

## what are we watching on dvd?



### AREA 88 (TARGET:01)

3 Episodes, 75 Minutes, Rated TV PG (ADV Films)

It has been over a decade since I have watched the original three OAV's (originally released by US Manga Corps in the early 90's; based on clips compiled from the original television series) of the anime "AREA 88".

The story of "AREA 88" revolves around Shin Kazama. A pilot with a great future with Yamato Air Lines. He's engaged to marry with his boss's daughter, Ryoko.

Everything looks good for Shin until his friend Satoru Kanzaki gets him drunk and signs his life away to enlist with the Aslam Foreign Legion (AFL).

Now Shin Kazama is a pilot that is on daily missions to kill other pilots and destroy enemy headquarters to live.

Shin is now living a life where the only way to get out of the AFL is to get enough kills to buy your way out (US \$1.5 million), survive until your term is up or escape (which usually leads to death).

Over 15 years later, a new television series featuring the adventures of Shin Kazama is now available on DVD courtesy of ADV

Films.

The first volume features three episodes with a new storyline slightly different from the manga and original anime series.

With more characters introduced in the new anime series, one is Makoto Shinjou. A photographer who is on a mission to take a photo of the face of a dead Shin Kazama. A mission that was given to him none other than by Shin's nemesis Kanzaki.

Of course, Shinjou doesn't know the history between Shin and Kanazaki but nevertheless, the storyline now incorporates this character to show how the toll of war and destruction are affecting the pilots and those who live at the Aslam Foreign Legion headquarters.

The first episode introduces several characters from the new television series as well as acquaints us with Shin and friends.

The second episode features a storyline of AFL pilot Boris, the Angel of Death.

The third episode features Shin and the young pilot Kim as they go

on a mission where Shin nearly dies and how it almost affects him.

The DVD features the video in anamorphic widescreen and the English dub is in 5.1 and Japanese dialogue in 2.0.

DVD special features include production sketches, character and aircraft specs, clean opening/closing animation and a feature not listed on the DVD but is included is an interview with the director Isamu Imakake and screenwriter Hiroshi Ohnogi.

"Area 88" is an action anime. Following the aerial action scenes of popular films such as "Top Gun", "Area 88" incorporates that action by showing battles between Shin and friends versus the enemy.

But the storyline that wins me over is the perspective as seen by photographer Makoto Shinjou.

Shinjou comes off as a pompous photographer but you get to see him change from episode-to-episode as he starts to learn about the pilots and most notably, as he starts to slowly learn about the man he is to photograph dead.

"Area 88" has always been a series that I have always loved. From reading the original Japanese manga to playing the video game available on the old SNES console, the anime has a storyline that will hook you in.

Most of all, you watch because the TV series show you with each episode of how Shin Kazama goes through Hell and back as a pilot of the Aslam Foreign Legion and living for his Ryoko and to get revenge on Kanzaki. I can't wait to see that happen!

— DENNIS A. AMITH

REVIEW GRADE

A-