

ANIMATION PLANET

Covering The World Of Animation

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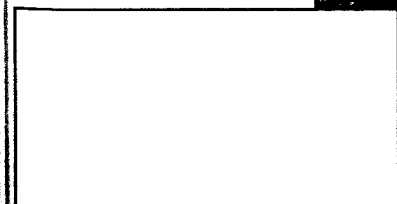
Bill Plympton

Talks about his two new
wild features

• Voice Actor
Supreme
Frank Welker

• So You Want
to be an Animator?
Steve Hullet of the
Cartoonist's Union
Gives You a Look

Fall 1997



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About the Cover:

Bill Plympton generously supplied this self-portrait, an image from his poster for his new feature film, Mondo Plympton.

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viewers. However, there is so much virtue in this film, it certainly deserves a good look.

The director, screenplay writer, and concept artist for *Laputa* is Hayao Miyazaki, one of the finest men to enter the animation field. Of all the films of his I have seen (and I have seen most of them), this one is the most ambitious and solid. The story elements are all handled with great care to give the audience a very satisfying conclusion to the viewing experience. And it is a wonderful viewing experience! Set in sort of an alternate pre-World War I backdrop, *Laputa* displays wonderfully conceived technology, beautifully executed layouts and backgrounds, and animation that certainly rivals anything done by Disney artists. The animation itself is not always as fluid as a Disney film, but I have never judged animation by how many "in-betweens" were inserted between the key frames. *Laputa - Castle in the Sky* is in so many ways an animation masterpiece, and it certainly belongs up there among the very best.

Will Walt Disney Pictures be able to sell *Laputa* to a very discriminating American audience? Only time will tell. Perhaps if some people could somehow forget that it is Japanese (in sort of the fashion they do when they purchase a Honda automobile or Mitsubishi television set), and just watch it for the pure enjoyment and pleasure of watching a good film, then films like this could be accepted. Hayao Miyazaki's films are treasured all over the world, and it would be a shame if the people of North America turned away from them, simply because of some ethnic, aesthetic, or cultural bias. **John Beam**

Macross Plus The Movie

Manga Video Release

Color, VHS Hi-Fi Stereo, 115 minutes

Contains violence, partial nudity, and adult situations

As far back as the mid-Fifties, the Japanese have thrilled to the exploits of stories with futuristic settings, where heroic pilots or dutiful robots battled against giant monsters or alien threats. One of the best examples of these never-ending series is *Macross*, which began as a television program back around 1982 (televised in the US as part of the *Robotech* saga). Since its initial television run, *Macross* has spawned at least one other television sequel, two OVA (direct-to-video) releases, and two movies. Well, to be honest, the second movie is actually a compilation of the second OVA series (*Macross Plus*); however, since there are a few new scenes which link the episodes so they run together with some fluidity, it sort of qualifies as an entry in its own right.

This particular spin-off of *Macross Plus* deals primarily with three characters: Guld, a

Zentraedi descendent, who is a top test pilot for a new fighter project, Isamu, a human pilot who is a rival to Guld for the new test project, and Myung, who is linked to both characters romantically. The production's other key plot point regards a new mind-controlled computer system which is the same system in Guld's YF-19 fighter. As with all *Macross* stories, there is a musically-inclined character to bring across an inspired soundtrack. However, the music from the *Macross* series is also always a significant part of the story, and in *Macross Plus the Movie*, it is no exception.

Myung, who once enjoyed a professional singing career, is now the "manager" for an artificial intelligence performer named "Sharon Apple." Myung actually connects with the computer system during Sharon's performances, and in a way, allows Sharon to act for her. However, the system running Sharon is being rigged by people who envision "her" as more than entertainment for the masses, and eventually, Sharon becomes an autonomous creature bent on conquest. To combat this threat, Guld and Isamu must put aside their petty differences, and join forces to stop Sharon from confiscating the giant *Macross* craft itself.

For the most part, this tale is a sordid soap opera-like love triangle between the principal characters. I think the story gets rather muddled with the plot, but the real reason to get *Macross Plus the Movie* is the outstanding action sequences. While this is termed a "movie", it is for the most part a pieced-together four-part series. The animation, though, is feature quality. In fact, the aerial sequences are some of the most exciting pieces of animation I've ever seen. Original *Macross* director Shoji Kawamori creates an all new anime experience with *Macross Plus*, and animation director Yuji Moriyama (*Project A-ko*, *Wings of Honneamise*) shows he is still one of the best in the business.

On the downside, several cool sequences were deleted from the four-part *Macross Plus* series, and the movie is more character-oriented. Also, with the compilation of this series into a one-tape format, events become a bit confusing, especially regarding the rivalry between Isamu and Guld. However, I can make an exception for a film that is so incredibly well produced. Between the outstanding action and music, *Macross Plus the Movie* is a definite find. Recommended even for owners of the *Macross Plus* series.

John Beam

The Guyver

BioBooster: Terminal Battle, Fall of Chronos

US Renditions

From the opening scene of good-guy

Tetzuro's whispered confession of failure to the touching reunion of Sho (a.k.a. Guyver One, the super-powered protagonist) and his high-maintenance girlfriend, this film stews in mediocrity. Pity that, for the *Guyver* series sparks with an interesting and potentially commercially appealing storyline of human beings as "mere progenitors" of the monstrous Zolenoid species who are the true inheritors of the Earth. This concept could have been magnified to explore the universal mystery of the monstrosity of human behavior. All humans carry the seed which waits patiently to be nurtured to its disastrous fruition.

This production, however, merely plods along in its swill of bad acting, bad animation, and bad haircuts. If by some misfortune you come to possess this waste of perfectly good advertising money, prepare yourself for plenty of flopping limbs, crushed craniums, and juvenile splashes of blood peppered with dialogue consisting of agonized shouts of "You bastard," by the bad guys.

Though the animators have done an admirable job of rendering the oppressive and excessive form of the Zolenoid hulking brute, the protagonist and enemy-turned-ally in their biological boosting armor are both unimpressive and vaguely comical with the ridiculous names of their armor's arsenal. A word to the wise—caveat emptor! **Brenda Ainsburg**

Neon Genesis Evangelion: Genesis 0:4

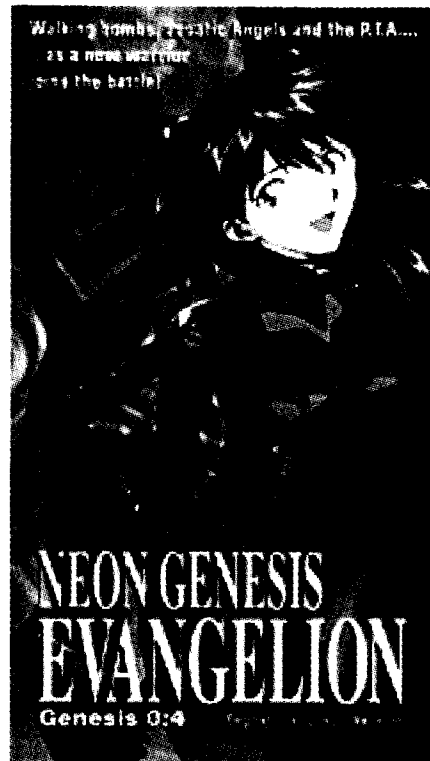
A. D. V. Films Release, VHSEV/004S

Subtitled, Color, VHS Hi-Fi Surround, 60 minutes

Contains violence, partial nudity, and adult situations

In Japan, one of the clearest signs that an animated film or series has really hit the big time is when professional and amateur "dojinshi" (underground comics which lampoon other popular comics or animation, often in rather sexually explicit form) come out with different versions of it. Being someone who tries to keep up on everything going on in Japanese pop-culture, I can say without a doubt that the only anime I've seen which has been "hit" more often than *Neon Genesis Evangelion* is *Sailor Moon*, but it's pretty close. *Evangelion*, a 26-episode series, has long run its course on the Japanese airwaves, but last time I checked, it was still being rerun and it's also still one of the most watched shows running.

As such, it is making a fairly good showing among fans in the United States, although very few people here actually know what's going on with it, because it is very complicated and involves some rather unfamiliar religious and philosophic underpinnings. Some of the story's plot structure is based upon the esoteric teachings



from the Cabala, as well as the Christian Bible and Jewish Torah (The "Tree of Life" motif which is seen often in this series is taken from the Cabala). Even in Japan, fans of this program have found themselves scratching their heads at times, wondering what is going on and why things often happen the way they do. However, regardless of the complexity and sometimes bewildering elements of *Evangelion*, it remains as one of the most popular and finest anime programs ever produced.

In volume 4 of ADV Films' release of *Evangelion*, mankind continue its fight to rid the world of "Angels," hideous monsters who threaten to destroy us all. In episode 7, "The Human Creation," corporations and politicians attempt to build their own robot weapons to replace the Evangelion as humanity's hope against the Angels and their absolute terror fields. Apparently, the expenditures to run the NERV operation has prompted these cost-sensitive types to find an alternative weapon which can run far longer than the Eva, but will also be less apt to go berserk, as the Eva had done. However, the "JA" does exactly what it wasn't supposed to do, and it runs out of control with its nuclear core nearing the point of a meltdown. Now, Misato Katsuragi and the young Eva pilot Shinji Ikari must stop the JA before it blows up, killing millions of people as a result.

In episode 8, *Asuka Strikes!*, "Second Child", Asuka Langly takes charge of the Unit 02, but bites off more than she can chew when an enormous Angel threatens to destroy the

new Eva, as well as an entire UN fleet. She realizes before too long that the job cannot be done by herself, and Shinji's talents must also be called upon. NERV also learns from this encounter that the Evangelion program must make mankind safe from Angels beneath the waves as well as on land, something which had not been counted on.

There are a lot of things about *Evangelion* which I do not know about, but even some of the things I know are a mystery (like the "Second Impact" which destroyed much of mankind when an Angel self-destructed on the North Pole, melting the icecap fifteen years prior to the events occurring in these episodes). I have not been given any indication of what the "First Impact" was, and even people who have seen this series all the way through are wondering about this. Also, the Evas themselves are still a mystery to me. Their outer shells have been constructed by human hands, but what are they really? From all indications, they are actually alive, and may possibly be the result of a genetic program which is the reason the Angels have appeared in the first place.

In spite of all the speculation regarding the mysteries of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, it certainly stands well enough with its outstanding characterizations, animation, and dramatic presentation. Thus far, the Angel threat has been rather mild. However, I have the feeling things are going to get very hairy before it's all over. I'll be following this series to the very end, and I hope readers of this will follow along with me. Highly Recommended.

John Beam

Ushio & Tora Volume One
A. D. Vision Films Release
Color, 60 Minutes, hi-fi, Surround
Contains Graphic Violence

This particular tale is about a young man named Ushio Aotsuki who is descended from a long line of priests who have cared for his family's temple. According to legend, one of Ushio's ancestors trapped a terrible demon by impaling it on the end of his spear, and at the same time, implanting the spear point into a large stone. Having captured the monster, he erected the Aotsuki Family temple over the monster, where it has been imprisoned for 500 years. Well, all this hokum is just that to Ushio, and he is rather tired of all the nonsense surrounding his family history, and he just wants to be a normal teenager.

Things change when he stumbles upon a basement where he finds the monster. The monster implores Ushio to release him, even though he would immediately eat him once free. Ushio insures the spear is secure, and then re-locks the basement door. However, by merely upsetting what had been for 500 years, Ushio has allowed the monster to summon other evil spirits, and they threaten not only his life, but the lives of his entire community. Now, he is forced to deal with the monster directly, and Ushio releases him by withdrawing the spear.

The monster believes he can take quick advantage of Ushio's youth and inexperience, but finds that Ushio isn't what he seems to be. Upon taking the spear in his hand, Ushio transforms into the image of the ancestor who imprisoned the monster in the first place, scaring the wits out of him. Now, Ushio (or rather his alter-ego) takes charge of the

