

Battle of the Planets

Battle of the Planets (1978) is an American adaptation of the Japanese anime series *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman* (1972).^[2] Of the 105 original *Gatchaman* episodes, 85 were used in the*Battle of the Planets*adaptation, produced bySandy Frank Entertainment. The adaptation was generally faithful to the plot and character development of the original *Gatchaman*series, but significant additions and reductions were made in order to increase appeal to the North American television market of the late 1970s, as well as avoid controversy from parents; these included the removal of elements of graphic violence andprofanity.^[3]

As of June 2013,Sentai Filmworkshave licensed^[4] the Gatchaman franchise. An oft-delayed CGI film based on the franchise*Gatchaman*, last slated for a 2011 release from Warner Bros., was officially canceled in June 2011. However, a live-action *Gatchaman* feature film was released in Japan in August 2013.

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Origins

In April 1977 Sandy Frank attended the MIP-TV conference in Cannes. It was here Frank first encountered the Japanese animation “Gatchaman” from producer Tatsunoko Production run by the Yoshida brothers.^[5] Frank committed to release the series in the U.S. after he saw the success of Star Wars in May 1977.^[6] *Battle of the Planets* is the title of American adaptation of this series created by Frank. Frank authorized new footage and hired writers to add dialogue to fit the look of the animation, without reference to original scripts.^[6] Of the 105 original *Gatchaman* episodes, 85 were used in the *Battle of the Planets* adaptation produced by Sandy Frank Entertainment in 1978.

Summary

Battle of the Planets cast five young people as G-Force, consisting of Mark, Jason, Princess, Keyop, and Tiny. G-Force protects Earth from planet Spectra and other attacks from beyond space. The most prominent field commander of the Spectra forces was a villainous, masked individual known as Zoltar. Zoltar would receive his orders directly from a being he would refer to as "Luminous One". The Luminous One would appear as a ghost-like, disembodied, floating head. Who, or what this being actually was, is never explained in any detail throughout the series.

The main ship of the G-Force team was called the *Phoenix*, which could carry, transport and deploy four smaller vehicles, each operated by one team member. The four vehicles included a futuristic race car with various hidden weapons driven by Jason; this vehicle was concealed within the Phoenix's nosecone. The "galacti-cycle", a futuristic motor cycle the Princess rode, was stored within the left wing capsule of the Phoenix. Keyop's "Space Bubble", an all-terrain, tank-like vehicle capable of VTOL as well as being a submersible craft, was held in the right storage capsule of the Phoenix. And lastly, a futuristic jet fighter Mark pilots was stored in the top rear section of the Phoenix command island structure, and which used its tail fin to make up the center tail fin of the Phoenix. The fifth crew member Tiny, was assigned to pilot the*Phoenix* rather than one of the detachable craft.

A regularly featured plot device was the transformation of the Phoenix into a flaming bird-shaped craft able to handle virtually any exceptional situation by functioning as a sort of giant, super blowtorch called the Fiery Phoenix. The *Phoenix*'s primary weapon was a supply of rockets called "TBX missiles" in the series. It also occasionally flaunted a powerful solar-powered energy blaster, although the team had the misfortune of choosing very cloudy days to use it.

The G-Force team themselves would use a combination of martial arts skill, ninja-like weapons, and their "cerebonic" powers to dispatch hordes of enemy soldiers and overcome other obstacles. Their bird-like costumes include wing-like capes that could fan out and function nearly identically to parachutes and/or wing suits, enabling the G-Force members to drift or glide down to safety from heights which would otherwise prove fatal.

The G-Force members stay in contact through a wrist-band communicator device which also serves as a way for them to change instantly into their G-Force uniforms or back into their civilian clothes. Other weapons seen displayed by various team members include: Mark's sonic boomerang, a bird-shaped boomerang with razor sharp wings; Jason's and Tiny's multi-purpose gadget guns, which can be outfitted with grappling hook and line, drill bits, etc.; and Keyop's and Princess's yo-yo bombs, which could be used as bolas, darts, and explosive devices. Other weapons include feathers with a sharpened steel quill that could be used as deadly throwing darts, and mini-grenades shaped like ball bearings with spike studs.

Subsequent versions

Battle of the Planets	
 <div><i>Battle of the Planets</i> Volume One</div>	
Created by	Sandy Frank Entertainment
Directed by	David E. Hanson Alan Dinehart
Voices of	Casey Kasem Keye Luke Alan Young Janet Waldo Alan Dinehart Ronnie Schell
Theme music composer	Hoyt Curtin
Composer(s)	Hoyt Curtin Dennis Dreith Richard Greene Bob Sakuma
Country of origin	United States Japan
No. of episodes	85 (list of episodes)
Production	
Executive producer(s)	Jameson Brewer Sandy Frank
Producer(s)	David E. Hanson Alan Dinehart
Running time	30 minutes
Release	
Original network	first-run syndication ^[1]
Original release	September 12, 1978 – May 12, 1980

In 1986, *Gatchaman* was re-worked in the US as *G-Force: Guardians of Space* by Turner, with a good deal of the original content edited out of *Battle of the Planets* put back into the show. It followed the plot of the original *Gatchaman* much more faithfully than *Battle of the Planets* because of this. Missing was Hoyt Curtin's original score. New voice acting was used. This version, however, was criticized by fans of both *Gatchaman* and *Battle of the Planets*, and never achieved the same level of popularity

Two soundtrack albumsand several DVDs have been released.

The two Japanese follow-up series, *Gatchaman II* and *Gatchaman Fighter*, were combined into 65 episodes and released as the Saban-produced show *Eagle Riders*. All 65 episodes aired in Australia, but in the United States only 13 episodes were aired.

Key changes in the adaptation

The *Battle of the Planets* adaptation differs significantly from *Gatchaman*.^[7] The difference is due to heavy editing made to make the show appealing to the audience in the United States by removing controversial elements (i.e. graphic violence, profanity, nudity and transgenderism) while adding elements reminiscent of the feature film *Star Wars*, which was popular at the time. In fact the name "Battle of the Planets" was an attempt to associate itself with that popularity of *Star Wars*. While the original *Gatchaman* was earthbound, dark-toned, and environmentally themed, the adaptation morphed it into a kid-friendly outer space show with robot characters, although some environmental themes were kept, and this is also why the other planets to which G-Force traveled on missions looked very much like Earth. Setting, violence, objectionable language, and most character fatalities were altered or eliminated by cutting scenes, dubbing, and explanatory voiceovers (for instance, claiming that the city had been evacuated before a battle scene that would show the incidental destruction of buildings and houses, as well as explaining away the destruction of the Earth armies and air forces as being robot tanks and fighter planes).^[8]^[9]

One of the most notable changes in the *BotP* adaptation involves the character Keyop (Jinpei in *Gatchaman*), who picked up a bizarre verbal tic of stuttering, chirping, and burbling every time he started to speak. There was a longstanding fan rumor that this was done because the original character spoke using much profanity and that Keyop's excess mouth motion would cover up deleting the words. This was not true, as demonstrated by the existence of an unedited *Gatchaman* version released by ADV Films in the USA, in which Keyop rarely if ever used profanity. The in-story explanation for Keyop's unique manner of speech is that he is an artificial life form with a speech impediment because of slightly defective genetic engineering.^[10]

The main villain, known as Zoltar in *BotP*, had an unusual background due to the hermaphroditic nature of the original Berg Katse character. In an episode where Katse's female half was featured (*BotP* title: "The Galaxy Girls"), she was introduced as a separate character, Zoltar's sister, for *BotP*. (A hint of her actual nature was retained in the name she used when masquerading as a human, Mala Latroz —"Latroz" is an anagram of "Zoltar")^[10]

To compensate for the other differences, a robot named 7-Zark-7 performed explanatory voiceovers and light comic relief, which not only padded the time lost from editing but also filled in the gaps in the story line. This device bears the influence of contemporary *Star Wars* film, with 7-Zark-7 having a visual appearance not dissimilar from R2-D2, and a somewhat campy personality in the style of C-3PO. Notionally, 7-Zark-7 ran the undersea monitoring station Center Neptune, from where he received information regarding incoming threats to Earth and relayed that information to G-Force. Zark and other added characters, such as 1-Rover-1, Zark's robotic dog (who could hover from one side of the control room to the other by spinning his tail like a propeller, Muttley-style) and Susan (the early-warning computer whose sultry feminine voice often sent Zark into paroxysms) added to the cartoon's youth appeal. Some additional footage was also animated showing G-Force members (using their *Gatchaman* model sheets) interacting with Zark, helping his addition blend more smoothly into the existing *Gatchaman* footage (although there is a clear difference in quality between the Zark and the *Gatchaman* animation).

Voice cast

- Alan Young as 7-Zark-7, Keyop, additional voices
- Casey Kasem as Mark, additional voices
- Ronnie Schell as Jason (regular voice), Tny (episode 1), additional voices
- Keye Luke as Zoltar, the Spirit, Cronos, additional voices
- Janet Waldo as Princess, Susan, additional voices
- David Jolliffe as Jason (episode 1), additional voices
- Alan Oppenheimeras Commander Gorok, additional voices
- William Woodson as the Announcer, additional voices
- Alan Dinehartas Tiny (regular voice), Anderson, additional voices

Additional voices provided by:

- Takayo Fischer
- Michael Rye
- Wendy Young

Episodes

Movie

A TV movie called *Battle of the Planets: The Movie* was made by Gallerie International Films and Sandy Frank Film Syndication. David Bret Egen was the voice of 7-Zark-7. The movie was combined from several episodes to form a new story line which contained violence as well as deaths. It was considered for an uncut remake of Battle of The Planets, but was scrapped when plans changed. Sandy Frank began focusing eforts on arranging an unat dub of Gatchaman instead.

Comic books

Battle of the Planets was also released in comic book form, originally by Gold Key Comics but later revamped by Top Cow Productions.^[11] Among the Top Cow comic books was *Battle of the Planets: Princess*, written by David Wohl with art by Wilson Tortosa, released in 2002.^[12] A *Battle of the Planets* comic strip ran in the British *TV Comic*. The *TV Comic* issues which feature the *Battle of the Planets* strip run from #1530 (17 April 1981) to #1671 (30 December 1983). *TV Comic* also reprinted some of the Gold Key stories for two *Battle of the Planets* holiday specials and one *TV Comic* holiday special. There was also a*Battle of the Planets*annual which reprinted some of the Gold Key stories.

Soundtrack

Battle of the Planets **track listing**^[13]

- Main Theme – Title Card
- Dramatic Curtain

- Ready Room
- Alien Trap

- BP-Mysterioso 4 – BP-Mysterioso 3 – BP-Mysterioso 2
- BP-Teenage Mysterioso



Left to right: Mark, Tny, Keyop, Princess, and Jason



Battle of the Planets soundtrack cover illustration

7. Love In The Afterburner

8. 7-Zark-7's Song – Zarks Theme Alt – Zark Disco

9. Keyops 1 – Robot Hijinks

10. Firefight

11. BP-Orion Cue #1 – Orion 4 – BP-Orion Runs

12. Alien Planet

13. Two Monsters – Star Fight

14. Alien Trouble – More Alien Trouble

15. Space On Fire

16. Phoenix Raising

17. BP-108

18. BP-101 Alt – The Robot's Dog

19. BP-Sneak-Up – BP-Bad Guys

20. Return To The Alien Planet

21. BP-600 – BP600 A

22. BP-101 – BP-106 – BP-107 – BP-2002
23. Come Out, Come Out

24. BP-105 – BP-2001

25. Melting Jets

26. BP-Dialogue – BP-2025 – BP-Mysterious – BP-2020 – BP-2002

27. The Chief Alien Shows Up - Victory

28. Main Title With Voice Over

29. Emblem G

30. Spectra Visions

31. Like The Phoenix

32. Coral Reef

33. Crescent Moon

34. Holding Up A Shad

35. Zoltar, Fastening The Armor

36. Fighter G

37. Red Illusion

38. The Earth Is Alone!

39. A Vow To The Sky
40. Countdown

41. Fighting Phoenix

42. Space Chase

43. BP-1 Zark's Theme

44. Alien Planet

45. BP-1000

46. Space Mummy Trailer

47. Space Serpent Trailer

48. The Ghost Ship Of Planet Mir Trailer

49. The Luminous One (Promo Spot)

50. G-Force Vs. Zoltar (Promo Spot)

51. 7-Zark-7 And Company (Promo Spot)

52. The Luminous One #2 (Promo Spot)

53. Commander Mark, Jason (Promo Spot)

54. Princess, Tiny, Keyop (Promo Spot)

55. Battle Of The Planes 04 (Remix) – Spray

56. The Ballad Of 7 Zark 7 (Remix) – Spray

Characters

The renaming of the various characters and terms in*Battle of the Planets*are **highlighted** as follows (in correspondence to their*Gatchaman* equivalents, among others):

<i>Gatchaman</i>	<i>Battle of the Planets</i>	<i>G-Force</i>	<i>Eagle Riders</i>	<i>OVA (Harmony Gold Dub)</i>	Rank	Bird Uniform	Weapon	Mecha	Japanese voice actor	Voice actor (BOTP)	Voice actor (G-Force)	Voice actor (Harmony Gold OVA Dub)	Voice actor (Eagle Riders)	Voice actor (OVA)
Ken Washio	Mark	Ace Goodheart	Hunter Harris	Ken the Eagle	G1	Eagle	Razor boomerang	Airplane	Katsuji Mori	Casey Kasem	Sam Fontana	Eddie Frierson	Richard Cansino	Lera Anzures
George "Joe" Asakura	Jason	Dirk Daring	Joe Thax	Joe the Condor	G2	Condor	Pistol	Race Car	Isao Sasaki	Ronnie Schell	Cam Clarke	Richard Cansino	Bryan Cranston	Brian Jepsen
Jun	Princess	Agatha "Aggie" June	Kelly Jennar	June the Swan	G3	Swan	Yo-yo	Motorcycle	Kazuko Sugiyama	Janet Waldo	Barbara Goodson	Lara Cody	Heidi Noelle Lenhart	Kim Praeger
Jinpei	Keyop	Pee Wee	Mickey Dugan	Jimmy the Falcon	G4	Swallow	Bolo	Dune Buggy	Yoku Shioya	Alan Young	Barbara Goodson	Mona Marshall	Mona Marshall	Luci Christian
Ryu Nakanishi	Tiny Harper	Hoot "Hooty" Owl	Ollie Keeawani	Rocky the Owl	G5	Owl	Pistol	God Phoenix	Shingo Kanemoto	Alan Dinehart	Jan Rabson/Gregg Berger	Richard Epcar	Paul Schrier	Victor Carraway

Character variations across different versions

Gatchaman	Battle of the Planets	G-Force	Eagle Riders	OVA (Harmony Gold Dub)
Dr. Kozaburo Nanbu	Chief Anderson	Dr. Benjamin Brighthead	Dr. Thaddeus Keane	Dr. Kozaburo Nambu
ISO Director Anderson	President Kane	Anderson/Cmdr. Todd (some episodes)	Anderson	Director Anderson
Red Impulse / Kentaro Washio	Col. Cronos	Red Impulse / Kendrick Goodheart	Harley Harris	Red Spectre / Kentaro Washio
Berg Katse	Zoltar	Galactor	Lukan	Solaris
Sosai (Leader) X	O-Luminous One/ The Great Spirit	Computer	Cybercom	Lord Zortek
Galactor	Planet Spectra	Planet Galactor	Vorak	Galactor
Gel Sadra (Gatchaman 2)			Mallanox	

Other notable changes

Variations	<i>Gatchaman (Japanese)</i>	<i>Battle Of The Planets</i>	<i>Guardians Of Space</i>	<i>Eagle Riders</i>	<i>OVA (Harmony Gold dub)</i>	<i>Gatchaman (English)</i>
<i>Identity Change Command</i>	Bird, Go!‡	Transmute!	G-Force, Transform!	Eagle Mode, NOW!	<i>Ken</i> Eagle One, Transform! <i>Joe</i> Shapeshift, Condor <i>June</i> Swan Mode, Now! <i>Jimmy</i> Falcon Tracker, Transform! <i>Rocky</i> (Unknown)	Bird, Go!
<i>Planet/Civilization</i>	Selectol (planet) Gyarakutā (civilization)	Spectra	Galactor	Vorak	Galactor	Selectol (planet) Galactor (civilization)

‡The original Japanese-language version of Gatchaman contains a small amount of English.

Reception

In the United Kingdom, the show was voted #42 on *Channel 4's 100 Greatest Kids' TV Shows* in 2001.^[14]

The show was voted #62 on "100 Greatest Cartoons" in 2004.

According to *Wizard* magazine, *Battle of the Planets* is considered to be one of the 100 greatest animated shows^[15]

In 2009, *IGN* ranked *BOTP* as the 44th greatest animated show of all time in their Top 100 list.

Reboot

Battle of the Planets: Phoenix Ninjas (working title) is an upcoming animated reboot produced by Nelvana, d-rights and Tatsunoko tentatively scheduled for release in 2018.^{[16][17][18]} Aimed at 6-11 year old boys, the project was conceived when d-rights expressed interest in Nelvana rebooting the franchise after the success the three saw with the second generation *Beyblade*.^[19]

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External links

- Battle of the Planet*son IMDb
- Battle of the Planets*at TV.com
- Battle of the Planets*on Hulu.com

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