one of the film's highlights.

INFRA MAN has previously been available from Prism Video and Sinister Cinema. The latter was probably the best possible edition, as it was in widescreen and boasted a sharper picture than licensed prints. Its only disadvantage was that a couple of insignificant bits were missing from the film. This version was unfortunately withdrawn when Goodtimes Home Video issued an officially licensed video. This tape has a new sequence in the credits, wherein clips of the baddies are shown along with video-generated (and usually uninspired) monikers for them. Like most Goodtimes releases, the video is recorded in LP mode and not SP. However, the box is adorned with a reproduction of one of the original theatrical posters. This version of **INFRA MAN** is not perfect, but it does offer a low-priced and easily obtainable copy of this wonderful movie.

Christopher Elam

BRAIN 1 7

BRAIN 1 7 is probably the closest thing to a "lost" or "forgotten" film in the history of English dubbed Kaiju eiga. It is virtually unknown to the vast majority of fans and I can't recall ever reading anything about it. The only reason I have a copy of it is because I stumbled across it while browsing at my local Blockbuster Video.

BRAIN 1 7 is edited from Toei's **DAI TETSUJIN 1 7** ("Giant Iron Man 1 7") series, which ran for 35 episodes in 1977. This series was created by those

kaizo ningen masters Shotaro Ishinomori (KAMEN RIDER, KIKAI, GORANGER) and Toei Creative Producer Tooru Hirayama (GIANT ROBO). Toei tried to market the series internationally under the title IRON ROBOT 17, but this feature seems to be the only thing that arrived on our shores.

The Americanization was done in 1982 by 3-B Productions, the same company which dubbed and re-edited the MESSAGE FROM SPACE: GALACTIC BATTLE series into the movie, SWORDS OF THE SPACE ARK.

Our story revolves around a renegade super computer called Brain that is attempting to conquer the world. Brain is opposed by a giant robot of its creation dubbed "17" (that's "One Seven," not "Seventeen."). 17 also protects and obeys an orphaned boy, named Stevie in this version and Saburo in the original Japanese version. There is also a special peace-keeping agency on hand. Originally, this group was named the Global Safety Project, but they are referred to here as the Defenders (despite a prominent stylized "G" in their insignia). At any rate, 17, Stevie, and the Defenders battle Brain's henchmen and nasty robots. Yes, this is a lot like GIGANTOR or JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT. And, yes, Brain and 17 are two separate entities. I have no idea why they chose the title BRAIN 17.

BRAIN 17 is a decently entertaining little movie. Its robot battles aren't as inspired as either Tsuburaya's FX extravaganzas or Toei's more down-to-earth conflicts, but they work fairly well. The plot isn't the best written story and that problem is further compounded by the fact that we're missing approximately 30 installments. This completely nukes any pretense of continuity. But you don't watch these things for the plot or continuity, do you? You watch them to see guys in rubber suits bashing each other in the head amid miniature buildings. BRAIN 17 is an unqualified success in that department.

An unexpected bonus in this English version is the dubbing, which is brain-damaged to say the least. Imagine a really bad cartoon (like maybe TRANZOR Z,

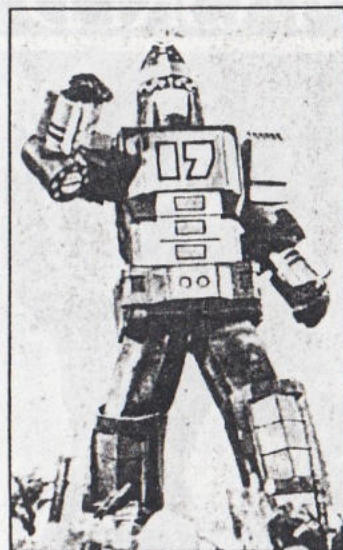
3-B's destruction of MAZINGER Z) and you'll get the idea. I used to dislike this dubbing, but I've since come around to its perverse charm. It's practically surreal in many respects and can be incredibly funny. There is also a canned music score, which consists of about one track that drones on and on and on. A word of warning: if you think TNT's

ULTRA 7 is aggravating, BRAIN 17 might be enough to turn you into a mad dog killer.

Masahiro Kamiya stars as "Stevie" (Saburo), the boy protected by 17. Kamiya appeared as Masaru Komoyoji in JINZO NINGEN KIKAI (see KR #7). There are a number of faces in this movie that I'm certain I should recognize, but I fear they're still anonymous to me. Two exceptions to this rule are Tadao Nakamura and Akihiko Hirata. Nakamura played such roles as Cpl. Sudo in THE SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN, "Shepherd Wong" in WHAT'S UP TIGER LILY?, and the INTERPOL chief in TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA. Here he portrays Sahara, chief of the Defenders. Hirata's reputation is legendary, so I'll merely mention that he appears as the evil "Captain Roger"!

BRAIN 17 was issued to video in the mid-'80s by Family Home Entertainment (F.H.E.). This video is almost certainly out of print, which is too bad. While BRAIN 17 has more than its share of faults, it's still lots of fun. Check it out if you can.

Christopher Elam



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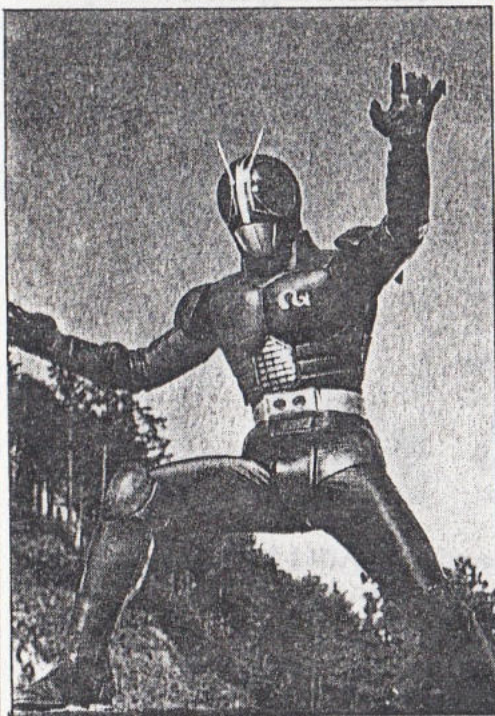
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MASKED RIDER



Oh well... another icon of Japanese fantasy has been shot to hell by those Ranger-happy folks at Saban Entertainment.

The 9th installment of Toei's Kamen Rider saga, **KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX**, has been released to American TV in the form of

Fox's **MASKED RIDER**.

KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX, which aired in 1988 in Japan, was an instant hit on its home shores and gained a respectable following among fans of the genre here in the U.S. The show was exciting, fast paced and loaded with special effects that dwarfed the series earlier incarnations. It included an excellent and able cast that featured series veteran **Tetsuo Kurata**, reprising his role as Kotaro Minami from the previous year's Rider show, **KAMEN RIDER BLACK**. Mr. Kurata is to date the only actor to play the lead in a Kamen Rider show two years in a row.

The Americanized version, Saban's **MASKED RIDER**, continues the now standard method of inserting Japanese action footage into dismally produced domestic shows with weak and inane plotlines.

The story centers around young Dex, (T.J. Roberts) an alien sent to Earth by his Obi-Wan Kenobi wannabe Grandfather. Dex's mission on Terra Firma is to combat his nasty uncle, the omnipotent invader Count Dregon, played by **Ken Ring**. (An obvious graduate of the Snidely Whiplash school of voice.)

Immediately upon his arrival a la Superman in the back yard of his soon-to-be foster family, Dex embarks on his task of battling various beasties in between school assignments. An irritating little Mogwai impersonator named **FERBUS** is his extraterrestrial sidekick, and really belongs in an episode of **THE TICK** rather than a show of this nature.

The cast is horrible, and the editing is worse. T.J. Roberts isn't even a pale shadow of his Japanese counterpart, and he comes across as a dork of the first degree, with similar acting all along the line by the supporting actors. The worst of which are not the child actors, but the adults, played by **David Stenstrom** (Hal) and **Candace Camille-Bender** (Barbara). I'd rather watch a 12 hour marathon featuring that irritating brat from **GODZILLA VS. MEGALON** than to sit through 30 minutes of this junk.

The action scenes from Japan are edited severely for violence content. For instance, the famous scenes in which the Kamen Rider delivers the coup de grace to his foes (a constant event in the Japanese version) is edited out of

existence here. The monster simply blows up or disintegrates, with no really clear reason as to why.

Some really insipid cuts feature action scenes from 1993's feature film, **KAMEN RIDER ZETO**. These scenes do not feature the character of **KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX** at all, yet these scenes are included in the pilot episode of **MASKED RIDER**, and it is painfully obviously in these shots that the Rider suit is completely different than the **BLACK RX** costume. Why the production staff chose to use this stuff is a mystery to this writer. They must think that the viewers are all stupid and can't tell one bug-man from another. Wrong. The show does have a few badges to its merit, however. The effects staff at Saban have wisely done some touch up work on the lightsabre-like Ribolcane sword used by Masked Rider, here called the Electrosaber. In its original form the sword simply looked too much like a Star Wars rip-off. The new show incorporates some effects that help mask this similarity.

The vehicles in **BLACK RX** are included as well, with a name change or two. The Acrobatta bike is now called Combat chopper, while the car, originally called Rideron, is now called Magnum. Also the production staff have gone out of their way to keep Dex dressed in the same sort of attire worn by Tetsuo Kurata in **BLACK RX**. Kurata was an integral part of the action in the **BLACK RX** though he never wore the **KRBRX** costume -- that honor was bestowed upon gymnast **Jiro Okamoto**, so all of **RX**'s fight scenes as a human being were portrayed by Kurata himself. Keeping Dex dressed similarly enables these scenes to be incorporated into the new show, and they work surprisingly well. This same idea is used during scenes involving the show's villains -- for close-up shots of Count Dregon and Nefaria, the American actors are used, wearing identical costumes to those of their Japanese counterparts Shogun Jak and Maribaron.

Although it is obvious to the astute observer that two different women are playing the female baddie in these chopped sequences, I doubt that the young target audience of this series will even notice the difference.

Overall, however, the show is every bit the disappointment that this reviewer expected. The actors stink, the writing is horrid -- oh, my, I gave the writers too much credit by using the word horrid -- their supporting characters created for this show are ripped off from virtually every Saturday morning show and sitcom ever made. They take our favorite Japanese heroes and turn them into preadolescent wimps at every turn. I stress this point to every young Ranger and Rider fan out there today -- stick with the real thing. Pick up copies of the original shows -- even though they may be in Japanese, they are ten times as entertaining as this garbage Saban keeps shoveling our way.

Masked Rider Cast (1995)

Dex: T.J.Roberts; Count Dregon: Ken Ring; Molly: Rheannon J. Slover; Albee: Ashton McArn II; Hal: David Stenstrom; Barbara: Candace Camille Bender; Nefaria: Jennifer Tung; Gork; Ferbus (A monosomonax from Edenoi).

Kamen Rider Black RX Cast (1988)

Kotaro Minami: Tetsuo Kurata; Shogun Jak: Toshimichi Takahashi; Reiko: Jun Koyamaki; Bosgan: Yoshikazu Fujiki; Gatenzone: Takayuki Kitamura; Gedorian: Minoru Watanabe; Maribaron: Junko Takahata.

Jay Johnson

MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS: THE MOVIE

Review by Luke "Stag Beetle" Jaconetti



MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS: THE MOVIE is, in essence, a 90 minute commercial for Bandai's toy line. It gives this message quite heavily-handedly, with a lot of flash, bells, and whistles. The humor is overemphasized and comes off half-baked. It has very few ties to the show.

With all these strikes against it, one would think that MMPR: TM stinks.

For the most part, it does. This is best displayed in a look at the top grossing films of the summer. A shiny new Zord to anyone who can find it there. Bryan Spicer's directing job is adequate, but I think the watchful eye of Steve Wang (as rumored for many months) would have helped this film tremendously. The screenwriter(s) took a completely wrong direction in writing this film. The television show's writers play it straight, to a degree, anyway, but these guys went absolutely tongue-in-check.

It all starts out innocently enough, with the six Rangers having fun doing stereotypical Gen-X stuff: skydiving, rollerblading, etc. The real story starts when a group of construction workers uncover a huge egg surrounded by a force field. That night, Lord Zedd, Rita, Goldar, and Mordant (an original, pig-like monster) teleport to the site and free the evil Ivan Ooze, played rather sleazily by Paul Freeman, perhaps best known for his role as Belloq in *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*. Zedd commands Ivan to destroy the Rangers. Turns out that Ivan ruled the Earth 6,000 years ago, but Zordan imprisoned him. Ivan is a shapeshifter, and he has his share of the good effects. The Rangers are warned of his release, and go to the site to investigate. Ivan, who is hiding there, creates a group of clones to fight them. The Rangers fight them in an almost careless manner. Even upon morphing, the fight is unexciting to the max. The Rangers use several new weapons, none of which are any good. This is the key to the film's failure; everything seems a little rushed and not as good as it could be.

Meanwhile, on the moon, Ivan betrays Zedd and Rita, putting them in an Angel Grove snowglobe. It's a good joke, one of the two good ones in the film. However, this also signals pretty much the end of Zedd and Rita's roles in the film. Ivan threatens Goldar and Mordant into helping him destroy the Rangers. So he infiltrates the Command Center, trashes Alpha, and

almost kills Zordan by breaking his time warp chamber. This causes the Rangers to lose their power. Upon finding the Center in ruins, Zordan tells them of the "Great Power" which can be found only on a distant planet. Alpha uses the last of the Center's energy to teleport them there.

On this planet, filmed on location in Australia, they find Dolcia, a beautiful female warrior who trains them in the way of Ninjetti, an art of power from within. After they finish their training, they get new animals to tap and new Zords, namely the Ninjazords. Tommy is the Falcon, Kim in the Crane, Rocky is the Ape, Billy is the Wolf, Aisha is the Bear, and Adam is the Frog. This gives the film its other good joke: Upon receiving the new powers, Adam sadly says, "I'm a frog." Good stuff.

While all this is going on, Ivan is busy creating his ooze; a substance which looks like liquidy purple Jell-O, and controls the minds of parents. He uses these slaves to dig up his two huge robotic warriors. Then a flurry of events happen quickly. The Rangers come back. Ivan sends the parents to kill themselves. Big fight ensues. The Zord battle is actually the best sequence in the film, with its CGI (Computer Generated Image) combatants. The new Zords look and move much better than ever before, and they have more personality than usual. After a few skirmishes, one of Ivan's Zords is destroyed, so Ivan integrates himself into the other. To counter this, the Rangers form the NinjaMegaFalconzord. This battle rages into outer space, and some excellent CGI backgrounds are on display. The film's climax, however, is ruined by a horrible joke involving Aisha pulling a fail-safe that knees Ivan in the groin, thus knocking him into the path of a comet, which destroys him. The Rangers then use their power to rebuild the Center and revive Zordan. All is peaceful in Angel Grove. On the moon... well, I'll just say Goldar shouldn't have betrayed Zedd.

The cast is made up of all the usual faces from the show. Some of the performances aren't that bad. Jason David Frank and Amy Jo Johnson practically carry the Ranger's dialogue, and show some acting ability. The others, to be blunt, are poor at best. David Yost's character of Billy is still lacking much spine, and the three "Power Transfer" Rangers, with the exception of Adam's aforementioned "I'm a frog" are still very inept as actors. Paul Freeman has a lot of enthusiasm in his role of Ivan, and makes him a likeable bad guy a la Zedd and Rita. As for the small roles Bulk and Skull have, Paul Schrier and Jason Narvy show some of the comic relief that made them so likeable on the show's second season.

Except for the CGI's, the effects are very similar to the show's. The new "armor" style costumes of the Rangers look okay, but the helmets are hideous! I mean, they stuck the babelicious Amy Jo Johnson in a huge blocky thing! It's really not fair.

MMPR: TM fails on a lot of levels. It only works on its hi-tech effects and the cool villain. Maybe Saban will do the rumored sequel the right way. And even if they don't we get the third season this fall (I can't believe the third season's already here. Jeez, I remember when I started watching the MMPR with the five original Rangers and only Zyuranger footage. I also remember how I got hooked when I first saw the Green Ranger. Ahh, memories.

Save the Earth ..for a 100 Yen

Text and Photos
by Norman England

"Save the Earth from the power of Godzilla," reads the slogan ascribed on a recent arcade game from game-maker

Namco of Japan.

There are now two games using Godzilla as a theme available for arcade dwellers in Japan. Fantastic, you say? Well, in actuality, Namco has come up with two losers in what I think is a plot to undermine Godzilla's good name.

UTE UTE GOJIRA

Released last December, "Ute Ute Gojira" is the smaller of the two and is, oddly enough, a stand up game (95% of all arcade games in Japan are designed around a seated position). The object of the game is to get 6 ping-pong balls into the mouth of a 10" tall plastic model of Godzilla within a limited amount of time; in this case a scant 15 seconds or so. With Godzilla's head jerking slightly back and forth, as well as side to side, the player uses all his dexterous skills to prove the victor.

Sound exciting? Yawn! But, if one does get the required 6 in the trap, a small plastic egg with a prize is bestowed upon the player. This would be wonderful if the prize related to Godzilla in some small way. Instead, one gets prizes like: a Crayon Shin-Chan handkerchief, a Dragon ball key chain, a Chibi Maruko-chan comb.

Redeeming qualities? A few. The design of the game is nice: a clear plastic half dome covers the cartoonish Godzilla model who stands surrounded by drawings of fleeing people, other kaijyu, and a mazer tank. Strains of Ifukube pour out of the speaker while the game is in play. But at 100 yen a game (the standard rate for arcade games in Japan) the time just shoots by way too fast.

Overall rating: Totally lame.





GODZILLA WARS

Next up is the game: "Godzilla Wars." This game, designed for two seated players, allows one to try their hand at warding off an advancing Godzilla.

At 6 feet long and 5 feet high, this game should be listed as a new entry in the dictionary for the word "huge". The sides of the game are decorated with a brilliant mural of a beserk Godzilla bursting out of a city. Inside, on a 3 foot long track, stands a Godzilla model just a tad over 2 feet tall, and at the player's end rests two futuristic-looking molded plastic guns.

During game play Godzilla advances towards the player with shaking head, opening jaw, moving torso, slashing arms, and walking legs. Thin beams of light shoot from the guns, which, when striking one of the small red sensors located on every appendage of Godzilla's body, causes

him to be pushed slightly backwards. The object being to keep him from reaching a small chain strung up in front of the gun turrets just at the end of his course within an allotted time (in this case, about 2 minutes). Different sensors rack up different amounts on the score board; with the largest payoff coming from the mouth (5 points), down to a single points for a hit to the arms.

Game play is nice and the Godzilla is huge enough to actually induce a menacing feeling. Here, too, Ifukube music is effectively incorporated, helping to heighten game play. But as a game I'd like to play more than once for the sheer novelty of it, it ranks mighty low - especially in light of winning on my very first time up. A real shame because it's obvious a lot of time and work went into putting this game together.

Overall rating: Half lame.

JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT Episode Guide & Series Review

by Robert Dwyer and Mark Schultz
additional research by August Ragone,
Marshall Crist, Toshiki Okazaki
Joe Riley, and Lenell Bridges

After the success of Tsuburaya's Ultraman series in 1966, it was inevitable that other companies would

follow in their steps. One of these was Toei Co., a production firm since the '50s. Toei Co. began to establish their reputation in fantasy adventure television with series such as **SPYCATCHER J3**, **AKUMA KUN**, and **CAPTAIN ULTRA**. The best of these early shows however was a program that would play upon the theme of a young boy in command of a giant and all powerful robot.

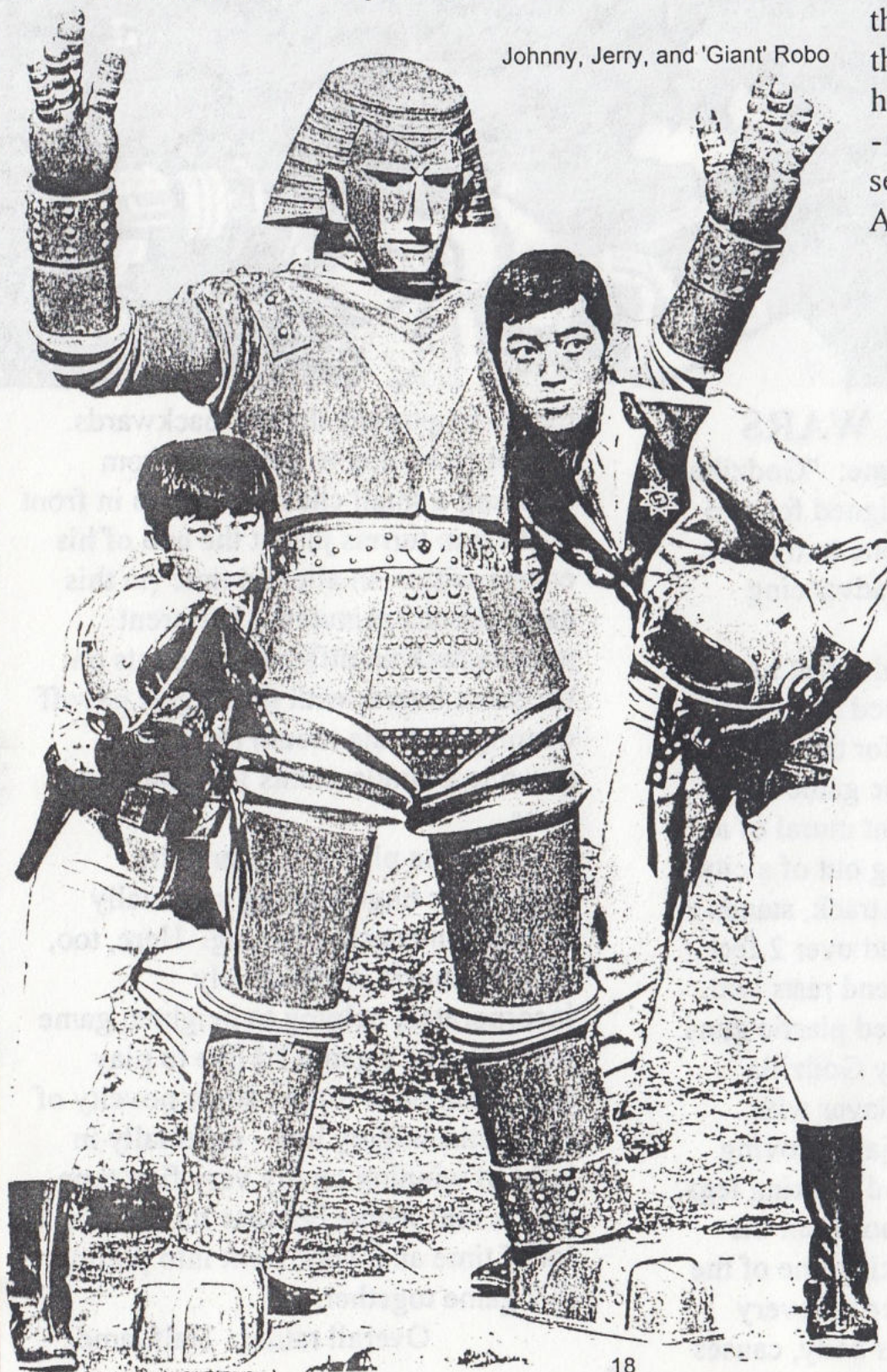
On October 11th, 1967, they launched the first episode of one of

their best shows, one that would remain in the hearts of its fans forever - **GIANT ROBO**. The series aired on TV Asahi in Japan until April 1st, 1968.

GIANT ROBO was originally created as a manga (comic) series by Mitsuo Yokoyama, who also originated the tele-series **IRONMAN No. 28** and **RED SHADOW, THE MASKED NINJA**.

The plot revolved around the efforts of the alien Emperor Guillotine and his Gargoyle Gang (human minions) to conquer the Earth. Opposing them was the Unicorn Organization, a form of international police. To combat the horde of bizarre creatures that Guillotine sent against them, Unicorn had

Johnny, Jerry, and 'Giant' Robo



Giant Robo on their side. Giant Robo obeys the commands of only one person, Johnny Sokko, a young boy, who relays orders to Robo via a radio wristwatch. Together, Johnny and Giant Robo formed a team which fought wave after wave of Gargoyle plots.

Like most Toei shows, Giant Robo relies on exciting scripts, fast paced action, and colorful characters to compensate for a low budget. In the Japanese version, every episode's opening credits start the same (with Robo leaving the hanger), but then scenes from that episode, like the monster attacking, are shown. Also, every episode ended with coming attractions from the next show, which were also used in the U.S. version.

The series was dubbed into English and syndicated by AIP-TV, under its new name, **JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT**. More than likely, the soundtrack was recorded by Titra Studios, under the supervision of



Salvatore Billitteri, who also worked on the dubbing of such Toho classics as **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS**, **FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD**, and **GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER**. Despite the weak English dub, **JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT** is an enjoyable show with more than enough action to satisfy fans of the genre.

What follows is a synopsis of the series' 26 episodes. They are presented in their English titles with the original Japanese titles in parenthesis. "Go, Giant Robo!"

UNICORN AGENTS

Johnny Sokko (U-7), Daisaku Kusama in the Japanese version : Played by **Mitsunobu Kaneko** (also the young lead in **AKUMA KUN**), the young boy whose voice commands Giant Robo.

Jerry Mano (U-3) , Jyuro Minami in the original: Played by **Akio Ito** - Johnny's partner; a brave man with a caring, fun-loving side.

Johnny and Jerry spend a lot of time tied up



Commander Azuma (U-1): The surly, much too serious leader of Unicorn's Japan Branch, played by Toei series vet, **Syozabaro Date**.

Mari Hanamura (U-6): She's a very intelligent linguist around Johnny's age, portrayed by **Tomomi Kuwabara**.

Mitsuko Nishino (U-5): The equivalent to Ultraman's Fuji, an intelligent young lady who's usually left behind, played by **Yumiko Katayama**.

GARGOYLE GANG

Emperor Guillotine: Pure evil in a papier-mache mask, a blue, demon-like alien who's trying to conquer the world from his spaceship at the bottom of the ocean.

Dr. Botanis (Dr. Over in the Japanese version), played by **Mitsuo Ando:** A silver-skinned humanoid from the planet Gargoyle with very large eyebrows. He has many weird abilities and carries an amulet that lets him turn



invisible. He's easily the most memorable villain of the show.

Spider: A thin, evil-looking man who commands several early Gargoyle operations. He spends a lot of time in disguises that wouldn't fool anyone. He's used mainly as comic relief.

Fangar (Red Cobra): A large man, (played by actor **Koji Miegai**) with a huge tattooed forehead and a peg leg, which doubles as a machine gun. He also sometimes wears large novelty-style bucked teeth, thus his English dub nickname. He's called the Executioner in Episode #17.

Harlequin (Black Dia): A long-haired, eye-patched man in a black and white checked outfit. He often aids Dr. Botanis.

In the following episode guide, the credit key is as follows :

w. : scenario by (writer),

d. : Director

fx. : Special Effects Director,

m. : The creatures who appear in the episode,

b. : The original Japanese broadcast date.

Episode #1: Dracolon the Great Sea Monster (Dakolah the Giant Sea Beast)

****1/2**



w. Masaru Igami, d. Minoru Yamada, fx. Nobuo Yajima, m. Dakolah, b. 10/11/67

Emperor Guillotine of the planet Gargoyle has his spaceship apparently shot

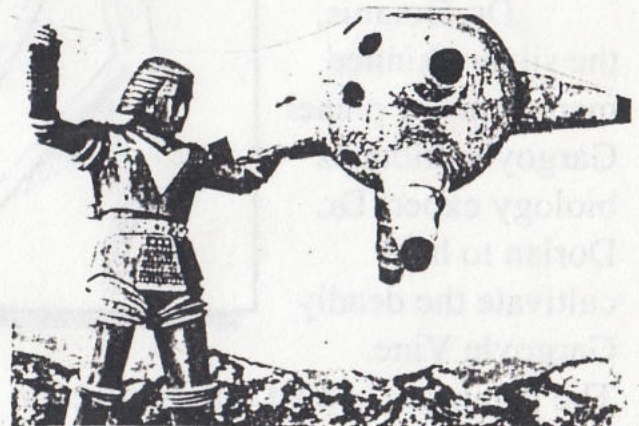
down over the sea during an invasion attempt. Months later, after many ships have been mysteriously destroyed, young Johnny Sokko, travelling alone, meets Jerry Mano, who turns out to be an agent of Unicorn, an organization whose only purpose seems to be to counteract the Gargoyle Gang. Dracolon, a poor-man's Creature from the Black Lagoon, attacks the vessel they were aboard but they manage to swim safely to an island, that turns out to be a Gargoyle base. Gang members capture the duo and take them in for questioning, but Jerry and Johnny escape their captors and stumble upon the laboratory where Giant Robot is. There they meet Dr. Lucuis Guardian, the creator of Giant Robot. The Gargoyle Gang had kidnapped the doctor and forced him to build the near-complete robot for them to conquer the world. All it needs is atomic power to activate its brain and a voice to command it. Johnny takes the control watch and speaks into it, not realizing the ramifications. Dr. Guardian has planted a bomb to destroy the Gargoyle base. He helps Jerry and Johnny

escape, just before the massive explosion. Everything is destroyed except... Giant Robot! Johnny now realizes the robot obeys his commands, so they fly back to Tokyo to defeat Dracolon.

Some observations about the first episode: How does Johnny know Robo has an Atomic Punch and Rocket Missiles? Robot is about 100 feet tall. Jerry's transmitter looks like a broken radio antenna. In their big battle, Dracolon almost loses his mask and Robo's chest armor comes unsnapped. This episode marks the first appearance of Spider.

Dumb quote: "Run for it! Run for it!" says the captain of the ship that's attacked.

Episode #2: Nucleon the Magic Globe (Global The Giant Devil Ball)



w. M. Igami, d. M. Yamada, fx. N. Yajima, m. Global, b. 10/18/67.

A giant meteorite turns out to be Nucleon, a huge mace-like monster sent to Earth by Emperor Guillotine to recapture Giant Robot. Johnny is officially enlisted into Unicorn as Agent U-7. His first mission is to stop Nucleon, which has retracted its spikes and is rolling through town and over tanks. Johnny and Jerry are knocked unconscious by Spider, making Giant Robot an easy target for Nucleon. The rest of Unicorn come to their rescue; Johnny regains control of Robo, and he

defeats Nucleon.

This episode marks the first appearance of Mitsuko Nishino, female agent U-5. In this episode, we learn that Robo can withstand temperatures hot enough to melt iron and can fly at an earth-shattering mach 19!!

Dumb quote: "Giant Robot, obey. Into the air, up and away!"

**Episode #3:
Gargoyle Vine, a
Space Plant (Satan-
Rose- the Space
Plant)**1/2**

w. Teio Matsuda &
Hisashi Abe, d.
Koichi Takemoto,
fx. N. Yajima,
m. Satan-Rose, b.
10/25/67.

Dr. Botanis,
the silver-skinned
man from the planet
Gargoyle, kidnaps
biology expert Dr.
Dorian to help
cultivate the deadly
Gargoyle Vine.

The plants are spread throughout the city, and one of them grows to gigantic proportions (looking like a tall Sigmund the Sea Monster). After a devastating battle, Giant Robot is able to defeat the Gargoyle Vine with electricity.

The correct response to the secret password "Napoleon Code 4" is "806."

The make-up department did a good job with Dr. Botanis, covering his entire head with silver make-up, but they could have done his ears better. The center of his ear is still flesh-colored and is very obvious.

Dumb quote: Jerry and Johnny are in a taxi cab when Dr. Dorian's

granddaughter steps out in front of the cab. Jerry sticks his head out the window and yells, "I nearly hit you!" But Jerry wasn't even driving!

**Episode #4: Tyrox, Creature from
the Pyramid (Lygon- The Magic
Beast) **1/2**

w. T. Matsuda / H.
Abe,
d. K. Takemoto, fx.
N. Yajima,
m. Lygon, b.
11/1/67.

When oil
refineries are
mysteriously being
destroyed, Johnny,
Jerry, Mitsuko and
giant Robot travel
to Arabia to stop
Dr. Botanis, Spider,
and the Gargoyle
Gang. Johnny and
Mitsuko discover
the giant statue,
Tyrox, is actually a
robot when they are
trapped inside.

Robo battles Tyrox

(one of the only kaiju that wears jewelry) and ruins Gargoyle's plans.

Apparently, in the U.S. version, the beginning of this episode was cut. The first scene shows Dr. Botanis and Emperor Guillotine plotting to conquer Earth. Then, Dr. Botanis and some Gargoyle soldiers are shown executing members of the Arabian branch of Unicorn in cold blood.

Bad SPFX: when Tyrox first comes to life and starts destroying oil refineries, one of the explosions casts his shadow on the back drop.

Mitsuko has a brother, Egon, who is also a Unicorn agent.



Episode #5: The Giant Claw (Gangar the Colossal Hand)**

w. M. Igami, d. Itaru Orita, fx Yasuo Ogawa, m. Gangar, b. 11/8/67.



Spider has a hard time stealing the plans to a new, transparent, indestructible metal, called QQV, from Unicorn. And Giant Robo goes up against a giant mechanical claw. Number five in the American version, this episode was actually number eight in the original Japanese run.

Episode #6: Dragon the Ninja Monster (Dorogon- The Ninja Monster)****

w. M. Igami, d. Itaru Orita, fx. Y. Ogawa, m. Dorogon, b. 11/22/67.



Guillotine sends the Ninja Monster to destroy planes and subs of opposing countries in an attempt to cause a world war.

Unicorn holds a meeting of all their branches

to try and prevent this from happening. Spider manages to plant a bomb in the conference room, but Mitsuko races it outside, just in time for Giant Robot to safely fly it away. Just when it seems that Gargoyle has been defeated, the

Ninja Monster shows up.

Dragon, the Ninja Monster is one of the best suits used in the series. It resembles Gyaos from the original Gamera movie, RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS. And this episode features one of the best fight scenes. Apparently "806" is also the correct password for "Napoleon Code 3" as well as "Code 4."

Spider disguises himself as Unicorn agent Alex Lloyd of Canada. When Mitsuko runs out of the conference hall, the bomb has about 12 more seconds before it blows up, yet it takes Robo about 50 seconds to drop it. Episode number #7 in the original run.

Episode #7: Scanlon the Starfish Creature (The Enemy is Monster Ikageras)****

w. M. Igami, d. K. Takemoto, fx. Masao Ichikura, m. Ikageras, b. 11/22/67

Spider and the Gargoyle Gang successfully steal Unicorn's decoder box, which would tell them the locations of all Unicorn bases. Jerry is captured by Spider and it's

up to Johnny to rescue him. Robo battles Scanlon, who shoots acid out its nose, dissolving one of his hands (which Unicorn scientists are able to replace). Jerry grabs the decoder back and escapes with Johnny's help. Spider is accidentally sprayed with Scanlon's acid and dissolves.

This episode introduces Unicorn



agent Mari Hanamura, who knows 39 different languages.

Dumb quote: One Gargoyle agent to another, "Hey, let's get the chess set!" And the others reply, "Good, I'll bet you today, buddy." These must have been the wimpier Gargoyle agents. Episode #9 in the original run.

Episode #8: Challenge of the Two-Headed Monster (Challenge of Doublion- The Turning Face Monster)**1/2

w. M. Igami, d. K. Takemoto, fx. M. Ichikura, m. Doublion, b. 11/29/67.

An ex-Gargoyle agent enlists Unicorn's aid to rescue his three

children from the clutches of the enemy. But he double-crosses Johnny and Jerry and is actually Harlequin, "Gargoyle leader of the entire country." Harlequin uses the monster



Double-Head, a beast with two faces (one mouth spits out hot oil, the other fire), in his evil plan.

Dumb quote: All of the dialogue between the three children, Kenny, Sonny, an Sally, is asinine, but especially this line, "Oh, go on. Don't be a pill, huh, Kenny?" Episode #10 in the original run.

Episode #9: Tentaclonn, an Electric Monster (Spaaki- The Electric Current Monster)***

w. H. Abe, d. M. Yamada, fx. N. Yajima, m. Spaaki, b. 12/6/67.

Gargoyle kidnaps 60,000

hostages in exchange for control of Japan. When Unicorn refuses, Dr. Botanis



sends in Tentaclonn (which could be related to the Gargoyle Vine) to attack Tokyo. Johnny and Jerry infiltrate the island base where the hostages are being held and rescues them. And, of course, Robo defeats Tentaclonn.

In a scene right out of an Ed Wood movie, Jerry runs up to Commander Azuma pointing his gun right at the chief. Episode # 11 of the original run.

Episode #10: The Giant Lagorian (The Cyborg / The Re-Constructed Man)**

w. T. Matsuda / H. Abe, d. Michio Konishi, fx. N. Yajima, m. Lygon II, b. 12/13/67.

Gargoyle tries to prevent Unicorn's World Conference in Kyoto by brainwashing the Chief of that branch. Jerry and Johnny, while investigating the strange behavior of Chief Susuki of the Kyoto branch, are captured and held in an underwater base below Lake Biwa. Dr. Botanis and Harlequin send the Lagorian (Tyrox from Episode #4) to destroy the Conference Hall. But, of course, Giant Robo is able to defeat the Lagorian and save Johnny and Jerry in the nick of time.

The producers of the show must have had no concept of time. When Johnny and Jerry are captured and a bomb is set to blow them up, Johnny says it only has 20 more seconds to go.

Yet it takes exactly one minute and 20

seconds before it finally detonates.
Episode #6 in the original run.

Episode #11: The Terrifying Sand Creature (The Terror of the Man-Eating Sand)1/2**

w. M. Igami, d. Katasuhiko Taguchi,
fx. Y. Ogawa, m. Dakolah II,
b. 12/20/67.

When a sandstorm strikes the Antarctic base of Unicorn, Johnny and Jerry are sent to investigate. They are captured and are brainwashed by Emperor Guillotine. Johnny is ordered to send Giant Robot flying into the sun. A new, sand-spewing Dracolon attacks Tokyo. Johnny and Jerry recover their sense and recall Robo to battle Dracolon.

In this episode, Johnny and Jerry see Emperor Guillotine for the first time (via TV monitor).

Best SPFX: The sand-tidal wave that destroys the Antarctic base and parts of Tokyo is fairly impressive.
Episode #13 in the original run.

Episode #12: Ameron the Synthetic Monster (Unbalan, the Combined Monster)*1/2

w. H. Abe, d. M. Yamada, fx. N. Yajima, m. Unbalan, b. 12/27/67.

Unicorn raids a secret base of Gargoyle, capturing Dr. Botanis. Meanwhile, a stone body is found inside

a dead boa constrictor at the zoo and is sent to Unicorn Headquarters for examination. The stone cracks open, releasing Amberon, a



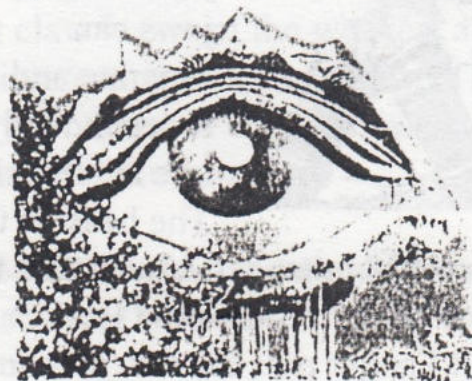
man-sized monster, that frees Botanis. But Amberon increases in size when attacked; just the right size to fight Giant Robot.

Dumb quote: Commander Azuma, speaking about capturing Dr. Botanis, "Try to get that shiny thing that he wears on his chest." Jerry's reply, "You mean that shiny thing he wears, that's pinned to his chest and glows?"

Episode # 13: Opticon Must Be Destroyed (Ganmons-Eyes of Devil)

w. M. Igami, d. K. Takemoto, fx. M. Ichikura, m. Ganmons, b. 1/3/68.

A small, foreign country holds the key to a new radioactive element,



which the Gargoyle Gang would very much like to possess, of course. Emperor Guillotine plans to blackmail the nation's ruler by capturing his daughter, who just happens to look like agent U-6 of Unicorn. Opticon, a gigantic eyeball, is sent to ensure the plan's success. Unicorn foils the plot by replacing the Princess with Mari, while Robo in turn vanquishes the Devil Eye.

Opticon is much less silly than he may sound (or look) here and is one of the most popular Robo monsters. Opticon has a tractor beam and can grow legs during daylight. Most English prints incorrectly have the monster's name as Opticorn in the credit sequence.

Best quote: Johnny talking about

the Princess, "She looks just like our Mari....and she has the same kind of mouth!" Worst quote: Johnny, as Robo fights Opticon, "Aim for the eye!" Think about it. Episode #15 of the original series run.

Episode #14: The Monstrous Flying Jawbone (The Monsterous Fangs of Iron)**1/2

w. M. Igami, d. K. Takemoto, fx. M. Ichikura, m. Iron Power, b. 1/10/68.

True to the American title, the monster in this episode is indeed a flying jawbone, whose jaws can separate and act independently of one another.

The beast is used



to capture Commander Azuma and the leader of Unicorn's Chinese Branch. The evil Fangar puts the two men in electric chairs and leaves them to die. Johnny and Jerry rescue their leaders, while Robo kills two birds with one stone by using the monster's carcass to demolish the Gargoyle base. Episode #16 in the Japanese run.

Episode #15: Igganog the Iceberg Monster (Icelar the Freezing Monster)***

w. H. Abe / T. Matsuda, d. M. Yamada, fx. N. Yajima, m. Icelar, b. 1/17/68.

Giant Robo's latest foe is Igganog. This huge beast has horns which release a freezing vapor. Commanding this monster is the obnoxious Goldinok (Mister Gold in the Japanese version), a man wearing a bulletproof suit of gold armor. Igganog turns Robo into a giant

popsicle during their first encounter. Aided by a former Unicorn agent (who

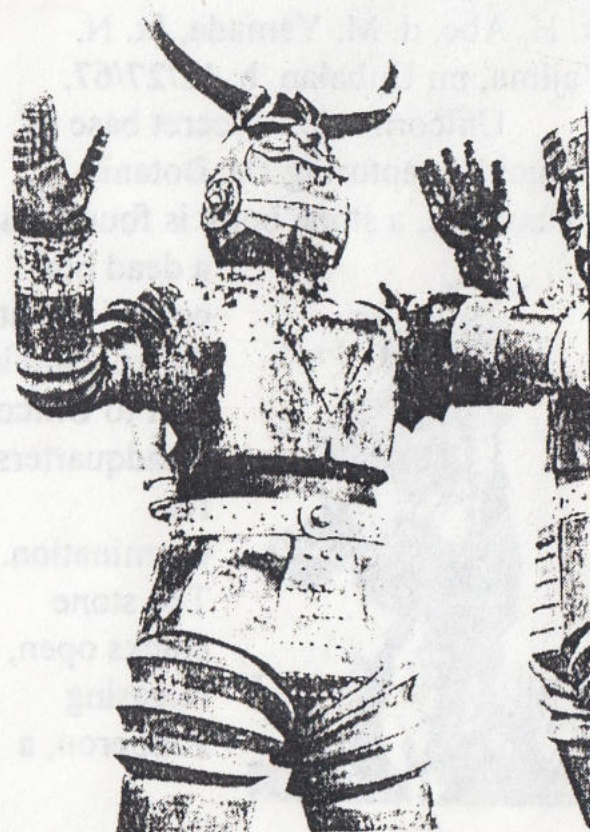


has a grudge against Commander Azuma), Unicorn agents demolish the latest Gargoyle base and thaw Giant Robo. The mighty Robo then puts the latest Gargoyle monster on ice. Former Unicorn agent U-9 probably has the most charisma of anyone who ever appeared on the show. He easily steals the spotlight in this episode. This was #17 in the original run.

Episode #16: Torozonn, an Enemy Robot (Mysterious Robot- GR2)***

w. M. Igami, d. I Orita, fx. N. Yajima, m. GR2, b. 1/24/68.

Dr. Snake (and an unwilling accomplice) build a robot more powerful than Giant Robo. Robo takes quite a beating until he uses a special chest missile to bury the robot deep underground.



This is one of the few times the English dub does something to improve the show. The English name Torozonn (because of bull-type horns on the robot's head) is a great improvement over the generic GR2. The second robot was built using a spare Robo costume and attaching a new head. Torozonn returns for an even better fight with Robo in Episode #19. This was episode # 21 of the original run.

Episode #17: Destroy the Dam (Destroy the Aka-Fuji Dam)**

w. T. Matsuda / H. Abe, d. M. Konishi, fx. N. Yajima, m. Satan Rose II, b. 1/29/68.



The Gargoyl Vine returns and empties a lake of its water. Fangar shoots Commander Azuma, but he survives. The bullet contains a recording of Dr. Botanis' latest threats to destroy Unicorn. A military attack on the Vine proves useless as it absorbs the firepower and returns it in the form of red hot lava bombs. As villages go up in flames, Robo has to rescue some trapped children. On Dr. Dorian's advice, Johnny has Robo destroy the Akafuji dam. This weakens the Vine enough for Giant Robot to destroy it.

This episode features the last appearance of Dr. Botanis. This one would be better if it weren't so slow going. Stick with the original (Episode #3).

Funniest quote: Johnny says, "Oh, that darn plant!" This was actually

the fifth episode in the original run of the series.

Episode #18: X-7 A Mysterious Enemy Agent (The Riddle of Double Agent X-7)*

w. M. Igami, d. M. Yamada, fx N. Yajima, m. Gangar II, b. 2/5/68.

Johnny Sokko meets his Gargoyle counterpart in the form of Agent X-7. To fight Giant Robo X-7 has the Giant Claw from Episode #5 to assist him. It doesn't matter. Both are easily beaten by Robo.

This is probably the worst episode in the series. Agent X-7 is even younger and more annoying than Johnny himself (if that's possible). Giant claw is one of the weakest and least interesting of Robo's foes. The overly sentimental ending is almost certain to make you gag.

Episode #19: Metron the Mysterious Space Man (Metro 3- The Man from Andromeda)***1/2

w. M. Igami, d. K. Takemoto, fx. Y. Ogawa, m. GR- II, b. 2/12/68.

Unicorn agents rescue the three-eyed alien, Metron, from the Gargoyl Gang. The thankful alien offers to help Unicorn if they take him back to his ship. Metron soon shows his true colors as he freezes Johnny and the others with a paralysis ray fired from his third eye.

At the same time, the robot Torozonn appears. Luckily, Mari saw through the deception and rescues the other Unicorn agents by shooting Metron in the

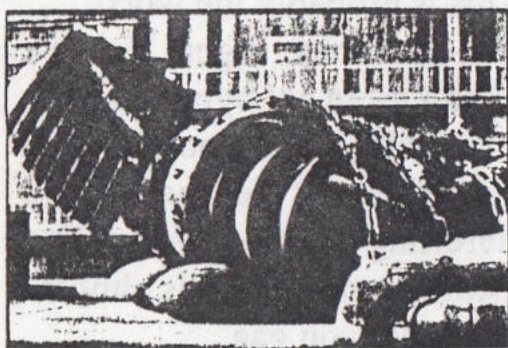


third eye (ouch!). Johnny goes after metron while Robo deals with Torozonn.

This is a solid episode. The actor playing Metron overdoes it, but the episode is saved by the awesome Torozonn and a good fight at the end. Episode #22 in the original run.

Episode #20: Captured by the Radion Globe (S.O.S. Giant Robo)1/2**

w. M. Igami, d. K. Taguchi, fx. Y. Ogawa, m. Global II, b. 2/19/68.



A new, improved Nucleon captures Giant Robo! The Gargoyle Gang keeps him immobilized in a secret installation run by Fangar. With Robo out of the picture, Nucleon goes on a rampage. Johnny and Jerry locate Robo, but can't activate him. Incredibly, Giant Robot seems to activate himself in response to Johnny's tears. Robo then takes care of Nucleon once again. This marks the first time in the series that Giant Robo acts on his own. Episode #14 in the original run.

Episode #21: The Terrifying Space Mummy (The Mummy Mutants)***

w. M. Igami, d. K. Taguchi, fx. Y. Ogawa, m. Dorogon II, b. 2/26/68.

The Space Mummy puts a poison in Japan's water supply which turns people into creatures like himself. He has the size changing monster, Stalker, as his bodyguard. This monster can grow from 8 inches to about 80 meters



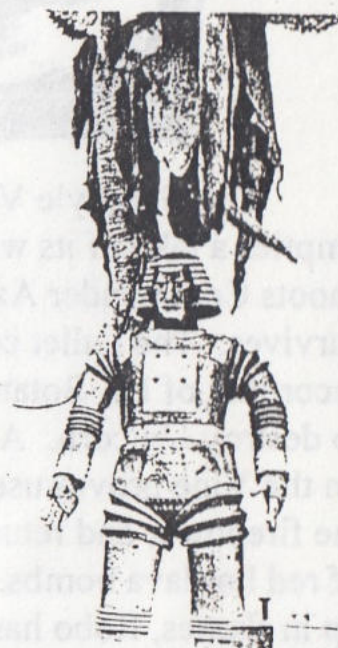
tall. In the end, both Stalker and the Space Mummy are defeated.

The Stalker costume is a repainted Dragon suit from Episode #6. A word of warning: the English voice dub for the Space Mummy is virtually guaranteed to drive any sane person up a wall. Episode #19 of the original run.

Episode #22: The Robot Called Cleopat (Calamity the Murderous Weapon)****

w. T. Matsuda / H. Abe, d. I. Orita, fx. N. Yajima, m. Calamity, Spaaki, b. 3/4/68.

A foreign country uses the Robo plans to build their own robot, Cleopat. The new robot is identical to Robo, but also has a force screen which reflects all attacks back on the attackers. The Gargoyle Gang, led by Goldinok, steals Cleopat (naturally). Ironically, Cleopat can't even move, but its force screen protect it from harm. Giant Robot is badly beaten by Cleopat and the Gargoyle monster, Tentaclonn. Aided by Johnny, Robo recovers and vanquishes both foes. Best scene: Robo is blinded when his own eye beams are reflected back at him. Episode # 20 in the Japanese run.



Episode #23: Dr. Engali, Master of Evil (Dr. Gelma - Space Goblin)**
w. Jo Hichi, d. K. Taguchi, fx. M. Ichikura, m. Android U 7, b. 3/11/68.

Dr. Engali sends Johnny a surprise package for his birthday. It turns out to be a statue of Johnny, which

he is only too eager to put together. Unfortunately, the statue comes to life, stealing Johnny's wristwatch controller and assuming his identity.

Commander Azuma figures out who the real



Johnny is, but he can't prevent the artificial duplicate from vanishing with Dr. Engali. The evil U-7 sends Giant Robot on a destructive rampage. Robo acts on his own for the second time in the series as he stops himself from smashing Johnny with a truck. He destroys Dr. Engali instead, while Unicorn agents destroy the duplicate with a special gun.

Dr. Engali is hardly a master of evil and his scenes are mostly comical. His lame costume ruins any sense of menace. He appears to be based on the gremlin legend. Episode #24 of the original run.

Episode #24: Hydrazona, a Terrifying Bacteria (Hydrazone the Germ Spore)****

w. T. Matsuda / H. Abe, d. K. Takemoto, fx. Y. Ogawa, m. Hydrazone, Icelar, b. 3/18/68.

The hideously scarred Professor Hydra has created the Hydrazona, a



bacteria which can eat through almost anything. As if this weren't enough, he has the monster Igganog as a back-up. To demonstrate his power, Professor Hydra has his bacteria destroy not only a freeway, but also a new prototype Hovercraft. The Professor then decides it's time to eliminate Unicorn!

This excellent episode features some of the best special effects in the series. Best scene: the Hydrazona bacteria destroys Unicorn headquarters... and Giant Robo! How can this be? You'll have to watch the episode to find out. This is Robert Dwyer's personal favorite. Episode #23 of the original run.

Episode #25: Drakulan, Creature of Doom (The Space Vampire)***

w. M. Igami, d. M. Yamada, fx. N. Yajima, m. Drakulan, b. 3/25/68.

While searching for a missing agent, Unicorn discovers a village full of vampires. This is part of a plot by the evil Drakulan to take over the Earth with an army of the undead... and he just might succeed!

This effective episode features many scenes that remind one of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD. A good conclusion tops off an interesting variation of the vampire theme.



Episode #26: The Last of Emperor Guillotine (The Last Day of Emperor Guillotine)***1/2

w. M. Igami, d. M. Yamada, fx. N. Yajima, m. Ganmons II, Ikegeras II, Icelar III, b. 4/1/68.

Emperor Guillotine gets nasty! Not only does he try to assassinate Johnny, but he also sends the monsters Opticon, Igganog, and Scanlon to take care of Giant Robo. Incredibly, Robo is victorious, so Guillotine himself becomes gigantic. Guillotine's body is made of unstable sub-atomic particles, which prevents Robo from attacking directly (any violent contact would result in a nuclear explosion). Overriding Johnny's orders, Robo carries Guillotine into space and into the path of an oncoming meteor, apparently obliterating them both. A teary-eyed Johnny mourns the loss of his friend.

Emperor Guillotine's plan to wear down Robo works to perfection. The plot moves very well. The real question is: Why didn't Guillotine do that to begin with?



Giant Robo flies Emperor Guillotine to their final reward

VOYAGE INTO SPACE (1970)

AIP-TV edited many episodes from the series together and released the film into syndication. The movie, which runs 97 minutes, not 88 minutes as listed in some sources, contains the entire first episode with only Dracolone's first appearance (arm only) attacking a ship edited out. The movie next moves to the second episode with much of the beginning rearranged and many of the military and all of the civilian scenes from the beginning missing. Next, we jump way ahead to Episode 17 for the second appearance of the Gargoyle Vine. Many scenes with the Ministry of Defense and Dr. Dorian's rantings were edited out. And Dr. Botan's death scene, for obvious reasons, because he's back in the next segment. Not much, if anything is cut from Episode 10, which features the Lagorian. Then it's on to the final episode of the series for the conclusion of the movie.

GIANT ROBO Animated Series (1992)

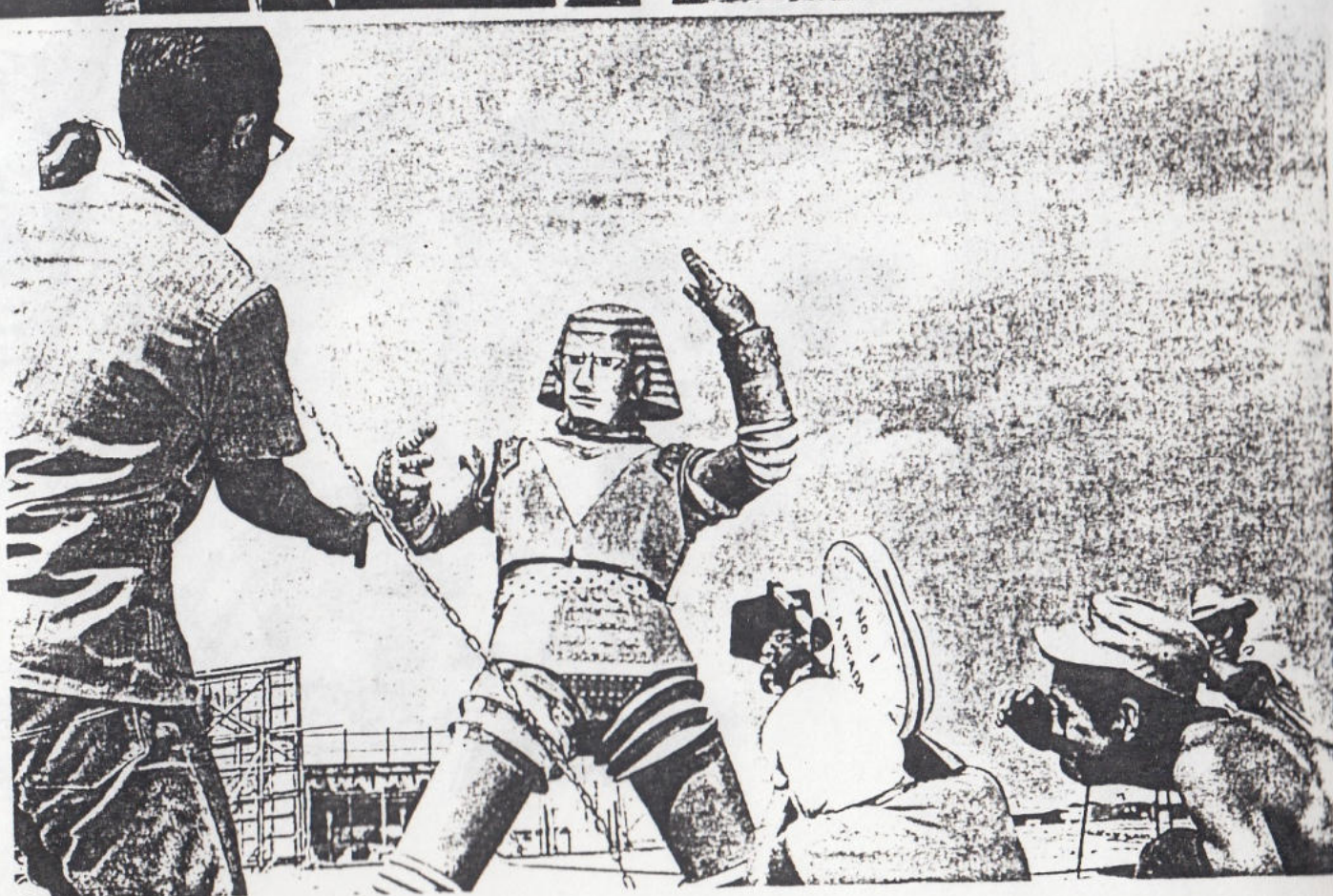
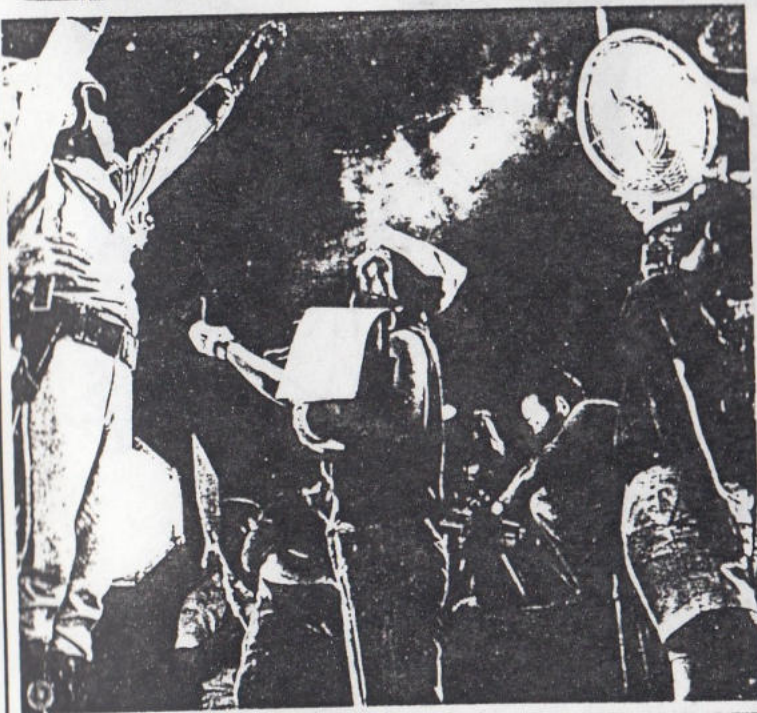
An animated series about Giant Robo was produced in 1992 by Hikari Productions and released by Amuse Video in Japan. The story has very little, if anything, to do with the original series. As in the original Japanese version of GIANT ROBO, a young boy named Daisaku controls Robo. However there is no Unicorn Organization or Gargoyle Gang. They have been replaced by the Experts of Justice and Big Fire, respectively. The series is now being dubbed into English and is available from Manga Video in America.

Sources: Marklite Magazine #1, 1990, "Superhero Roll Call" by August Ragone; Japanese Science Fiction Fantasy and Horror Films by Stuart Galbraith, and the Zen Kaiju & Kaijin Encyclopedia published by Keibunsha. Kaiju Review thanks everyone who helped out on this article. All Art work is (c) Ron Wilber.



Clockwise from the left; SPFX Director Nobou Yajima sets up a shot featuring Gangar II for episode # 18, Stunt actor Toshiyuki Tsuchiyama is suited up for his role as Giant Robo, Yajima stages an action sequence against a painted sky background, on a soundstage the crew sets up a shot of Johnny 'taking flight'.

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Ron Wilber's ART OF GAMERA



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Tsuburaya Legend

A Continuing Series by Kevin Grays

BACKGROUND TO AN ERA

Eiji Tsuburaya's ground breaking television success that began with the overwhelming popularity in Japan of **ULTRA Q** and was followed by the creation of Japan's most famous super hero **Ultraman** in 1966, prompted other television production studios to hit the air waves with their own shows that would feature giant heroes against giant monsters. Examples: Toei's innovative "Giant Robot to be Controlled by a Young Boy" theme highlighted in 1967's, **GIANT ROBO** (Johnny Sokko and his Flying Robot, for more see page 18), P-Productions' **SPECTRALMAN** (Spectreman, see page 43) - 1971, Hiromi Productions' - **THUNDER MASK** - 1972, Nippon Gendai Planning & Senkosha's **SILVER MASK** - 1971, **IRON KING** - 1972, Toho Eizo's **THE HUMAN METEOR, ZONE** (Zone Fighter) - 1973, and Toho's own **THE BLAZING SUPERHUMAN, MEGALOMAN** - 1979. The '70s would come to be known as both "The Second Monster Boom" and "The Golden Age of Japanese Heroes" thanks to shows like these as well as innovative programming from Toei TV such as **JINZO NINGEN KIKAI** - The Artificial Human/Android, Kikaider 1972 (see KR #7 for complete series guide), or their famous long-running and continuously developing **KAMEN RIDER** (Masked Rider) series that began in 1971.



Eiji Tsuburaya and the Red and Silver dream

THE PLEASANT BEASTS

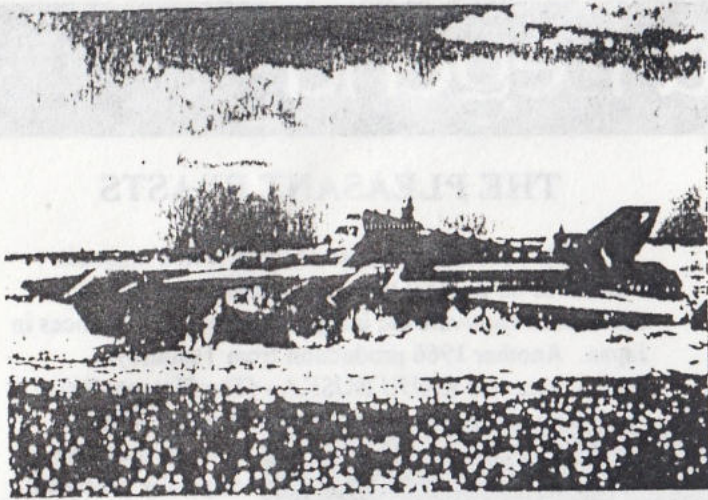
Eiji Tsuburaya's house of ideas would maintain their focus on original television projects that would continue to captivate the imaginations of TV audiences in Japan. Another 1966 production from Tsuburaya Productions was **KAIJU BUSKA** - (The Pleasant Beast

Buska). 47 half-hour episodes were originally broadcast between November 9th, 1966 and September 27th, 1967 on Nippon Television (NTV) at 7:00-PM.

This comical children's show featured the bizarre young creature, Buska. Looking more like a big plush teddy bear with an overbite and a crown comprised of a row of three oddly shaped horns on its head, the child monster comes to think of a clever young boy named Daisaku Tonda as its parent. Together they share unusual adventures and encounters with other strange characters and creatures, including Buska's younger brother beast, Chamegon. Music for the series was by Junio Miyauchi.

More comic fantasy adventure shows aimed at children would follow from Tsuburaya Productions, such as

CHIBIRA-KUN, first broadcast on NTV in 1970 in 15 minute color installments. This series featured an amusing juvenile creature who shared misadventures with his parents; Papagon and Mamagon, their household pet Pochi Pochi, and an assortment of bizarre characters in over 400 segments. Little indication could be found in these colorful and comic premises of the dramatic and decidedly more adult direction Tsuburaya Productions would take next.



MIGHTY JACK

In 1968, Tsuburaya would produce what has been considered by some to be one of his studio's finest quality television works, *MAITEI JIYAKKU* - (Mighty Jack). Ambitiously taking on a full hour format for 13 episodes, this series is perhaps the most probable and realistic of all popular Japanese science fiction television productions. Airing on Fuji TV from 8:00-9:00PM from April 6th to June 29th, 1968, *MIGHTY JACK* has sometimes been described in the West as a conceptual combination between *MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE* and *VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA*, with a nod toward the popular spy genre inspired by the James Bond films.

The stories of *MIGHTY JACK* focus on the agents and crew of the great Mighty Jack, a flying submarine battleship vessel, the product of some of the most modern technology in the world, which was built to defend from Q, a terrorist organization that has set its eyes on the goal of global domination. The 11 M.J. officers based in Japan are called to duty when the international threat of Q strikes. The plots involve heavy espionage, including bloody assassinations, issues of international infiltrations, and the sacrifice of one's life for personal ideals or on behalf of one's homeland, with serious, sometimes grim, human drama.

Included among the actors that American fans might recognize in *MIGHTY JACK* is **Masanori Nihei**, who portrayed the eccentrically comical Science Special Search Party officer, Ide (Science Patrol Officer Ito) in the original *ULTRAMAN*, played against type as the impulsive and sometimes aggressively daring test pilot and skydiving M.J. officer and Captain's Assistant, Akira Genda, known by the nickname of Gen.

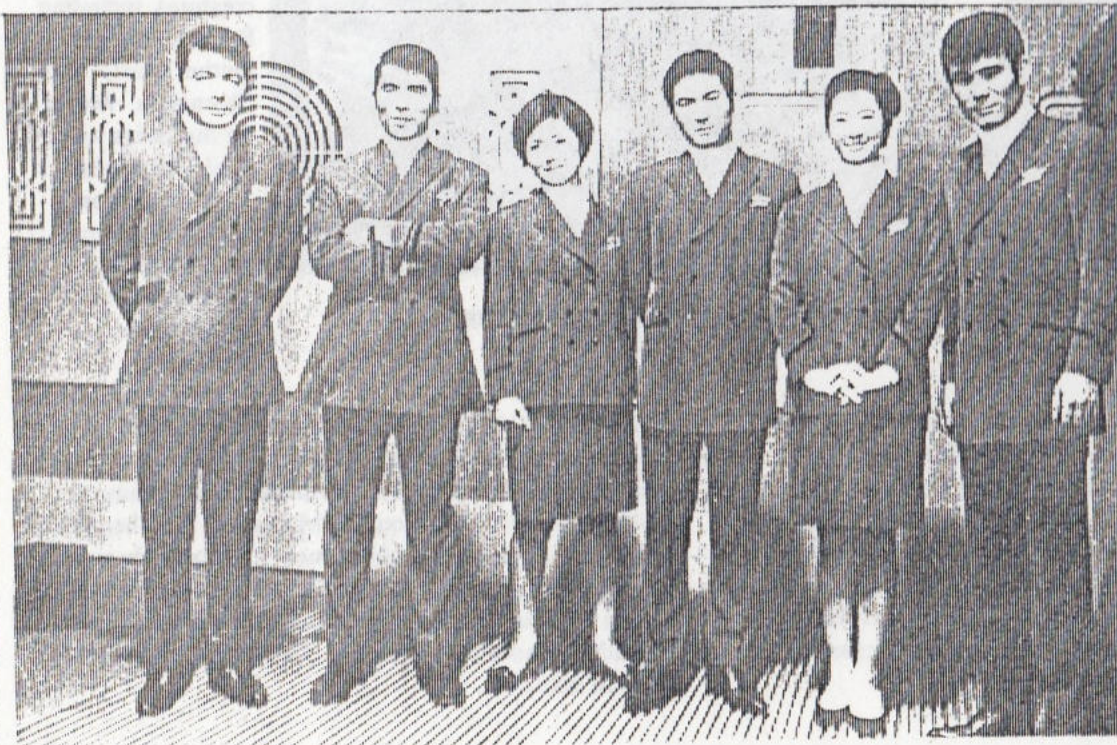
Hiroshi Minami, who appeared in *ULTRA SEVEN* occasionally as Space Station V3 Combat Captain Kurata, plays M.J. Vice-Command Officer and Pro Golfer, Ippei Amada.

Eisei Amamoto, (aka Hideyo Amamoto), perhaps best known in the U.S. for his role as the notorious Dr. Who in Toho's *KING KONG ESCAPES* ('67), portrayed an elder M.J. officer.

Guest appearances in the series included **Hiroko Sakurai**, **Jerry Ito** (Nelson, the cruel captor of the tiny twin fairies in *MOTHRA*, '61), **Harold S. Conway** (a scientist aboard the U.N. Submarine, Sea Hawk, destroyed as Godzilla emerges from the iceberg in *KING KONG VS. GODZILLA* ('62), Roliscan ambassador in *MOTHRA*, scientist in *THE MYSTERIANS* ('57), etc.), as well as major Toho genre veterans **Kenji Sahara**, and **Akihiko Hirata**.

Writers for *MIGHTY JACK* included Toho (and Tsuburaya) vet **Shinichi Sekizawa**, **Tetsuo Kinjo**, **Masahiro Yamada**, **Hiroyasu Yamaura**, and **Fumizo Wakatsuki**. Among the directors were **Kazuho Mitsuta** and **Samaji Nonagase**. **Tohl Narita** designed the mechanics and uniforms.

The grand soundtrack was composed by **Isao Tomita** who is now widely known for his computer music recordings (he also did the soundtrack for **Osamu Tezuka's** original 1965 animated series from Mushi Productions, *JUNGLE TAITEI - JUNGLE EMPEROR*, which became *KIMBA, THE WHITE LION* in America, and the seductively haunting score for Toho's *THE GREAT PROPHECIES OF NOSTRADAMUS/ CATASTROPHE: 1999/ THE LAST DAYS OF PLANET EARTH* in 1974.



The Officers of Mighty Jack, l-r: **Hideaki Nitani** (Atari); **Hiroshi Minami** (Ippei Amada); **Wakako Ikeda** (Mari); **Noriaki Inoue** (Terakawa); **Naoko Kubo** (Katsura); **Masanori Nihei** (Akira Genda)



Absent from the scenarios of MIGHTY JACK are the monsters and aliens that had become the expected trademark of a Tsuburaya series. Instead, the battleships and war machines of Q would provide the conflicts for the main characters and their arsenal of weapons and combat crafts as they engage in battles beneath the sea, across the Earth, and in the skies. Instead the mechanizations of the organization "Q" becomes as horrible a threat to the world as any giant monster, if not more so.

Sandy Frank Productions strung together footage of several episodes and hastily dubbed them to release as a MIGHTY JACK movie to American television in 1988 through King Features Entertainment.

Although the original MIGHTY JACK series is now recognized for its innovation and challenging scenarios, general ratings for the show were not rewarding, with some going as low as 6.7%.

After the 13 hour format episodes concluded, a sequel series was created to immediately follow. The second series, called TATAKAE! MAITEI JIYAKKU - (Fight! Mighty Jack), saw its premiere on July 6, 1968, and was broadcast until December 28th of that same year, at 7:00-7:30PM. Returning to the more standard Tsuburaya television format of half-hour shows with 26 episodes and a new score composed by Kunio Miyauchi, this series would introduce monsters and aliens into the story lines in familiar fashion.

THE TSUBURAYA FILES

Another unique TV series that Tsuburaya introduced in 1968, on September 15th, was KAIKI DAI SAKUSEN - (Great Operations: Mystery). 26 episodes were broadcast on TBS from 7:00-7:30PM until March 9th, 1969.

This series concerned bizarre, inexplicable and supernatural occurrences involving ghosts, vampires, cursed or possessed objects which would be countered by the SRI's (Science Research Institute) efforts through its agents to combat the supernatural threats using scientific

strategies and weapons.

The regular SRI cast included Shin Kishida who, ironically, would be cast as the lead vampire in Toho's "Kyuketsuki (Vampire)" films in a trilogy of the '70s which included LAKE OF DRACULA - 1971, and EVIL OF DRACULA - 1975, in addition to the character of INTERPOL agent Nanbara in the original GODZILLA VS. MECHA-GODZILLA (1974). Shoji Kobayashi also starred in KAIKI DAI SAKUSEN.

Just a few of the bizarre characters from Kaiki Dai Sakusen



FAREWELL TO THE MASTER

Having lived to see his creations reach uncharted peaks of popularity with a generation of fans, many of them coming to respect his creative genius and dedication to craft with the type of adulation normally reserved for national heroes (in the context of honorable Japanese titles, he has been called "Tokusatsu No Kamisama" - The Honorable God of Special Visual Effects), Eiji Tsuburaya passed away on January 25th, 1970. But the legacy and popularity of his creations continued on. While some fans would choose to remain loyal only to those works created under his personal supervision, most fans wanted to see more of the creatures, characters, and heroes that he had introduced.



The Agents of the Science Research Institute



ULTRAMAN JACK

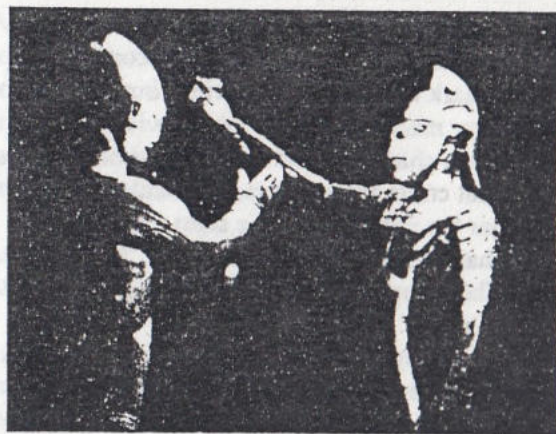
Hajime Tsuburaya moved into the position of producer to continue the ULTRA series in 1971 with **KAETTEKITA URUTORAMAN - (Return of Ultraman)**. Comprised of 51 episodes, it was originally broadcast from April 2nd, 1971 to March 31st, 1972 on TBS from 7:00-7:30PM. This series brought a new Ultraman to Earth in a role similar to the original. Nicknamed Ultraman "Jack" or "New Ultraman" or simply "New Man," he merges his identity with that of Hideki Go (**Jiro Dan**) who was buried beneath the debris of a crumbling building when two giant monsters, the Oil (consuming) Monster, Takkong, and the Water Pollution Sludge Monster, Zazam, carry their battle from the waters of Tokyo Bay onto the shores of the city (episode 1, **KAJU SOSHINGEKI - (Total Monster Attack)**, interestingly, the same as the Japanese title for **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS** ('68). This episode was written by Shozo Uehara and directed by Ishiro Honda.

Secretly at one with the new Ultraman, Go soon found himself recruited by the **Monster Attack Team, MAT**, part of an international defense operations network extending from United Nations' New York headquarters. With their base located on the floor of Tokyo Bay, MAT of Japan is specially equipped to deal with the increasing threat of monsters and dangerous life-forms in this era.

Actor **Susumu Fujita** appeared in the series as Terrestrial Defense Chief Director Kishida.

Unusual climates, terrain fluctuations, solar disturbances, hydrogen bomb experimentations, the destruction of nature, cosmic disasters, and factors of the unknown, have all come into classification as phenomena that have adversely affected or mutated various terrestrial life-forms and greatly contributed to this period in Earth's history which some have come to think of as "The Age of Monsters." There is also the continuing threat of extraterrestrial invaders (a theme popular in the first three Ultra series).

When the dangers seem insurmountable, MAT officer Go signals the transformation for the Ultraman to appear and challenge the menacing forces. However, the

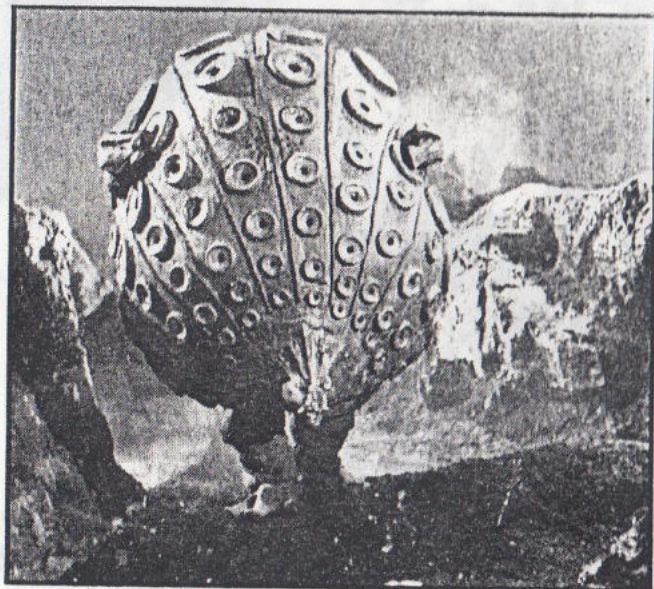


sometimes brash and impulsive auto racer and factory mechanic, lacking a substantial background in military discipline, must learn to use the ability wisely and to act less selfishly as part of the team, especially when irresponsible acts could jeopardize the lives and property of an entire populace.

Returning to assist his younger brethren, Ultra Seven presents the New Ultraman with the Ultra Bracelet weapon to slay the rogue Space Monster, Bemstar (episode 18; **URUTORA SEBUN SANJO! - (Enter! Ultra Seven)**), and both Seven and the original Ultraman appear in the 2nd part of a double episode story developed by Uehara (episode 38; **URUTORA NO HOSHI HIKARU TOKI - When the Ultra Star Shines**), as do Moroboshi and Hayata, to resurrect Ultraman Jack from the brutal assassination attack of the Nackle alien and its Guard Monster, Black King. Tragically, Go loses his love, Aki Sakata (**Rumi Sakakibara**), and her elder brother, Ken Sakata (**Shin Kishida**), a past racing mentor for Go (main supporting characters in the series until this point) in the onslaught of the Nackle plot. Eleven-year-old Jiro Sakata (**Hideki Kawaguchi**) survives the loss along with Go.

Already known Ultra villains to resurface in this series include one of the Baltans (episode 41; **BARUTAN SEIJIN JR. NO FUKUSHU - The Retaliation of Baltan jr.**) and a second Z-Ton (the final episode, 51; **URUTORA 5 TSU NO CHIKAI - The 5 Ultra Vows**).

Ishiro Honda, famed Toho film director perhaps best known for his superb collaborations with Eiji Tsuburaya in the late 50s and throughout the 1960s, directed five **RETURN OF ULTRAMAN** episodes. These included episodes 1: **KAJU SOSHINGEKI** (with the Oil Monster Takkong, the Sludge Monster Zazam,



and the Vicious Monster Arstron/Earthstron), 2: TAKKONGU DAI GYAKUSHU - Takkong's Great Revenge), 7: KAIJU REINBO SAKUSEN - Operation : Monster Rainbow- (with the Transparent Monster, Gorbagos), 9: KAIJUTO SOS - Monster Island SOS (with the Ancient Monster, Dungan), and 51: URUTORA 5 TSU NO CHIKAI (with the second Space Dinosaur, Alien Z-Ton, and the Batt alien).

This series features the designs of Norikatsu Ikeya who also contributed designs for ULTRA SEVEN with Tohl Narita.

The soundtrack score by Toru Fuyuki was accompanied by musical arrangements for the theme songs by Koichi Sugiyama, who would compose the soundtrack for Toho's GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE in 1989, with vocals by Jiro Dan himself.

Episode 34: YURUSAREZARU INOCHI - Forgive this Life, was based on a 16-year-old Japanese senior high school student's original story idea that impressed Tsuburaya Productions. This episode dealt with the concept of creating artificial life that would be the synthesis of animal and plant life. The resulting monster, Leogon, would traverse the waters of Ashino Lake. In 1985, the same fan, a young man named Shinichiro Kobayashi, would send a story idea into the "Godzilla Story Finals Committee," which was in search of a fresh concept for the film to follow GOJIRA ('84). His writing again met with great enthusiasm and was finally selected as the premise for GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE, which, interestingly, also focused on the concept of synthesizing plant and animal life, with Ashino Lake providing a point of focus in the story.

Though not as successful as the previous ULTRA related shows (especially in terms of audience ratings), RETURN OF ULTRAMAN did find its own devoted national audience and would bring about further development of the ULTRA series, as well as other programming featuring giant superheroes battling weird monsters.



MIRA-MAN

Hajime Tsuburaya also introduced an original hero character to Japanese television called MIRA-MAN - MIRROR-MAN, that was clearly inspired by his father's creative visions, to Japanese television audiences in 1971.

Broadcast from December 5th, 1971, to November 26th, 1972, on Fuji TV at 7:00-7:30PM, MIRROR-MAN consisted of 51 episodes, with music by Toru Fuyuki.

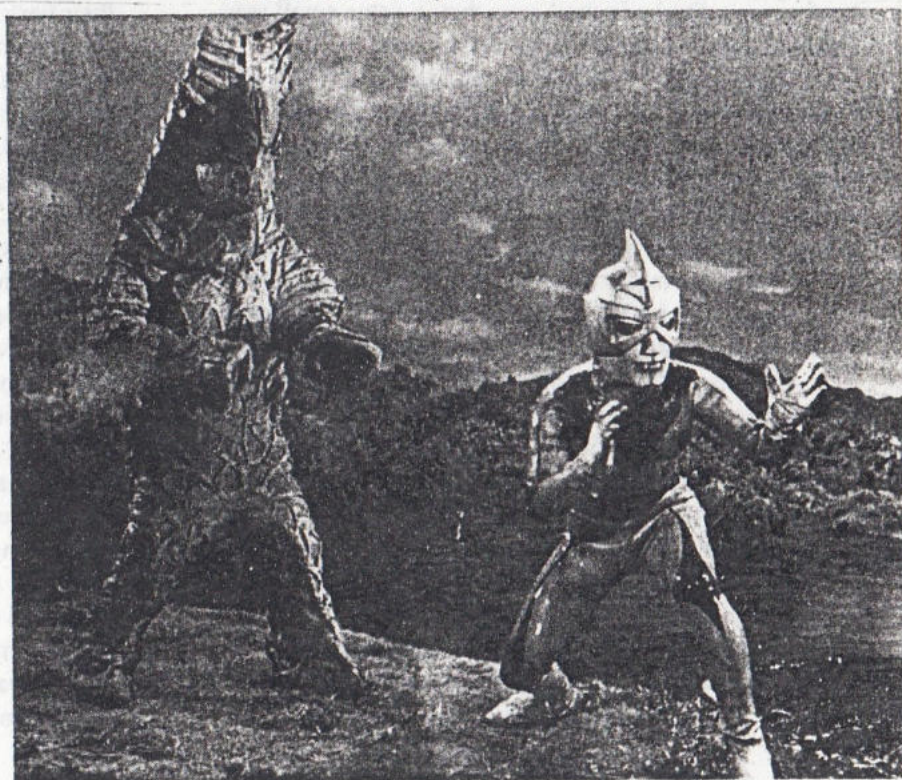
This time, when Earth is besieged by invaders, their challenge is met by a defender whose origin is from another dimension. Born of the love shared between two people from different dimensional worlds, Kotaro Kagami (Nobuyuki Ishida) uses his ability to trade places with his great alter-ego, or mirror-identity, Mirror-Man, in order to defend the Earth against terrible threats. Kotaro's father was from the 2nd dimensional world opposite to our side of the dimensional universe. Kotaro joins SGM, the Science Guard Members, in their Earth defense and investigations operations, and as Mirror-Man, he uses his abilities and strength to fight against alien villains and various inter-dimensional horrors that would otherwise destroy the peace or jeopardize the delicate balances that exist in the universes.

The first two episodes, 1: MIRA MAN TANJO - Mirror-Man's Birth, and 2: SHINRYAKUSHA HA TONARI NIIRU - The Invader Next Door, both written by Fumizo Wakatsuki, and directed by Ishiro Honda.

Following the success of ULTRA SEVEN, a series of 195 five-minute matches were produced for TBS to run from September 28, 1970 to July 2, 1971, like commercial sporting or wrestling preview segments in which Seven would engage in brief battles with "re-patched" old costume versions of past Ultra Monsters, shown as URUTORAFUAI TO - Ultra Fight.

For MIRROR-MAN, 65 similar five-minute segments were shot for broadcast from April 1st to September 27th, 1974, as MIRA-FUAI TO - Mirror Fight.

Next issue Kevin looks into the continuation of Japan's 'Second Monster boom, the Golden age of Japanese heroes' with a look at ULTRAMAN ACE, TRIPLE FIGHTER, REDMAN and more!



Hajime Tsuburaya's
brainchild
Mira-Man

OSAKA ELEGY

Last Year - Fall 1994

By Norman England

The morning light breaks through the curtains and strikes the woven straw tatami mats causing a sweet smell, like the scent of Autumn leaves burning in a far off field, to fill the room. The bell of the Tofu man outside making his rounds rings, as if over my head, and pulls me from my dreams. I reach for my wife, Yuko, but she's not beside me. Instead, the smell of frying fish reaches me. "Breakfast's brewing", I think to myself. Sliding the paper door a crack, I watch as she puts steaming rice into two small bowls and the fish onto a plate next to it. She calls for me to get up and eat. "Whatever happened to eggs and bacon?" I wonder, as I hop up, roll the futon, and throw it into the closet. Another day in Japan begins.

I'm constantly asked by friends from home, tourists I meet, and of course my parents, what it's like living in Japan. But still, after I tell of the people, the temples, the neon, and even after tales of adventure from Kagoshima to Tokyo, they keep pressing. Now I find the best explanation is saying, "It's fun!" Nothing satisfies like simplicity.

The truth, though, is that while it is fun and adventurous, it is also tedious, confining, and at times unbearably frustrating. Like anyplace, Japan has its good points as well as its bad points. What I find a bit humorous is that the good and bad points here are almost the exact opposite of the ones in the United States. If we could somehow just squash here and there into one place we'd have the perfect country, or close to it.

Since the continental drift will take about a million years to make that a reality, we should look for a more practical way to bridge the gap between countries. The best way to bridge any cultural gap is through an understanding of how things are and work respectively. You may be surprised to find that a better understanding of Japan in general leads to a better understanding of kaiju.

With that in mind I'd like to write about a typical day for me in Osaka in the hopes that in some small way it can shed more light on Japan the country.

After a rather tasty (to me, anyway) fish breakfast over a summer rerun of KAMEN RIDER, I try to come up with the most exciting way to spend the weekend. It's funny, but even after more than a year here I still get excited about living in Japan, about exploring the nooks and crannies of the Kansai area. True, it may be a small country (slightly larger than the state of California) but it's a compact one; with all the features of a large country just minus the empty spaces between locations.

On this particularly hot August weekend day my choices begin to look routine: shopping, coffee at a kisaten, karaoke with friends, temple viewing, etc. Going through the local "what's up" magazine I stumble upon a small ad for a free showing of the original Godzilla. I quickly shelve any other plans I might have considered and call a friend to see if he'd like to join Yuko and I.

While making plans to meet, he warns that the reason for the showing is because August marks the anniversary of the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He's afraid I might feel uncomfortable to see

a film that is so blatantly anti-American in an atmosphere fostering that emotion. Hell, I don't care about politics - I just want to see Godzilla ('54) in celluloid form! With plenty of time to kill before the film, Yuko and I decide to take the day slowly. We leave our apartment building which, while in the center of Osaka, is best described as the eye of a hurricane. Quite simply, it is a small, quiet area with many old homes, several temples, and lots of old ladies hunched over small push-carts.

Though a "hot spot" for social activity it's not, the positive side is that my town has its feet firmly rooted in the Japanese past and so the summer is a time of a great many Maturi (festival). This involves the dusting off of the temples' Danjiri (large, ornate wheeled carts) and pushing them through the neighborhood, with the locals joining in for some chanting, drum beating and socializing. It's an interesting sight to watch and I occasionally join in - except when it's done on Sundays at 8AM.

The walk to the local JR (Japan Rail) train station is a quick 10 minute stroll through snug streets with barely enough room for a single car. The mesh of electric wires criss-crossing above coupled with everyone surrounding their home with a high wood or concrete wall gives the feeling of walking down a long, tight corridor. It's enough to make anyone with even slight claustrophobia a basket case. Unnerving at first, it is a feeling I've grown accustomed to, and now find the tight embrace of the Japanese street to be like that of a hug from one's mother - warm and homey.

About this time comes the assault. Not in the form of thieves or beggars, but in the shape of three foot high children who squeal at the sight of a bona fide foreigner. While this may seem strange to Americans, it should be noted that as of this year, Japan's foreign population hit the 1% mark, with 78% of that 1% going to other resident Asian nationalities.

Huddling together, the children confer on the best attack plan and on the few English phrases known (seems to make no difference if you're French, German or Nigerian - Japanese children seem to think all foreigners speak English). Bounding over with black and red Rando-serus (elementary school backpack - see GODZILLA'S REVENGE for reference) bouncing off their backs and yellow schools hats flapping in the wind, their shouts of "Amerikajin," "Gaijin," and "Eigojin," fill the air. "Eigojin" is my personal favorite and a word concocted by the kids on my block. It translates to "English language person." "Goo-bye," they say as they swarm close. Filing past, they all say, "Ha-low" in unison. Close enough.

Located just before the JR station is a cannopied outdoor market that seems to be mandatory in all Japanese cities and towns. These are sections of streets which have a permanent, opaque roof erected overhead, yet are open on the ends and to intersecting traffic. The upshot is one gets the feeling of walking through a shopping mall - except one has to be careful not to get run down by a passing car. While some of these outdoor/indoor-like stretches can go on for blocks and blocks, my town's a single block populated by Yukata clad fruit and fish dealers selling things I still haven't mustered up the courage to eat.

Arriving at the JR station, we purchase our tickets from a wall of vending machines and walk up to the platform to meet our train. Now, let me say that riding a

train in Japan is, except when filled to mind-numbing capacities, a real pleasure. The well celebrated cushioned green seats are great, but what I like best is that the conductors are so concerned about giving the smoothest ride that one can literally ride without having to hang on to something nailed down for dear life. The trains sort of slide up to speed and glide to a halt.

A nice touch by JR (last year) is the train safety campaign featuring ULTRAMAN in a series of station posters and in-train ads. In one, the evil Red King is smoking away in a no smoking section while Ultraman hacks from the second-hand smoke. In another, the Baltan alien tries unsuccessfully to dash onto a train as the doors are closing, with Ultraman denying him entrance. I find these touches of kaiju to be the icing on the cake about life in Japan.

After making all the proper connections we arrive in Umeda, a location immortalized in GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA ('93). I'm here, in desperation, to put the finishing touches on my Bandai Godzilla collection. While you may think it's easy to come by this stuff here, the truth is that things disappear quickly, either by being sold off or being pulled from the shelves to make way for the next load of whatever is popular this moment.

Unless I'm really desperate for a toy, I buy exclusively from SOGO or HANKYU for the simple reason that as of last year these places (among a few others) discount all Bandai toys 15%. When considering the price of models and toys here, that is nothing to scoff at. Shopping for toys is always fun, if only because of the contrast between me in my black leather biker jacket and the typically young children I'm competing with. Very small kids stuffing vinyl toy appendages into every orifice of their faces represent the average toy collector in Japan. Usually these discount department stores keep loose figures in a deep box giving easy access to about the first couple of feet. Getting to the bottom, where the discontinued and rarer items live, involves having to take each one out, causing the floor in the immediate area to become invaded by plastic Godzilla, Mothra, Rodan, and Moguras. As a result, I become the recipient of the well-disguised Japanese evil eye from the clerks. They may have a smile on their face and a "Maido" on their lips when I'm paying for the stuff, but they can't fool me!

After a cup of rich coffee in a well air-conditioned cafe, we decide it's time to head over to Sone to meet up with my friend Michio, a man who is perhaps the most movie knowledgeable film fan I have ever met.

To get to Sone we have to switch to the Hankyu train line. I buy our tickets using a YAMATO TAKERU pass from my collection of train passes from Hankyu that feature Toho films. It's a little known fact even in Japan that the former president of Hankyu department store, Ichizo Kobayashi is also a founder of Toho studios. A versatile man, he is considered to be among the greatest of Japan's business leaders and many of his concepts (such as the building of railways from remote areas to connect with Hankyu stores) has been imitated by countless others. While he passed away many years ago the two companies still have a vested interest in

each other. The Hankyu company today controls 5% of Toho stock. This is one reason Hankyu stores turn up quite often in Toho films.

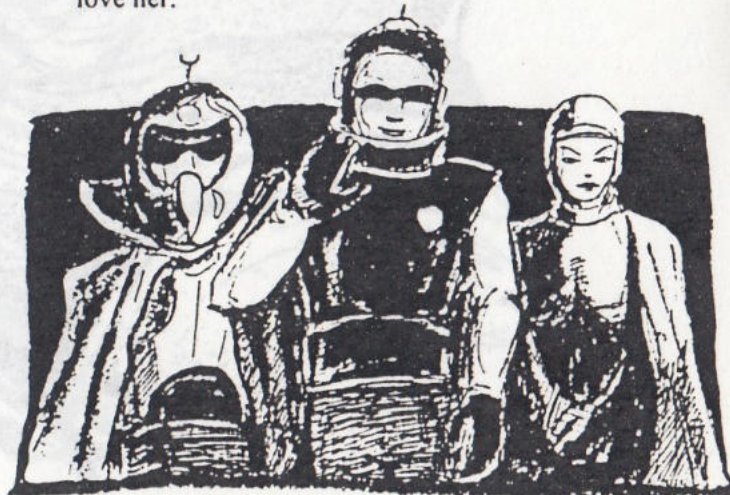
Sone's not far from Osaka, about the half way point to another major Kansai city, Takarazuka. An interesting city, Takarazuka is the birth place of Osamu Tezuka, the creator of TETSUWAN ATOM (Astro Boy) and JUNGLE TAITEIREO (Kimba, the White Lion). Earlier this year the city opened a beautiful museum to honor his contributions to the world of Manga and Anime. This town is also famous for the Takarauka singers: a group of butch looking women who perform musicals while dressed like men. They have been around for 80 years now and have a huge - and I mean huge following made up almost entirely of women.

Meeting up with Michio, we walk to the theater to find it's more a community playhouse than a theater. While standing outside admiring a hand-drawn poster for the show, a woman from the theater rushes out to us. Michio moans, "Here it comes, something anti-American." Instead, she asks where I'm from. "New York," I reply. Excitedly, she takes me by the arm and leads me in and tells everyone there, to my embarrassment, that I've come all the way from New York. Well, so much for the stoning I was expecting.

While the film plays I try and imagine what it must have been like to witness this on its first run, 40 years ago in Japan. Try as I can, I find it impossible - one look at the Japan in the film and the Japan around me and I can see that they are as different as night and day. But to see this as film and not video is a treat by itself, and I savor every frame.

Getting off the train back home we find a Matsuri in progress at the local grammar school. The place is filled with familiar faces from the neighborhood. A two-story tent sits in the center of the sports field with glowing paper lanterns strung from under it with about 50 old kimono-clad ladies dancing around in unison. Unbelievably cute little girls run around in loose, colorful Yutaka with smiles plastered on their doll-like faces. The boys though seem more interested in skill games set up in a corner of the field than the dancing, and they spend their time trying to win junk prizes.

Yuko and I sit with a few people we know from the neighborhood and drink cold rice tea while commenting on the good dancers and how cute and happy the children look. It's about this time that my mind begins to wander to my own childhood so far in time and place from here. I feel a bit homesick, but feel I am truly lucky in being able to experience another culture first-hand. Especially one as different and unique as this. Japan, I love her.



Spectreman battles
Okada (Dustman)
the Garbage Eating
Monster
seen in episodes
11 & 12.

Art by
Joe Riley



SPECTREMAN EPISODE GUIDE

Tetsko Narikawa as "George" (Joji)



by Ron Burton
Additional Research and Text
by Toshiki Okazaki and August Ragone

SPECTREMAN was a TV series created by comic artist Shoji Ushio and P Productions. The series premiered on January 2, 1971 on the Fuji TV Network and ran until March 18, 1972. The sixty-three episodes of **SPECTREMAN** featured battles with giant monsters from the lab of Dr. Gori, a simian scientist from Planet E in the Geisty solar system. Defending Earth is the titled hero, Spectreman. In the guise of Joji Gamou, the cyborg lands a job with the Pollution Research and Control Squad in Tokyo. The episodes center on Joji/Spectreman's struggle to keep the planet from being conquered by Gori and his creatures.

The first twenty episodes were titled **UCHU ENJIN GORI (SPACE APE-MAN GORI)**. Episodes 21 through 39 were named **UCHU ENJIN GORI TAI SUPEKUTORUMAN (SPACE APE-MAN GORI VS. SPECTRALMAN)**, and episodes 40 through 63 were simply titled **SUPEKUTORUMAN** (when it was released in the U.S. in 1978 by Richard Rosenfeld, the series was titled **SPECTREMAN** instead of its actual name, **SPECTRALMAN**, probably due to an error in translation).

Writers for **SPECTREMAN** included Shoji Nemoto, Keisuke Fujikawa, Masaki Tsuji, and Susumu Takahisa. The main director was Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, who previously helmed most of the episodes of **THE SPACE GIANTS** for P Productions. Musical director Kunio Miyauchi (**ULTRAMAN**) was responsible for the score. Tetsu Matoba, Takeo Sakai,

Nobuo Yajima, and Koichi Ishiguro were among the special effects directors that worked on the show (the U.S. version credits Tomio Sagisu as the FX man).

Tetsu Matoba had already established himself with a distinguished special SPFX career at Daiei, where he had helmed the effects team on Japan's first color science fiction film **WARNING FROM SPACE** ('56). From there Matoba went to work for Tsuburaya Productions, acting as one of the unofficial directors of effects (the only official 'Director of Effects' at Tsuburaya was Eiji Tsuburaya) of many shows including **ULTRA Q**, **ULTRAMAN**, and **ULTRA SEVEN**.

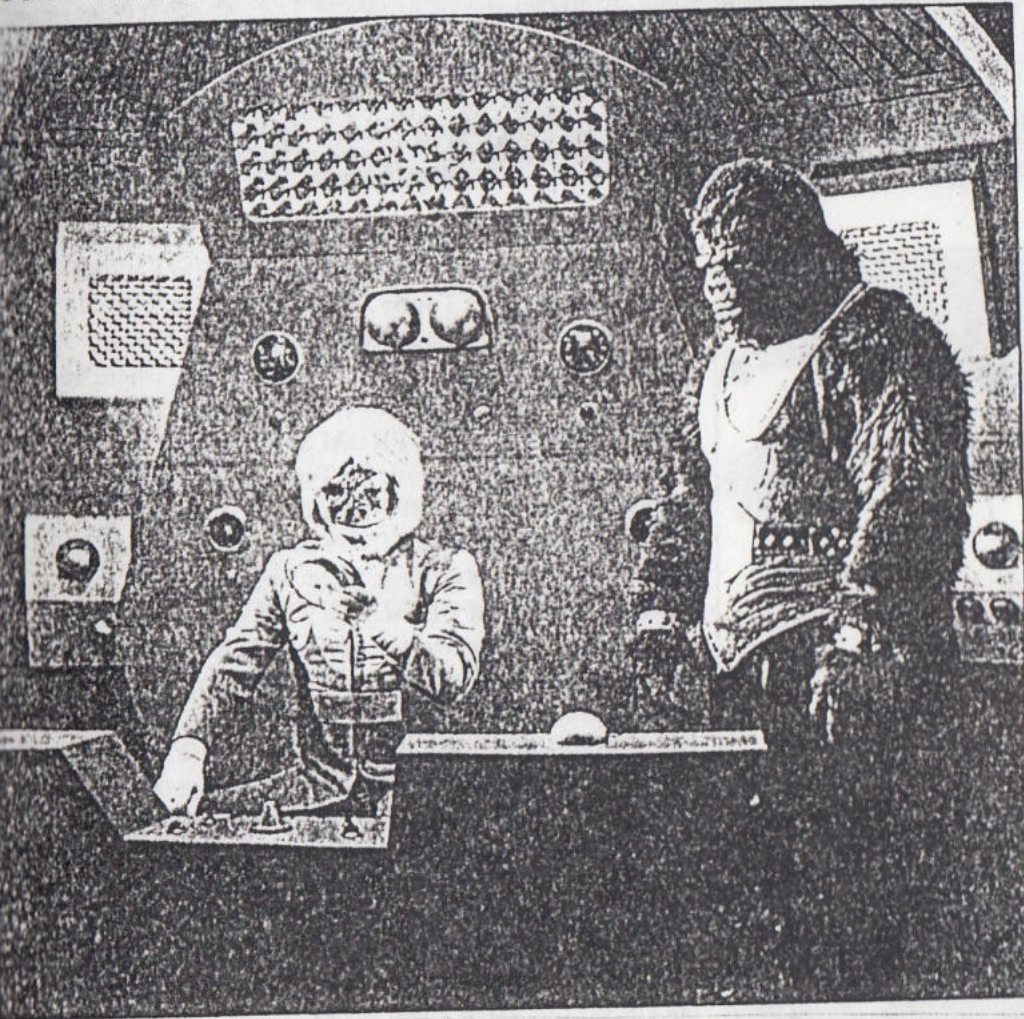
Nobuo Yajima had already proven his abilities in the special effects field heading up the effects on such Toei shows as **CAPT. ULTRA**, and **GIANT ROBO**. Yajima had established his own EFX workshop on 2/14/65. **SPECIAL EFFECTS RESEARCH INC.** would go on to play a major role in the development of effects technology on many of the Toei henshin and sentai shows, with Yajima himself playing a hands on role into the late eighties on shows like **JAN PERSON**. This past Summer (95) Yajima's company celebrated its 30th anniversary with a lavish party held at the Tokyo Hotel in the Ginza. Just about every major effects director in Japan attended this party. Yajima is also well known for his contributions toward the development of the Togsu EEG System, a video to film effects process that was the forerunner of the high definition video effects techniques employed commonly today.

In some ways, the series resembles **ULTRA SEVEN**. When Joji Gamo (George in the U.S. version, played by Tetsko Narikawa) shows up for the first time and forecasts disaster, nobody takes him seriously; the premier episode of **ULTRA SEVEN** had Dan Moroboshi doing the same thing and receiving an initially hostile reception from TDF officers Soga and Furuhashi.

Just as Dan ultimately became a valued Officer of the TDF, George came to be a respected member of the Pollution Squad (albeit an often troublesome one based on his frequent inexplicable hunches and subsequent disappearances in the middle of crisis situations). Popular with the female members of the team, George became friends with the succession of women who joined the Squad through the course of the series run. First, there was Rie Endo (actress Machiko Konishi), a modern girl, then Mineko Tachibana, a sweetly shy lady, then for only a short run there was Midori Sawa. Finally, there was Hiromi Yanagida (played by actress Taneko Sakurai). In the U.S. version these girls are dubbed Rita, Margaret, Sally



Ohira, Konishi, and Narikawa



reduces him to a fleshless skeleton, recalling Godzilla's demise in **GOJIRA '54**.

Despite the obvious budgetary restrictions evident throughout the series, Spectreman still manages to entertain fans of this television genre with its often poignant story-lines in which children frequently play a pivotal role. The friendship between a boy and the monster Metanodon in episodes #40 & 41 is an example of this.

The interplay between George and his superiors, the Overlords from Nebula 71 (he was part of the Space Allied Force in the Japanese version), is probably one of the most memorable aspects of the series. More than once, George risked the wrath of the Overlords when he took too personal an interest in the plight of individual victims, while the Overlords remained fixed on the bigger picture; the safety of all mankind.

The story arc has Gori and his brutish aide Karas fleeing from Planet E following Gori's unsuccessful attempt to take over the planet and extend the domination of his kind to other regions of the universe. Caught up in a magnetic storm, the evil pair eventually find themselves cast away to the planet Earth.

Captivated by the Earth's natural beauty, but disgusted by man's destruction of nature via pollutants and industrial waste, Gori sets out to rebuild paradise by turning man's garbage against him. Utilizing his advanced scientific techniques (and his 300+ IQ) Gori creates monsters out of the waste by-products man has assaulted the environment with in an effort to speed up the process of humanity's self destruction. Gori is the ultimate villain who will stop at nothing to get what he wants. Spectreman is the ultimate hero who is willing to sacrifice his life to protect both the Earth, and its inhabitants.

Unlike **ULTRA SEVEN**, **SPECTREMAN** did not often feature very impressive aliens, aside from Gori, and did not showcase extensive Meka, instead the series relied more heavily on the human element, and for that reason was very successful in its original run.



Midoron

and Kim, respectively.

The Pollution Squad included chief Kurata (actor Toru Ohira), a stern yet compassionate man, the comic relief character Takashi Ota (actor Kazuo Arai), the impetuous Toshio Arito (**Koji Ozaki**), and courageous Nobuyoshi Kaga (**Takamitsu Watanabe**) (Otto, John, and Arthur, respectively in the American show). **Koji Ozaki**, who played Kaga, would also play a sadistic alien in an episode of **RYUSEI MIGEN ZON**. **Takamitsu Watanabe** (Sado) was in the same episode as the alien's right-hand man. Watanabe and Ozaki later appeared in the original **GODZILLA VS. THE BIONIC MONSTER** ('74) as ape-men from the Third Planet of the Black Hole (relatives of Dr. Gori? Coincidentally an episode of **ULTRA SEVEN** also featured a space ape-man with a similar name Gorry; #45 **Horror of the Super Ape Being**).

Among the best episodes of **SPECTREMAN** were the first two, which dealt with Hedoron, a pollution-spawned blob, not unlike the titled monster of Toho's **GODZILLA VS. HEDORA** ('71) made the same year. Other impressive monsters from the series included Satanking, Balon, Karuma-Nicolas, and Maglah, all from the first third of the series. Gokinosaurus was a unique creation, as was the Moon monster, who had an appendage on his head resembling the blade of a battle axe. The space vampire Kyudora invokes images of Toho's vampire trilogy. The swarm of bats seen in episode #45 is reminiscent of **YOG-MONSTER FROM SPACE** ('70). Perhaps the most impressive monster was Midoron, which was realized by stop motion photography. Spectreman battles and kills Midoron but does so while human sized. One scene has Midoron holding Spectreman fast in his toothy jaws. Spectreman

Episode Guide



#1: Gori- Targets the Earth!

w. Masaki Tsuji, d. Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, m. Hedoron, b. 1/2/71.

The coastal city of Fuji is attacked by Hedoron, a tentacled blob created by Dr. Gori from pollution. George transforms into Spectreman and engages the beast in battle. But a ray from Dr. Gori's flying saucer neutralizes Spectreman.

#2: Smash Hedoron -The Pollution Monster!

w. Masaki Tsuji, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Hedoron, b. 1/9/71.

Hedoron appears a second time and Spectreman springs into the battle, this time destroying the monster. Kurata welcomes George into the organization, and Dr. Gori vows revenge.

#3: The Blue Terror

w. Keisuke Fujikawa, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Midoron, b. 1/16/71.

A mysterious blue liquid causes a plague to strike a village and a four-footed reptilian monster called Midoron emerges. At first, he is repelled by fighter jets and is miniaturized by Karas. Midoron appears again, Karas kidnaps Rita, and Spectreman appears.

#4: Rah- Search the Earth

w. K. Fujikawa, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Zeron, b. 1/23/71.

After Midoron is killed, Zeron surfaces and battles Spectreman to the death. Karas (Rah) explores Tokyo, incognito, and with two ape men in silver suits, tries to kill Spectreman. Their attempt isn't successful, and the ape men are revealed to be innocent human victims transformed by Gori.

#5: Terror of the Pollution People

w. Kazuo Koya, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Giant Rah b. 1/30/71.



Karas is transformed into a giant and scales a skyscraper. He is defeated by Spectreman, but Gori has another ape soldier named Kah (created by Gori using a normal earth ape stolen from a Tokyo zoo, and portrayed by the same stunt actor who performed the costumed Spectreman stunts) who kidnaps a family and infects them with a deadly pollution disease.

The Overlords order George to kill the family.

#6: Save The Beautiful Earth !

w. Kazuo Koya, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Ra #2 (Kah), b. 2/6/71

When George doesn't obey the command to kill the family, he is stripped of his powers and exiled to the desert world, Planet 7 in Pegasus. Gori sends Karas and Kah to tear the cyborg apart. The Overlords restore his powers and the family is cured.

#7: The Black Horror

w. Masaki Tsuji, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Gokinosaurus, b. 2/13/71.

Karas infects Nakaya with a disease that makes him fear the dark. The giant cockroach monster, Gokinosaurus, is unleashed on the world and Spectreman finds himself torn between wanting to rescue Rita from Karas and obeying the command to instead kill the monster and save Nakaya, whom the Overlords wish to examine.

#8: Duel ! Gokinosaurus

w. M. Tsuji, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Gokinosaurus, b. 2/20/71

Spectreman is again stripped of his powers. George tries to save Rita. His powers are restored and he saves Rita and battles Gokinosaurus. The giant insect later tries to attack the bullet train, and Spectreman battles and destroys the monster.

#9: The Terror of Nezubirdon

w. M. Tsuji, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Nezubirdon, b. 2/27/71.

Gori creates a two-headed cyborg rat which terrorizes a remote village. Arthur, Rita and George find a young survivor and flee from the rat. Spectreman fights the giant and uses his ray to cut off both its heads. But new heads grow and it is alive again.

#10: Stop the Monster Train

w. M. Tsuji, K. Tsuchiya, m. Nezubirdon, b. 3/6/71.

George is rescued from being buried by a mound of earth and battles the beast again. Karas hijacks a locomotive and nearly kills the weakened cyborg. Spectreman again severs the heads of the monster and finally blows it apart.



#11: The Titanic Monster Dustman Appears

w. M. Tsuji, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Dustman, b. 3/13/71.

A truck driver named Okada is abducted and inadvertently transformed into a monster. The hideous beast consumes garbage and grows gigantic. He attacks the dock section of Tokyo, and Spectreman engages him in combat.

#12: Terror Rises from the Dead

w. M. Tsuji, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Dustman, b. 3/20/71.

Okada's human nature causes him to destroy himself to keep from hurting anyone. His severed hand is retrieved and kept in a laboratory. The hand regenerates new tissue, becoming a giant monster again. Okada sacrifices himself, but survives returning to human form.

#13: Hedoron Strikes Back (Part one)

w. M. Tsuji,
d. K. Tsuchiya,
m. Neo-Hedoron,
b. 3/27/71

A scientist name Dr. Ogaki transforms into the second Hedoron, a huge tentacled mushroom shaped monster. John and a girl called Renata are trapped inside a building during the monster's rampage.

#14: Hedoron Strikes Back (Part 2)

w. M. Tsuji, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Neo-Hedoron, b. 4/3/71.

Spectreman battles Neo-Hedoron II and uses his circuitry to electrocute the titanic mushroom.

#15: A Great Earthquake Levels Tokyo

w. Shoji Nemoto, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Magnetudon, b. 4/10/71.

Huge monstrous footprints in a valley turn out to be those of Dr. Gori's latest creature, Magnetudon, a beast that is part mole and part catfish. Magnetudon invades Tokyo and Kurata's wife and child are put in jeopardy.

#16: Retaliation of Magnetudon !

w. S. Nemoto, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Magnetudon, b. 4/17/71.

Spectreman battles Magnetudon on land and in water, and finally defeats him. With the beast destroyed, the Overlords somehow manage to turn back time, erasing all the events that took place.

#17: Watch the Thunder Gei- The Flying Whale !

w. Masaki Tsuji, d. Takeo Sakai, m. Thunder Gei, b. 4/24/71.

A lighthouse is attacked by a giant flying whale monster. A boy's grandfather is blinded but can sense the creature's whereabouts. He also senses Spectreman's

presence when the cyborg comes to battle the whale.

#18: Torpedo Monster Island

w. M. Tsuji, d. T. Sakai, m. Thunder Gei, b. 5/1/71.

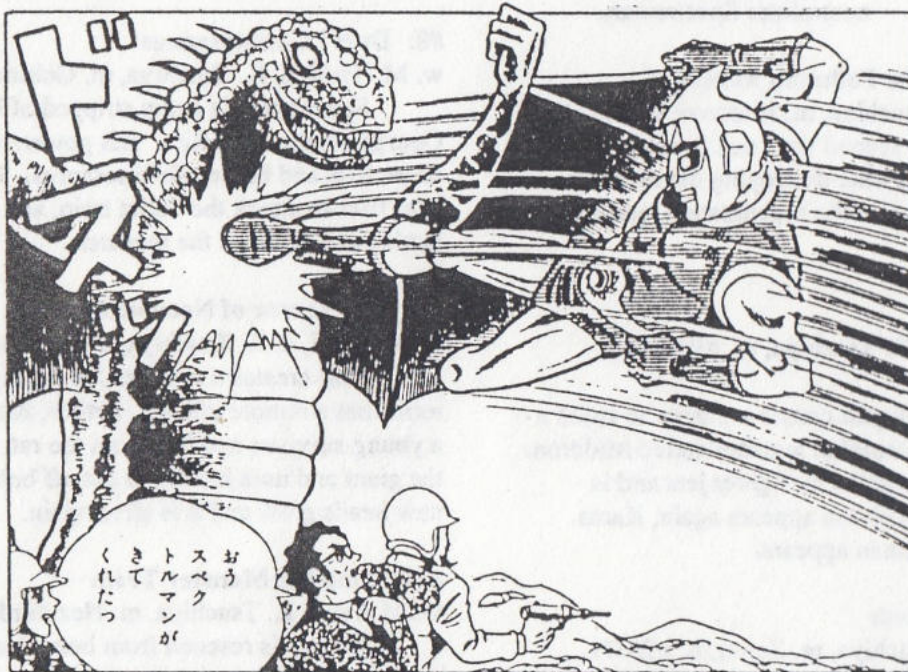
The Pollution Squad encounters another silver-suited space ape-man who tries to stop them from learning the monster's weakness. Spectreman acts as a decoy until the squad can go inside the whale's temporarily immobile body and plant explosives.

#19: Bakulah- The White Ant Monster Appears !!

w. Shoji Nemoto, d. Koichi Ishiguro, m. Bakulah, b. 5/8/71.

John and his wife buy a house in the suburbs. Unknown to them several others that have lived in the house have disappeared after being terrorized by a malevolent force. Lurking below the house is the insectoid, cyclopean monster, Bakulah.

Spectreman manga style by Shoji Ushio



#20: Find Bakulah's Nest !

w. S. Nemoto, d. K. Ishiguro, m. Bakulah, b. 5/15/71.

Spectreman battles Bakulah who can alter the path of the cyborg's shuriken in mid-flight. Eventually, the evil insect and its eggs are incinerated in a volcanic eruption.

#21: Mysterious Alien Zuno Vs. Gilagind

w. Susumu Takahisa, d. Keinnosuke

Tsuchiya, m. Alien Zuno, Gilagind, b. 5/29/71.

A spaceship piloted by an alien from Zuno crashes in the Japanese countryside. The Zuno man has the ability to inhabit and control humans. Gori captures the Zuno man, who is mostly a head with legs, to empower his new monster, Gilagind.

#22: The Violent Charge of the Duel Bladed Monster Gilagind !!

w. S. Takahisa, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Alien Zuno, Gilagind, b. 5/29/71.

Gilagind battles Spectreman, but the Zuno man causes the monster to kill himself in order that he may inhabit Spectreman. But, his attempt to enter the cosmic cyborg's body are unsuccessful. The Zuno man is killed by the shurikens and the Spectra ray.

#23: Auto Accident Monster : Karuma-Nicolas

w. Masaki Tsuji, d. Koichi Ishiguro, m. Karuma-Nicolas / Balonsaurus, b. 6/5/71.

When a young boy is struck down by a hit-and-run driver, negative energy creates Karuma, a monster with three traffic lights in his face. The creature appears and smashes a speeding car. At about the same time, a monster called Balonsaurus attacks Tokyo.

#24: Danger ! Karuman-Nicolas

w. M. Tsuji, d. K. Ishiguro, m. Balonsaurus, Karuma-Nicolas, b. 6/12/71.

The driver responsible for the boy's injuries confesses to the crime. Balon confronts Spectreman and almost defeats him, but Karuma, who is sometimes invisible, appears and aids Spectreman. After Balon's death, Karuma fades away, his vengeance satisfied.

#25: Grand Double Operation : Maglah - Satanking

w. Susumu Takahisa, d. Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, m. Maglah, Satanking, b. 6/19/71.

Gori and Karas send a new monster to Earth, this time encased in a meteorite. The crimson-colored reptilian, Satanking, ravages the area. Spectreman is very nearly defeated by the beast, who is apparently impervious to all weapons.

#26: Two Giant Monsters Battle in Tokyo

w. S. Takahisa, K. Tsuchiya, m. Maglah, Satanking, b. 6/26/71.

The reign of terror continues and it is learned that one of SatanKing's casualties was an egg of the monster Maglah. She and Satan King battle, and Spectreman is sent a special gun which he uses to kill Satanking. He must then reluctantly kill Maglah.

#27: Titanic Battle ! 7 Giant Monsters

w. Joji Nemoto / Kazuichi Tsumi, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Monster X (Silver Robo), Satanking, and others, b. 7/3/71.

Satanking inexplicably appears and battles Balon, whom he defeats. Other creatures appear, resurrected by Gori to test-fight the new Monster X (Silver Robo). Gokinosaurus, Magneton, the cyborg rat and a reptile, later to be identified as Longtooth are all bested by Silver Robo. Spectreman uses a frost ray from his head to cause Silver Robo to fall apart -- literally!

#28: Terrifying Attack of Salamandar

w. Masaki Tsuji, d. Hiromi Higuchi, m. Salamandar, b. 7/10/71.

After the disappearance of a hunter, a village is attacked by a giant fire-breathing monster with a long tongue. The beast, supposedly a giant salamander, battles Spectreman and fuses his face, thus blinding him.

#29: Kill the Evil Monster Salamandar

w. M. Tsuji, d. H. Higuchi, m. Salamandar, b. 7/17/71

Although he is blind, Spectreman battles the monster and his sight eventually returns. Spectreman disables the creature's long tongue and kills him.

#30: Monster Tag Match- Terror on Land

w. M. Tsuji, d. H. Higuchi, m. Zariganid, Spincobra, b. 7/24/71.

A lighthouse is attacked by a giant crab-like monster and a walking mass of seaweed with a pumpkin-like head. The crab has laid a number of eggs in the area. The Pollution Squad tries to gather all the eggs.

#31: Protect that Lighthouse !

w. M. Tsuji, d. H. Higuchi, m. Zariganid, Spincobra, b. 7/31/71.

Inner quarrels within the lighthouse break out among those imprisoned because of the monsters'

onslaught. Spectreman later uses his ray to kill both monsters while they are underwater.

#32: The Three Headed Dragon Rises Again

w. M. Tsuji, d. Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, m. Three Headed Dragon (Mitsuzu-Ryu), b. 8/7/71.

Gori uses a prehistoric three-headed dragon in his attempt to conquer Earth. The beast destroys an oil refinery and uses its vacuum-like tail to store oil.

#33: S.O.S. !! Undersea Oil Field

w. M. Tsuji, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Mitsuzu-Ryu, b. 8/14/71.

Spectreman battles and kills the triple threat monstrosity during the raging refinery fire.

#34: The Fury of Moon Thunder

w. Shoji Nemoto, d. Hiromi Higuchi, m. Moon Thunder, b. 8/21/71.

A huge, flying reptile sleeping on the moon awakens and then follows the Apollo astronauts back to Earth. His head discharge explodes the command module ("Houston, we have a problem.."). The lunar rocks gathered by the astronauts were actually eggs.

#35: Spectreman is Dead !?

w. S. Nemoto, d. Hiromi Higuchi, m. Moon Thunder, b. 8/28/71.

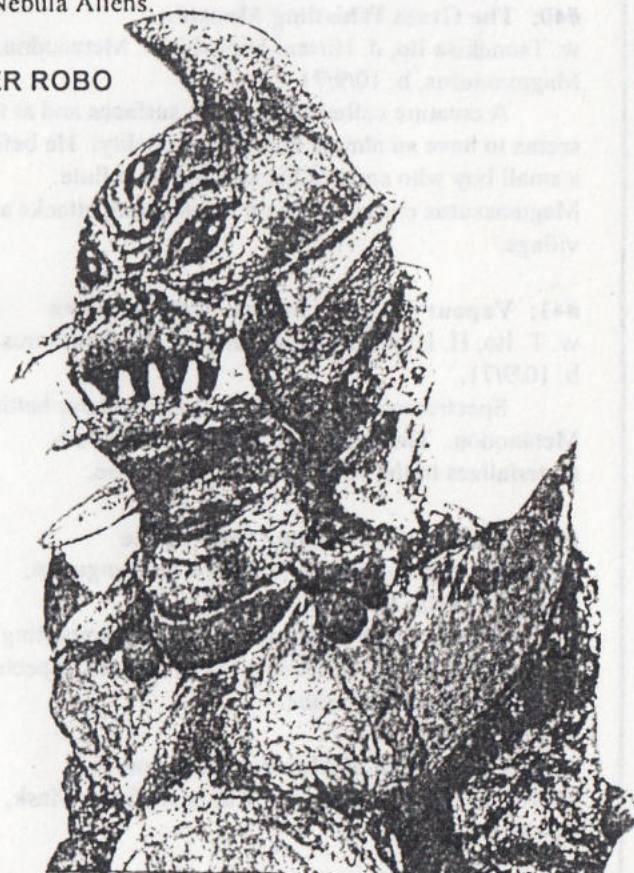
When Spectreman learns the true nature of the moon beasts appearance, he is reluctant to kill it. George is believed to have been killed during a volcanic eruption. The eggs hatch and the creature's offspring fly off into space.

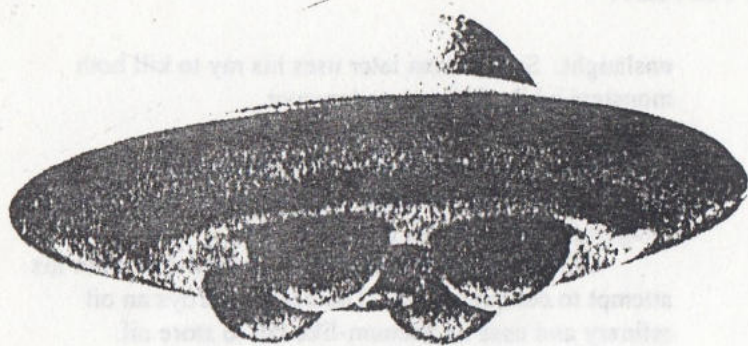
#36: Duel to the Death ! G-Men vs. Monster Vegaron

w. Susumu Takahisa, d. Koichi Ishiguro, m. Vegaron, Nebula Aliens, b. 9/4/71.

The Pollution Squad is issued some equipment in its battle against unknown forces. Gori and Karas unleash the monster called Vegaron. Sally is captured by the Nebula Aliens.

SILVER ROBO





#37: Operation : Destroy Gori's Saucer Base

w. S. Takahisa, d. K. Ishiguro, m. Vegaron, Minus Humans, b. 9/11/71

Spectreman triumphs over Vegaron and Gori's subterranean base is blown up, along with his flying saucer and artificial men. The squad is overjoyed to discover that George is still alive.

#38: Sphinx - Move Forward

w. M. Tsuji, d. Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, m. Sphinx, Spider Monster, Egyptian Mutant, b. 9/18/71.



Gori steals the Sphinx from Egypt and somehow instills it with life. The Sphinx and Spectreman do battle.

#39: Operation : Break into the Monster Zone

w. M. Tsuji, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Spider Monster, Egyptian Mutant, b. 10/2/71.

The Sphinx is transformed into a spider which entangles the cybernetic hero in its web.

Concurrently, a mummy rises. Guess who wins in the end?

#40: The Grass Whistling Monster

w. Tsunehisa Ito, d. Hiromi Higuchi, m. Metanodon, Magmasaurus, b. 10/9/71.

A creature called Metanodon surfaces and at times seems to have an almost human personality. He befriends a small boy who soothes his agony with a flute. Magmasaurus emerges from a volcano and attacks a village.

#41: Vapour Monster Brings Death at Dawn

w. T. Ito, H. Higuchi, m. Metanodon, Magmasaurus, b. 10/9/71.

Spectreman kills Magmasaurus and later battles Metanodon. The creature is killed and then dematerializes to the sound of the boy's music.

#42: Solar Mask has come from Space

w. T. Ito, d. Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, m. Tengudon, Kabagon, Solar Mask, b. 10/16/71

An alien possesses several children imparting them the power to transform people into monsters. Spectreman defeats a beast from space.

#43: The Arrival of Monster Kabagon !!

w. T. Ito, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Kabagon, Solar Mask, b. 10/23/71.

The children turn their teacher into a huge, hippo-like monster who fights Spectreman. The man later reverts to normal.

#44: Alien Kyudora - Cosmic Plunderer

w. Susumu Takahisa, d. Koichi Ishiguro, m. Alien Kyudora, Alien Pal, b. 10/30/71

George receives a hostile visit from a law officer from the planet Palu. The alien is in search of an escaped space vampire named Kyudora, who has been attacking girls. Spectreman battles the fiend, who releases a swarm of bats.

#45: Alien Pal Forever

w. S. Takahisa, d. K. Ishiguro, m. Alien Kyudora, Alien Pal, b. 11/6/71.

Kyudora kills the Palu alien and increases his own size. He invokes the powers of darkness to strengthen him as he and Spectreman battle once again. The space vampire is impaled and then decomposes. George gives his friend the Palu alien a burial on Earth.

#46: An Invitation from the Dead

w. Haruya Yamazaki, d. Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, m. Alien Gama, Toad Monster, b. 11/13/71

George, Kim, and Arthur go to the country to visit Arthur's folks. But strange things are happening at a nearby pond. Aliens have taken over the village. The aliens are the Gamma Toad-men who are aiding Dr. Gori.

#47: Alien Gama Commence Attack !!

w. H. Yamazaki, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Alien Gama, Toad Monster, b. 11/20/71.

The Gamma toad men enter a cauldron and merge into a huge bipedal toad monster. The Pollution Squad uses special equipment to detect the disguised aliens. Arthur uses a laser gun to kill a number of aliens. Spectreman battles and defeats the monster.

#48: Bobby Don't Become a Monster !!

w. H. Yamazaki, d. Hiromi Higuchi, m. Alien monster Noman, b. 11/27/71

A scientist is captured by Dr. Gori. This same doctor performs an operation on a mentally retarded young man in order to cure his retardation. The young man's little dog is turned into a rampaging monster whom Spectreman must kill.

#49: Genius Monster : Noman

w. H. Yamazaki, d. H. Higuchi, m. Alien Monster Noman, b. 12/4/71.

The young man undergoes changes in his psyche, including an inordinate craving for raw meat. He becomes a hideous creature who assaults others in order to consume their brains. Finally one stormy night, he becomes a giant bent on destruction.



#50: Smash Alien Igorl!

w. Masaki Tsuji, d. Koichi Ishiguro, m. Blackdragon, Alien Igorl, fake Spectreman, b. 12/11/71.

The Igorl uchujin takeover a village and a survivor, a boy, seeks safety. George is injured and unable to fight the invading monster from Igoria. Suddenly, a replica of Spectreman appears to battle the monster.

#51: Enigma of the Cobalt Monster

w. M. Tsuji, d. K. Ishiguro, m. Blackdragon, Alien Igorl, fake Spectreman, b. 12/18/71.

Spectreman defeats his evil twin who was constructed by the Igorlians and/or Dr.Gori. Igorl is killed but there is a bomb in its head. The villagers are free from the alien bondage.

#52: Operation : Capture Mound Dragon

w. Susumu Takahisa, d. Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, m. Mound Dragon, Birdman (chojin), b. 12/25/71.

A reptile called Moundragon is captured and transported to a lab. En route, a vulture-like alien revives the beast, which has swallowed Otto. Spectreman freezes the creature and rescues Otto.



Desiteman battles Spectreman

#53: The Iron Claws of Horror

w. Tsunehisa Ito, d. Koichi Ishiguro, m. Computer Monster, Weed Humanoids, Colossal Weed Humanoid, b. 1/1/72

The Weed Humanoids attack and terrorize a village. Spectreman is struck on the head by an appendage of their spaceship, from which issues a pink-colored mist. George gets amnesia.

#54: Pulverize the Computer Monster !

w. T. Ito, d. K. Ishiguro, m. Weed Humanoids, Computer Monster, Colossal Weed Humanoid, b. 1/8/72.

George regains his memory, kills the monster, and informs the alien queen that their planet had been destroyed some time earlier by a collision with a comet. Before destroying themselves the aliens perform a kind deed -- a little blind girl receives her sight.

#55: Order : Assassinate Spectreman

w. Haruya Yamazaki, d. Yasuharu Hasebe, m. Alien Killar, Murderah Triplets, Comet Mask, b. 1/15/71.

Gori sends the Murderah Triplets to kill his cybernetic nemesis. But, there is another alien present called Comet Mask. A young boy escapes the destruction of his village at the hands of the Murderah Triplets, and is befriended by Comet Mask.

#56: Cosmic Murder- Comet Mask

w. H. Yamazaki, d. Y. Hasebe, same as #55, b. 1/22/72.

Comet Mask, who is a type of cosmic cowboy, slays the Murderah Triplets. Later, he challenges Spectreman to a duel.

#57: Resurrection of Great Satan

w. Susumu Takahisa, d. Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, m. Great Satan, Alien Satan, Gorda, b. 1/29/72.

A young man is in love with a strange girl who turns out to be Mephista, the queen of a force of invading aliens.

#58: Gorda the Phantom Monster

w. S. Takahisa, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. same as 57, b. 2/5/72.

Mephista forms an alliance with Gori and unleashes the alien monster Gorda. The monster is bested and the queen is killed in a fall. At the point of death, she seems to feel love for the young man, who has also been killed in the same fall.

#59: Alien Genos - The Messenger of Hell

w. S. Takahisa, d. Hiromi Higuchi, m. Dokuron, Alien Genos, b. 2/26/72.

A young boy with psychic abilities predicts danger, but no one takes him seriously. The Genos alien kills Karas but revives him and implements a similar plan on criminals. He and Gori plan to use the dead gangsters to start a crime wave.

#60: The Dance of the Monster Dokuron

w. S. Takahisa, d. H. Higuchi, m. same as #59, b. 3/4/72.

George is captured and tortured. The psychic boy dies at the hand of the aliens. The Genos alien and Gori's new monster called Dokuron are destroyed.

#61: The Terrifying Monster Show

w. Tsunehisa Ito, d. Kanya Otsuka, m. Kitoto, Alien Migerl (Gamuro), b. 3/11/72.

An amusement park is taken over by the Migerlians. They turn a young boy into a chicken-like creature. In exchange for the boy's restoration, Spectreman allows Karas to go free.

#62: It's Gori's Final Death Match

w. Haruya Yamazaki, d. Keinnosuke Tsuchiya, m. Desiteman, Moguz, b. 3/18/72.

Gori captures a boxer with the help of robot-like agents. He programs the boxer's impulses into his latest creation, Desiteman. The boxer is found dead. Spectreman battles Moguz.

#63: Goodbye Spectreman

w. H. Yamazaki, d. K. Tsuchiya, m. Desiteman, b. 3/25/72.

Desiteman is killed in one of Spectreman's more brief encounters. Gori and Karas challenge the cyborg to an ultimate showdown. Spectreman battles Karas, finally killing him in an explosion. Gori delivers a soliloquy and jumps from a cliff at the same time blowing himself up. Spectreman is taken into the sky by the Overlords, and the Pollution Squad learns his human identity at last.

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ZINE PLUGS



I recently received the latest issue of Colin Geddes' "Occidental Tourist's Guide To Oriental Pop Culture", **ASIAN EYE**, and if you're not already reading this terrific zine you should be! I was

already impressed with Colin's debut issue which I think came out over a year ago, and the tradition of quality continues. This issue features an exclusive interview with the great **Jackie Chan** (whom I had the opportunity to meet out in Los Angeles this past Summer) that makes it abundantly clear that Jackie is a superstar that is fully in control of his own fate. The main feature in this issue is Colin's own in depth examination of the Gyonshi (vampire) genre in HK films. This issue also features coverage of the Toronto Film Fest, as well as a multitude of reviews (mainly HK films) by writers including **Martin Wong** and even the infamous **Garro Nigoghissian**. **ASIAN EYE** is very professional looking in the small press style, at 94 pages, with many original illustrations, as well as film stills. This is worth checking out if you have any interest in HK films, and Colin promises more coverage of Japanese films will appear in future issues. Send \$5. U.S. plus \$2 to cover postage to **ASIAN EYE**, 253 College St. #108, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 1R5, Canada. No checks, send cash or money orders made out to Colin Geddes.

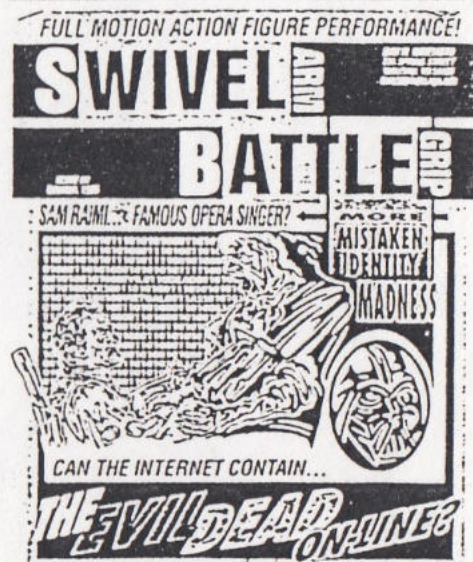


REJECTED TRI-STAR GODZILLA STORY IDEAS - TAKE ONE

Art by Chris Bradley

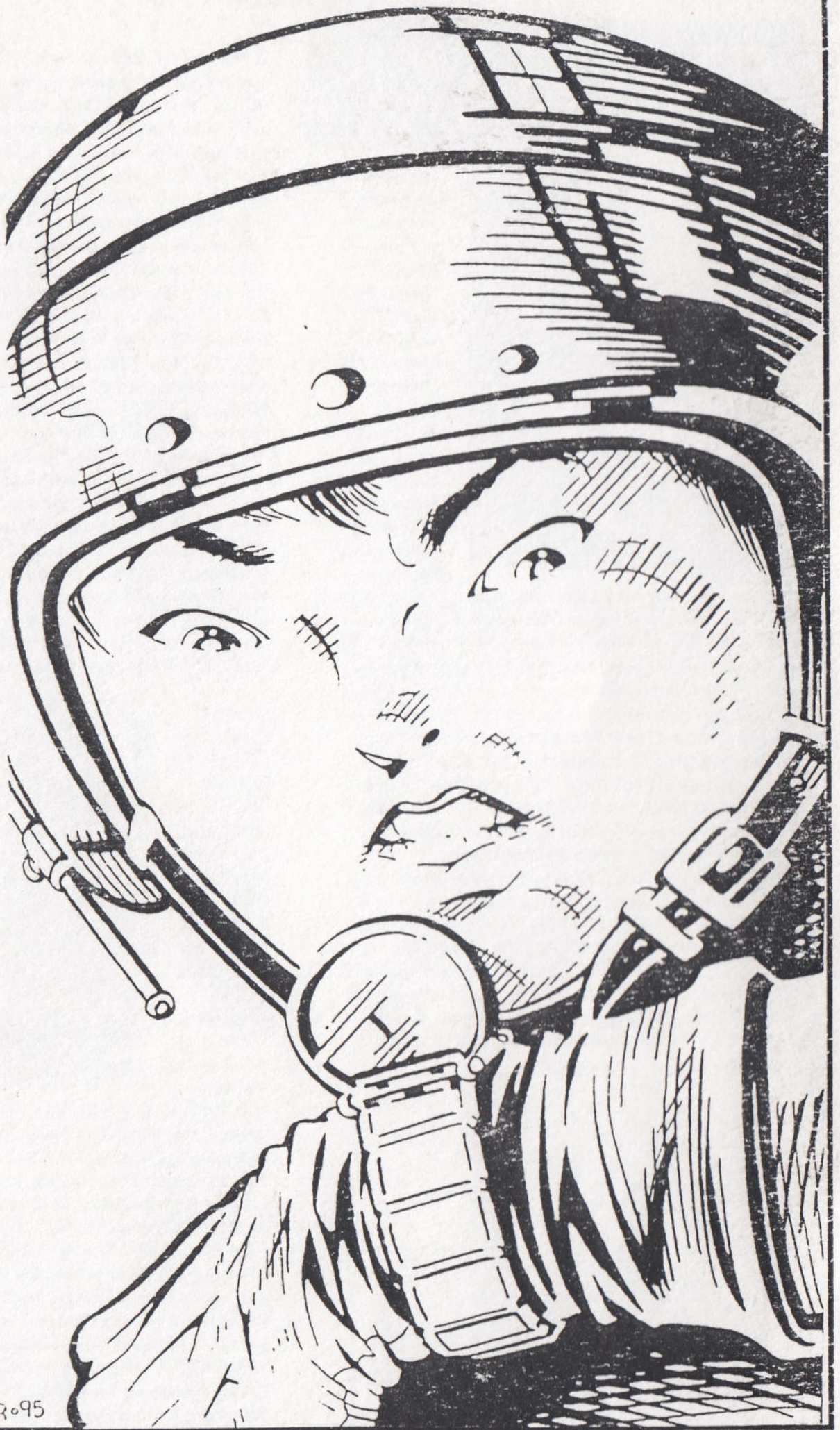
You Godzilla fans out there who just can't get enough to read are advised to check out the new **VIDEO WATCHDOG SPECIAL EDITION (#2)**. About half of the 178 page issue is devoted to a celebration of Godzilla's 40th Anniversary. Editor **Tim Lucas** has provided his readers with the most comprehensive examination I've seen of the deluxe Toho laser disc collections relating to Godzilla films, as well as information on the many videotape versions of these films that are in circulation. **August Ragone** also appears in this issue with an article that explores (in greater detail than we've seen anywhere else) the background and differences between Toho's **KING KONG VS. GODZILLA** and the lame Universal cut. **Shane Dallmann** contributes reports on the **TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA** that might have been, and on the various cuts of **GOJIRA 84** that were created. This issue also features a long list of sources for tapes, CDs, and laser discs, that any fan will find invaluable. The cover leaves a bit to be desired since it features actor **Udo Kier** (who has already appeared on a recent **VW** cover) rather than Godzilla. Kier is the subject of a lengthy interview and filmography that also appears in this Special Edition version of one of my personal all time favorite publications (film related). Check out your local newsstands, or call 1-800-275-8395 for more information. \$8.95 174 pages, digest, pro format.

Over the Summer I received the first four issues of an interesting zine called **SWIVEL ARM BATTLE GRIP**, that is produced by **Dan Kanemoto**. While ostensibly devoted to



Sam Rami films (**EVIL DEAD** in particular) and actor **Bruce Campbell**, this is really more of a personal zine about Dan's perceptions of life as seen through the eyes of a hard core fan. It is very well written and engaging. Of special note is the article in issue #2 on "How to beat people with their own limbs", this issue also features a piece called "My **STAR WARS**' toys" that I'm sure many other fans will relate to. In issue #3 we get to read about Dan's adventures in Europe (including leaving his mark on the Eiffel Tower's restroom). Each issue also contains several examples of Dan's unique artwork, which features **STAR WARS** icons along with the expected **EVIL DEAD** characters, and which look like woodcuts or something, really excellent. I thoroughly enjoyed reading **SWIVEL ARM BATTLE GRIP** and hope that a few of **K.R.**'s readers might take the time to check out this very unique publication. Send Dan a couple of bucks to cover postage (each issue runs about 14 1/2 by 11 pages) to 726 Spring Street, Wausau, WI 54403. You'll be glad that you did.

G I A N T R O B O



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