

# TRY THESE **Amazing Nuts!**



## THE RESULT OF COMBINING POPULAR MUSIC WITH AWESOME ANIMATION

### AMAZING NUTS! DVD BOX SET

Region 2, 16:9, 37 minutes (DVD 1)/40 minutes (DVD 2). Released on December 20, 2006

As the entertainment company Avex is known for the music industry, they have their sites set on various areas of entertainment such as film and definitely in the area of animation.

One of the most ambitious projects is "Amazing Nuts!", featuring a joint collaboration between Avex Entertainment Inc. (who now has an anime division for anime distribution) and well-respected Japanese animation studio, STUDIO4°C.

From Avex, featured is music from

rhythm zone artists m-flo (ala m-flo loves DOPING PANDA), RAM RIDER, Koda Kumi and Mink).

STUDIO4°C who has worked on critically acclaimed animated films such as "MEMORIES", "Spriggan", "Princess Arete" and "Mind Game" and most notably to "Matrix" fans for "The Animatrix".

Even Japanese music fans may recognize their work from the music videos such as Glay's "Survival" and Hamasaki Ayumi's "Connected".

And this is just to name a few as the studio has created works for television and video games as well.

But to know STUDIO4°C, you need to go back to the founders Morimoto Koji, Tanaka Eiko and Sato Yoshiharu.

Morimoto Koji is known for his work that are frenetic and bizarre and has set himself apart other animators with his unique approach to animation, thus he is considered one of Japan's top animators.

Morimoto is known for working on Otomo Katsuhiro's "AKIRA" and also animation directorial works for the "Franken Gear's" segment on "Robot Carnival", "MEMORIES" and many more.

His animated film works include

animation such as "Tomorrow's Joe", "Golgo 13", "The Super Dimension Fortress Macross: Do you Remember Love?", "Kiki's Delivery Service" and "Macross Plus" to name a few.

Musically, Utada Hikaru fans will recognize his work on the music videos for "EXODUS" and "passion".

The trio have produced a wide variety of work since 1986 and nearly twenty years later, have shown no signs of slowing down.

So, here we are with "Amazing Nuts!", a 37 minute anthology which contains around four distinctive shorts that last about 7-8 minutes long.

The big positive is the studio is being given the freedom to create something different and new without having it to be based on an original manga.

According to producer, Tanaka Eiko, their goal was to create shorts that could be a music video, a pilot to future anime projects and a standalone DVD release.

The first short is titled "Global Astro Liner" which is directed by Nakayama Daisuke (who also provides the character designs).

Nakayama's previous works include "Blood: the Last Vampire" and "Ghost in the Shell" films. "Princess Mononoke" and "Shin Megami Tensei Devil Children" and "Maho Shoujo Tai Arusu" TV series.

The music featured is "She loves the Cream -Amazing Nuts! Ver.-" by m-flo loves DOPING PANDA. Combining the hip hop and R&B sound of m-flo and the frenetic rock and digital sounds of DOPING PANDA, the animation and the music balance each other well.

"Global Astro Liner" has the feel of a futuristic police or headhunter team taking down underworld thugs in the future.

The film is definitely futuristic, urban, gritty, frenetic, of a metropolitan city rift with chaos and you are fed with many scenes of multiple teams of bad guys and scenes that looks like it comes from an actual series.

Obviously an anime short that shows that it can be a potential animated series if given the chance to.

The second anime short is titled "Glass Eyes" directed by Yamashita Takashi with character designs by Morimoto Koji.

The music for this short is titled "Smile Again" by digital music artist



avex  
group

avex+STUDIO4°C

PHOTO: "Tatoeba Kimi ga Sekaijyu no Teki ni Nattemo" aka "KUNG-FU LOVE" characters designed by Aoki Yasuhiro. Photo courtesy of avex+STUDIO4°C

RAM RIDER known for his experimentation with 8 bit sound and digital music.

"Glass Eyes" is Yamashita's first animated project as a director. Hired because of his script and a story about a guy who has dreams or images of apocalypse.

And throughout these dark scenes in his mind is a woman who looks like she's in a brink of death. Is he supposed to save her?

The animation is so beautiful as it shows love and destruction. This short was hands down, my favorite short of the whole anthology.

Different animation styles with interest dark imagery that was just too awesome that you just craved for more. A wonderful balance between CG and animation.

I felt that RAM RIDER's music also showed an interesting balance with his music and the animation.

The third animation is titled "Tatoeba Kimi ga Sekaijyu no Teki ni Nattemo" (Even if you were to become

the enemy to the rest of the world) aka "Kung-Fu Love" which is directed by Aoki Yasuhiro and also the person responsible for the character designs.

The music featured in this short is titled "Twinkle" by Koda Kumi.

Definitely a no brainer to include Japan's top selling music artist of 2006 in this Avex project (which is the label Koda is from).

"Kung-Fu Love" features a fighter who takes on other opponents and also finds love.

Suffice to say that compared to the other two shorts which were gritty and dark, this short is actually very colorful, and different animation wise from the previous two.

Also, as the music found a good balance in the first two shorts, "Twinkle" is more of a pop song that tries to feature Koda Kumi's bubbly personality with the main character. Even the main character sports the Koda Kumi eyes when shown close-up.

I actually enjoyed the animation style

and use of lighting for "Kung-Fu Love". Although simple drawn characters, the actual city that the characters live in are lush and is beautifully created.

Aoki who's previous roles as key animator for the "Sailor Moon" films, "You're Under Arrest" TV episodes and director for the Mahou Shojou Tai Arusu TV Series (again, just to name a few) utilizes the fighting action scenes very well.

Aoki used between 6,000-7,000 drawings for this 10 minute short which is five times the volume for a TV series.

Similar to the first short, "Kung-Fu Love" shows many scenes that could become a TV series or a film if ever given a chance.

The fourth and final short on the anthology is "Joe and Marilyn".

This time a 3D animated film directed by 4°Fahrenheit with character designs by Ishida Takafumi.

The music featured in this short is "Here by my side" sung by Mink. Mink is an English and Japanese speaking artist that has made it to the top on the billboard Dance Charts in the US.

The story of "Joe and Marilyn" revolves around a love story between the two characters.

Marilyn is a performer and is shown singing in front of many people until trouble finds itself into a venue that Marilyn is performing at. Unfortunately, Joe somehow gets involved in the trouble and I don't want to spoil the rest for you.

Some may look at the animation with the thick hair and think this is 3D from several years ago but it really isn't.

Needless to say that Mink's ballad works with the short very well but compared to the other three shorts, it does seem out of place. But then again, the nature of this anthology was to have something different.

As for the DVD release, there are several versions released.

The limited edition DVD box set of "Amazing Nuts!" (AVBA-35001, Y5800, pictured on page 1) is definitely the version I highly recommend on getting.

Included in the DVD box set are two DVD's. One which includes the 37 minute anthology feature and a second DVD which includes a 40 minute that includes "The Story of Amazing Nuts!"

with interviews with STUDIO4°C, those who were involved in directing or character animation of the shorts and also the interview with the music artists.

The biggest key in the DVD box set is the over 300+ pages of storyboard and interviews discussing the progression of the featured shorts.

For those who are art students who want to get into animation, these type of books are definitely desired and to see how much time and work was involved for just 7-10 minutes of animation will blow you away.

You won't believe how detailed they were for each of these shorts when it came to storyboards. Everything was thoroughly planned.

The regular edition of "Amazing Nuts!" (AVBA-35003, Y2856) features the anthology with no special features.

And last, is the "Amazing Nuts!" CD+DVD (RZCD-45477, Y1895) which is the soundtrack which comes with the four audio tracks and the four music videos. Total time is 13 minutes for the DVD music videos.

Granted, you can possibly catch most of what you want to see in the CD+DVD version but the DVD box set offers so much more that I won't hesitate but recommend the limited edition box set.

All in all, I look at this anthology as a collection of animated artwork. Showcasing a studio known for taking risks and doing things different, many fans of STUDIO4°C's animation respect the work of those involved in this anthology and it doesn't surprise me that people from all over the world have been importing this product.

Unfortunately it does not look like the anthology has been picked up by a US anime distributor, thus it could mean that you may need to import this and also need a region-free player.

A lot of work went into creating these shorts and it would be a shame if they weren't furthered to a OAV or TV series.

All in all, for fans of STUDIO4°C, this is definitely worth owning for your collection.

**A** — DENNIS A. AMITH

For more information visit, <http://www.avex-movie.jp/lineup/amazing-nuts/>

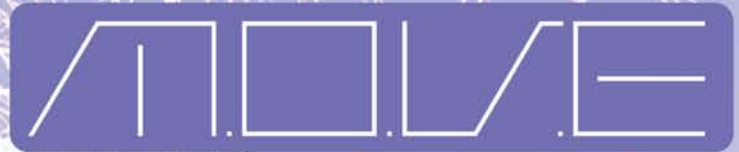


PHOTO: Character designs from "Global Astroliner", "GLASS EYE" and "Joe and Marilyn". Images courtesy of avex+STUDIO4°C

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