

what are we watching on dvd?



GATCHAMAN VOL. 1

6 Episodes, 150 Minutes, Rated TV PG V (ADV Films)

It was October 1972 when “Kagaku Ninja-Tai Gatchaman” first debuted on television. The series spawned 105 episodes and lasted through September of 1974.

The fact that an anime to feature a unique storyline for its time: Five characters with unique abilities and cool costumes were far from what was coming out of Japan years earlier.

With “Mach Go Go Go” (Speed Racer) being the hottest anime to be released in the United States and in 1978, fans going crazy over a film called “Star Wars”, people wanted more sci-fi and they got that with “Battle of the Planets”.

The American version was acquired by gameshow distributor, Sandy Frank, who had the animation adapted for the English market, violent scenes removed and to make up for those deleted scenes, added a robot to the series (Note: In the 70’s, the comic book to animated series “Fantastic Four” also featured a robot which was cool to have in

an animated series at the time).

It was reported that the cost to edit this animated series was \$4.5 million and many people, including myself, were glued to the screen to watch the 85 episodes shown on television.

But the series was not strong compared to other animations in the ratings due to competing anime and viewer’s differing tastes.

In Japan, with the release of the animated series in the US, “Gatchaman II” was released in Japan but never shown in the U.S..

The series would not reappear until almost a decade later when Turner Program Services acquired the series and leaving things unedited, selecting different episodes than what was shown on air in the 70’s and renamed the series to “G-Force”.

Unfortunately, the series only lasted 5 episodes and no one saw “G-Force” complete until it was released on the Cartoon Network.

It was not until 1994 when a new OAV series was released

(the OAV series on DVD was released in the US in 2003 by Urban Vision).

What many fans have clamored for though was for an unedited, true episode release of “Gatchaman” on DVD and fans will finally get that in June 2005 with the first volume released by ADV Films.

The first volume features six episodes which includes the clean opening and closing animation, episode commentary with Leraldo Anazulda (Ken) with Charles Campbell (ADR Director) and another with Brian Jepson (Joe) and for fans the chance to sing the theme song via Gatchaman Karaoke.

I was a bit surprised to see how much violence was in Gatchaman and what was aired during that time.

People do die in this series (in every episode I have seen so far) and the “cool” Joe that we were accustomed to was originally portrayed as a revenge seeking person who was quite a belligerent member who never listened to orders. To know Joe was really like that in the Japanese, uncut version was a bit surprising.

Japanese voice acting is great but audio is in 2.0, English dubbing, was well done for this series but some dialogue sounds a bit too corny but definitely fits with the kind of dialogue you typically heard on 70’s animated programs. Also, the English version is in 5.1.

All in all, I highly recommend “Gatchaman”. It’s a very fun anime for fans who appreciate old school anime and are fans of the series. — DENNIS A. AMITH

REVIEW GRADE

B+