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Subject: Animation review and follies

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((Gonna' build a mountain... in your living room!))  
( remotely posted for a friend )

### The Flanamation Scale

- 6 See it, record it, watch it several times a day. (Macross)
- 5 Record it, watch it while some dreck is playing on T.V. (Mighty Orbots)
- 4 Watch it if you happen to be in the room at the time. (Transformers)
- 3 Not offensive, not impressive. (Wheeled Warriors)
- 2 Dreck, but with some redeeming factors. (Thunder Cats)
- 1 Dreck. (He-Man)

Obviously there are several things above six, movies mostly. I'd rate Black Cauldron at least eight. There are also shows that are below one... My basis for zero is Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids, dreck that is even worse than He-Man.

I am, for now, going to stick to the action-adventure series that are now in syndication. All of which (With one exception that I can think of) fall into the above rating system.

Normally I wouldn't bother trying to rate cartoons but several things have entered the picture. World Events Productions has released a set of programs featuring good artwork and some semblance of a plot running through the entire series. (Voltron) Then Harmony Gold released three Japanese series tied together. The first of which is a thirty-six episode series originally entitled Macross. (Robotech) This not only combines the best Voltron has to offer with character building and plot that would rival any American comic book. I just want those interested to know that there is more than dreck out there.

I intend to post this weekly and review at least two series in each article. I'll also review the Voltrons (Voltage 5, and Go Lions. Has any one seen Voltron II? It's the one with six arms.) separately. I'm going to break up Robotech into its component parts. (Macross, Southern Cross, and Mospeada)

Let's start with the best.

Macross-- This is it folks. It's the best combination of plot, characterization, and good animation I have ever seen in a series that was meant for television. It is about an alien spacecraft that crashed on earth at the end of a world war. The humans adapted it for human use. There was room enough because the ship was over three quarters of a mile long.

The story centers around Rick Hunter, a young race pilot who becomes a fighter pilot; Lisa Hayes, his superior officer whose relationship with Rick did not get off to a good start; and Lynne Minmay; a beautiful young ditz, Rick's girl friend, (sort of) and a girl destined for a stardom that could only come to a beautiful young ditz.

The story has a few minor flaws. Minmay's opening song is played far too much. It is perfect for her debut, especially when you consider her personality, but they play it over and over, always calling it her new song. Over, and over, and over, and AAAAUUUGGHHHHH! Towards the end the plot doesn't move quite as fast as earlier in the series. And the word "Protoculture" gets very confusing. (This is the fault of the translators. ed) First protoculture is the old Zentraedi culture, then it is a power source, then it is some kind of food, ah well. Also in an effort to tie in the next series, (Southern Cross) Harmony Gold takes scenes from the following series, (talking heads mostly) and stuck them into Macross. All these faults are very minor and did not hurt the enjoyment of the series.

The good points: This was the most popular animated series in Japan for its year. The quality shows throughout. The translation, with very few exceptions, was humorous, well dubbed, and intelligent. I have heard that they used more sound effects than the original. Harmony Gold treated it with the class it deserved. Here is one of the best parts for all of you who watch Voltron and groan every time some one uses the word "robot", or "escape ship": people die in Macross!! No one flies "robot ships" and even characters bite it. It's wonderful.

Wonderful also describes the whole series. Rated 6 on the Flanamation Scale, it is called Robotech. The original animation is by Tatsunoko.

As a post script to this review, if any of you get a chance to see the Macross movie in the original Japanese, do so! If you know the basic story the language gap is not so great. That might be rated a 8 1/2 to 9 on the Scale.

Lets end this posting with the worst.

Tranzor Z-- I never thought the Japanese could create trash on the

order of He-Man, but they did. It was by The Toei animation company. the same people who did some of the Transformers episodes, all of the Voltrons, Harlock, and Starblazers if any of you remember that. (if any of you have Starblazers on videotape, have I got a trade for you!) After seeing some of the Yamato (Starblazers) and Harlock movies some of you may think that Toei can do no wrong. Not So! This is a story about young Tommy Tavis and his little brother Toad who, upon learning of their fathers death go to visit his old lab. Dear old dad was working on an invention made out of the elusive metal Tranzor Z, the strongest metal known to man. Of course the notes were lost and the only thing that was made of the stuff was the most practical of objects, a giant robot. Tranzor Z cannot be reproduced (except to make repairs on the robot, or new accessories). The series does not stop there, folks.

The villains are as well conceived as the hero. The ultimate villain is Dr. Demon. He has Zarkon's Disease (See footnote) and always must attack the Volcanic Institute (Tommy's home base). He also has a magic wand that can create any bad robot (robeast) that the episode needs. His second in command is Devleen, half man, half woman, all ugly and just as effective as Lotor when it comes to achieving his/her goal.

That's not all. Tommy is working for the Volcanic Institute. It must be named for its location because the only thing I remember it studying is the robots that attack it. One of the residents is Jessica. Her robot is not made of Tranzor Z and therefore gets trashed every episode she operates it. But not before she gets the opportunity to fire her twin missiles that come out of (you guessed it) her breasts. This is real class. Tommy is also a member of a motorcycle gang, nice guys all although a bit deformed. The two skinny ones I'll be damned if I can remember their names, but the fat one with the lower jaw that comes six inches out from the rest of his face is named Bobo. I remember this because he gets the Bobobot later in the series. It, also not made of Tranzor Z, gets trashed every time it appears.

By now you might feel that I was dissatisfied by this series. I was surprised to find that there were somewhere in the area of twelve voices. None of them are very good. The sound track is all synthesizer and repetitive. The animation is technically shoddy, and the cinematography is nonexistent.

The flaws... see above.

The good parts. Well, it had some good backgrounds.

As a parting shot, you might want to turn the sound down and come up with your own script. This has given my friends and I loads of laughs.

It rates 1 on the Flanamation Scale, and the original animation is by Toei.

\* This is a foot note.-- Beep -- Zarkon's Disease is the condition

in which the villain is forced to attack the heros every episode,  
forgoing all attention elsewhere. People with Zarkon's Disease tend  
to be unproductive throughout the series.

Have fun,  
Bill Flanagan

"You worry about the fighters. Let me worry about the tower."

(Jay Parks)  
(decvax!hao!ihnp4!seismo)!noao!parks :uucp  
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