



YOU ARE MY ONLY MADONNA

BOKU DAKE NO MADONNA ...AND I LOVE HER SO

538 minutes, AVBD-34155. 11 Episodes,
FUJI TV. DVD released December 2003.

It has been awhile since I watched a Japanese drama that really compelled me to watch the series immediately from beginning to end.

After all, 2004 and 2005 have been quite the dismal years for Japanese dramas and the ratings reflect that viewers in Japan watch less TV or possibly that the drama storylines aren't as exciting.

For those not familiar with Japanese dramas, the trendy dramas (typically on Fuji TV, TBS, NTV and occasionally on TV Asahi) only last 10-12 episodes.

Mainly because viewers attention span for a drama can last so long and only a few celebrities can retain their popularity for several years or more.

As I try to find several gems among the plethora of Japanese dramas out there, I have fallen in love with a drama titled *Boku Dake No Madonna* starring popular Johnny's star Hideaki Takizawa and the beautiful Kyoko Hasegawa.

The drama has a storyline that is anime-ish and a bit farfetched but it is very fun to watch.

Based on a story by Yoshikazu Okada, the main storyline focuses on college student Kyoichi Suzuki (Takizawa).

He always wanted to leave home to get away from his meddling siblings and bothersome mother, thus ends up in the "Brooklyn Heights" apartment complex where he meets strange, nosy neighbors that is reminiscent of the popular manga/anime *Maison Ikkoku*.

You have the unemployed writer always meddling with Kyoichi's

business, a woman who is a bartender that comes home drunk and wants some action from Kyoichi and a strange, quiet neighbor that is just too creepy.

But life as a college student is not all that glamorous for Kyoichi, apart from his bothersome neighbors, his part time security job where he does most of the work and his beautiful girlfriend leaving him because he's "too boring".

To add to the problem, some girl is breaking into his apartment and eating his food and sleeping in his bed.

Enter Surumi Kataoka (Hasegawa), the predator who uses Kyoichi's apartment to spy on her ex-boyfriend across the street.

For Kyoichi, he suddenly starts to grow an interest in Surumi and this somewhat spices up his life.

All of a sudden, the two become friends and he allows her to use his apartment, eat his food and gives her a spare key.

They develop a unique friendship that although they don't see each other that much, they leave messages for each other and cook food for each other.

Kyoichi doesn't understand why he's doing this but all he knows is that this girl makes him happy.

As for the import DVD box set, many outside of Japan may find it way overpriced (it's about \$195) for only 4-DVD's and no special features. And unfortunately, there is no legal distribution of Japanese dramas in the US, thus many will resort to the fansubs online.

Nevertheless, for those who never watched a Japanese drama but love anime that deals with relationships and fun characters, *Boku Dake no Madonna* is a drama that will make you laugh, cry and fall in love with it. Check it out!

A —DENNIS A. AMITH



DIVERGENCE EVE: MISAKI CHRONICLES

3 Episodes, 75 minutes, TV 14V, ADV Films

In 2003, *DIVERGENCE EVE* aired on Japanese TV, earlier this year, ADV Films released the first season on DVD.

Coming out in January 2005, is the second season of the series titled *DIVERGENCE EVE: MISAKI CHRONICLES*. A twelve episode series that aired in 2004.

In season one, the main storyline took place in the 24th Century where intergalactic space travel has become a reality.

One of the major outposts in the space is the "WATCHER'S NEST", an inflation hole drive portal that is being under attacked by these mysterious force known as GHOUL.

A group of young female cadets who have just finalized their training as elite pilots of the Seraphim Squadron are about to meet their match against the GHOUL.

The main focus among the female cadets is Misaki, your typical

cute and clumsy girl who happens to go through some unusual, mysterious transformation when she comes in contact with a GHOUL.

In "MISAKI CHRONICLES", the first episode focuses on Young Misaki as she remembers her father (a famous pilot) and training hard in school to follow her father's footsteps.

She teams up with her cadet friends as they undergo training and all fine and dandy right?

Unfortunately not. Because the last we saw these women at the end of *DIVERGENCE EVE*, they were either dead, discharged or MIA.

Reality is either not reality and something is definitely wrong.

Thus the storyline shifts to Lieutenant Commander Ertiana and the survivors of WATCHER'S NEST who are trying to find out about the mystery of why the Earth is normal and the Universe is in chaos.

The storyline takes you to space and into history as the GHOUL has found a way to go back in time (episode 2 and 3 takes Ertiana to feudal Japan) and possibly change the future for Earth.

One thing that will definitely remind you that you are watching a *DIVERGENCE EVE* anime is that all the women are well-endowed. As mentioned in my last review for the series, this anime screams out "BOOB-FEST!"

This second series is no different as Misaki's assets are shown quite a bit and anime fans of fan service will not be disappointed.

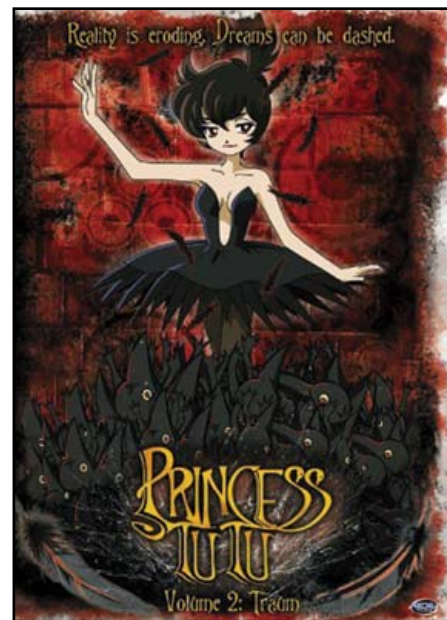
As for the anime, *MISAKI CHRONICLES* is definitely a beautiful anime to look at. The female characters are strong, sexy and independent and interesting.

As for the storyline, I actually found the anime series much more enjoyable than *DIVERGENCE EVE*.

The preview DVD I watched had three episodes and all I can comment right now is that the three episodes were enjoyable, but I emphasize that it helps to watch the first season of *DIVERGENCE EVE* before watching *MISAKI CHRONICLES* for better understanding of the characters, GHOUL and the twist in the universe.

So, far this anime features some intriguing twists and I'm enjoying it thus far.

B+ —DENNIS A. AMITH



PRINCESS TUTU: VOLUME 2: TRAUM

Episodes 6-9, 100 minutes, TV 14, ADV Films

Once upon a time, there was a little duck who dreamed of falling in love and to dance with her prince. But for the poor duck, it was not meant to be because...well, duck is a duck.

Until a bizarre old man gives the duck a pendant that changes the duck to a girl.

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coordinate
T.M.Revolution's hit US debut album, featuring INVOKE, as heard on Mobilesult Gundam Seed, and Heart of Sword -Yoake Mae, from Rurouni Kenshin! TOF002



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Sonic Warp DVD
This limited edition DVD features six video tracks, including Heart of Sword - Yoake Mae from Rurouni Kenshin, performed live at OTAKON 2003. English and Roma-ji subtitles, and a Roma-ji lyrics sheet. TOF004

NAMI TAMAKI



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what are we watching on dvd?

The girl, named Duck is given a chance but needs to follow the old man's order. That is to help the prince who appears to lack emotions, find pieces of his heart in order to bring happiness to the prince.

And with a special power of turning into Princess Tutu who has the power to unite the shards to the prince's heart.

All things seem to go well until you find out that Duck's presence as a girl also has its caveats. If Duck is to ever act like a duck, she will change to a duck (that is until she finds water and she'll change back to a girl).

The first volume (episode 1-5) featured Duck as she does what she can to help the prince. The first episode serves as introduction to main characters and the supporting characters of the series. As well as showing the

characters passion for ballet.

In this second volume of *PRINCESS TUTU*, we are introduced to the crow princess Kraehe.

Where Tutu's goal was to obtain all shards to restore Prince Mytho's heart (more or less his emotions). Princess Kraehe will do what it takes to prevent Tutu from accomplishing her goal.

What everyone doesn't know is that the evil Princess Kraehe is in fact, Prince Mytho's girlfriend, Rue.

To make matters worse, Mytho's protector Fakir is even more determined to stop Tutu and Kraehe from accomplishing their goals and keep Mytho's heart shattered to pieces to protect him from the two.

So, the second volume continues to focus on Tutu trying to obtain the shards but more insight on Rue and

Fakir and their role in why Mytho is the way he is.

Both the Japanese and English dubbing are well done. I'm a bit more biased towards the Japanese version, only because the English voices for Mytho and Fakir sound a bit older for their characters.

As for special features, included is "Ballet for Beginners", "Erude", outtakes, in the studio, clean opening and closing animation, reversible cover and a commentary insert by executive director, Junichi Sato.

All in all, *PRINCESS TUTU* is a beautiful, enjoyable anime that both children and adults can enjoy. Definitely an anime series worth checking out.

B+ —DENNIS A. AMITH

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