



THE FIVE STAR STORIES

70 minutes, Rating TV 14G (ADV Films)

It has been well over a decade since I first came across "THE FIVE STAR STORIES" in the issues of Newtype Magazine.

I was totally unfamiliar with this manga series (created by Mamoru Nagano) but what I do recall were these interesting looking manga characters with what I described as having triangle faces and thin bodies in violent battle scenes.

I was so curious that I definitely had to do my research and learn how epic the manga series was and also how challenging it was to create the animated film.

Why is that? Well, unlike other animations based on manga series at that time such as "Hokuto no Ken" (Fist of the North Star) and "Dragon Ball", "The Five Star Stories" was not a story that focus on one or a few major characters, the manga series was so epic that it focused on characters from four different solar systems and over 400 characters.

When the film was created, it focused on one part of the "Five Star Stories" storyline and that focused on the characters of Ladios Sopp and Fatima Lachesis.

To take on the challenge of creating a film on "Five Star Stories" were Nobuteru Yuki (character designs), Akinoria

Endo (screenplay), Tomoyuki Asakawa (music) and Kazuo Yamazaki (director) who were known for their works on other well known anime.

For those wondering what the epic of "The Five Star Stories" is about, the story revolves around the galaxy's four solar systems, countless kingdoms that are vying for ascendancy with mortar headed, war machines of godlike capabilities.

The only people who can pilot these mortar headed are headliners along with a fatima, which are androids created to serve its master (usually a headliner).

Duke Ballanche, known for creating Fatima's created three fatima's (Lachesis, Atropos and Clotho) to subvert the oppressive system under which Fatimas are pressed into service.

Instead of being assimilated like other Fatimas, these three Fatimas have two new features that make them special and that is "emotion" and "free will".

In the film, it's the debut of the Fatimas as they must choose their master. Many are vowing to become master and for Fatima Lachesis, she waits for the man that she wants to be her master, Ladios Sopp.

My first impression when I watched the film, I was a bit shocked to see the male hero, Ladios Sopp look like a beau-

tiful woman and interesting enough, many of the characters that meet him, mistake him as one.

In reality, Ladios has a special secret which is revealed at the end of the film (or the insert, if you happen to read that first).

The anime is quite beautiful and even though it's nearly two decades old, it amazes me how beautiful the anime was created, frame after frame.

As for the DVD, the anime is presented in anamorphic widescreen. The audio is presented only in Japanese and in 2.0. As for special features, there are only the Japanese preview and ADV trailers but perhaps the best thing that the DVD comes with in my opinion is the insert.

The insert contains character information, anime synopsis and details that go into the challenge of creating this anime. The insert is very good in explaining things but also contains spoilers.

I really enjoyed "The Five Star Stories" but it's one of those anime films that require multiple viewings (like "Akira" and "Ghost in the Shell").

In a way, it is a bit sad that this was the only animated production of this film but to definitely have appreciation for this film is reading the manga series.

Several issues were released in the U.S. and there is no reason why not to bypass it.

If there is one thing that this film suffers is that it's not necessarily the beginning nor the end of the popular manga series.

It's merely an anime created on the popularity of the manga series and to see how it would look to be created on the big screen.

So, anime purists who expect more will be disappointed that they will need to go to the manga to know more about the series.

This DVD was definitely long due and in my opinion one of the most important films from anime history that I'm glad anime fans can experience today.

A cool film with a storyline that hasn't been duplicated. As the epic manga series was unique, this film is unique as well.

— DENNIS A. AMITH

REVIEW GRADE

A-