



JET GRIND RADIO MEETS INITIAL D

AIR GEAR - VOL. 1 (EAST SIDE SHOWDOWN)

4 episodes, 100 minutes, Rated TV MA SL, ADV Films, Release Date: February 6, 2007

If you enjoy the thrill of racing competition-based anime such as "Initial D" and enjoy the world and characters of the popular Sega Dreamcast and XBOX video game "Jet Grind Radio", you will definitely find "AIR GEAR" to your liking.

"AIR GEAR" takes place in a world where Storm Riders are known for their motor-powered inline skates called Air Treck's (AT).

Many thrillseekers join groups or

gangs in order compete and be on top of this dangerous (and illegal) extreme sport.

The storyline revolves around Ikki Minami. A guy who lives with the Noyama sisters who are also part of their own racing group.

Needless to say that because he is more or less a freeloader (who tends to get himself into trouble) at their home, the sisters look down on him. With the exception of Ringo, who is closer to Ikki.

In the first episode, Ikki gets into trouble by taking one of the sister's AT's and starts experimenting with them.

You start to learn that although Ikki is a beginner, he has a talent riding the

AT's.

So, talented that he manages to do things that he and others can't comprehend during a race.

Ikki has a talent to fly. A phenomenon to the Storm Riders that very few are gifted with this ability. But for Ikki, he doesn't know much about this talent but with each episode he learns about the world of the Storm Rider.

Because he is naive to the sport and his crush on Shimuka, a beautiful and talented Storm Rider leads him to trouble.

Fortunately, with the support of his friends (aka his own startup Storm Riders team). hopefully Ikki's dream to climb to the top as a Storm Rider may come true.

The first four episodes are fantastic and full of energy and excitement that I just wanted to see more.

You can't help but root for Ikki, the underdog (with unknown talent) as he takes on the various Storm Rider gangs.

The vocal talent for both the English dub and the Japanese version are awesome. But I will say that "AIR GEAR" ala English dub does feature it's share of adult language. So, definitely not an anime to watch with the kids.

Also, with the first episode, it is a bit ecchi, with scenes of the sisters nude as they shower. But nudity is not used on every episode, nor does it detract from the pacing of the series.

I found the animation to be very cool. Because the races take place in so many areas, definitely a lot of work was involved to create settings for this anime series.

As for special features, you get the opening and closing ending. The opening theme "CHAIN" by rock band BACK-ON is awesome.

So, in conclusion, I highly recommend the first volume of this series. I like the competition aspect with the multiple groups/gangs, the use of motorized inline skating and including technical aspects that the Storm Riders need to complete ala "Parts War" and the characters are numerous but yet very interesting and fun to watch.

"AIR GEAR" definitely rocks!

A — DENNIS A. AMITH