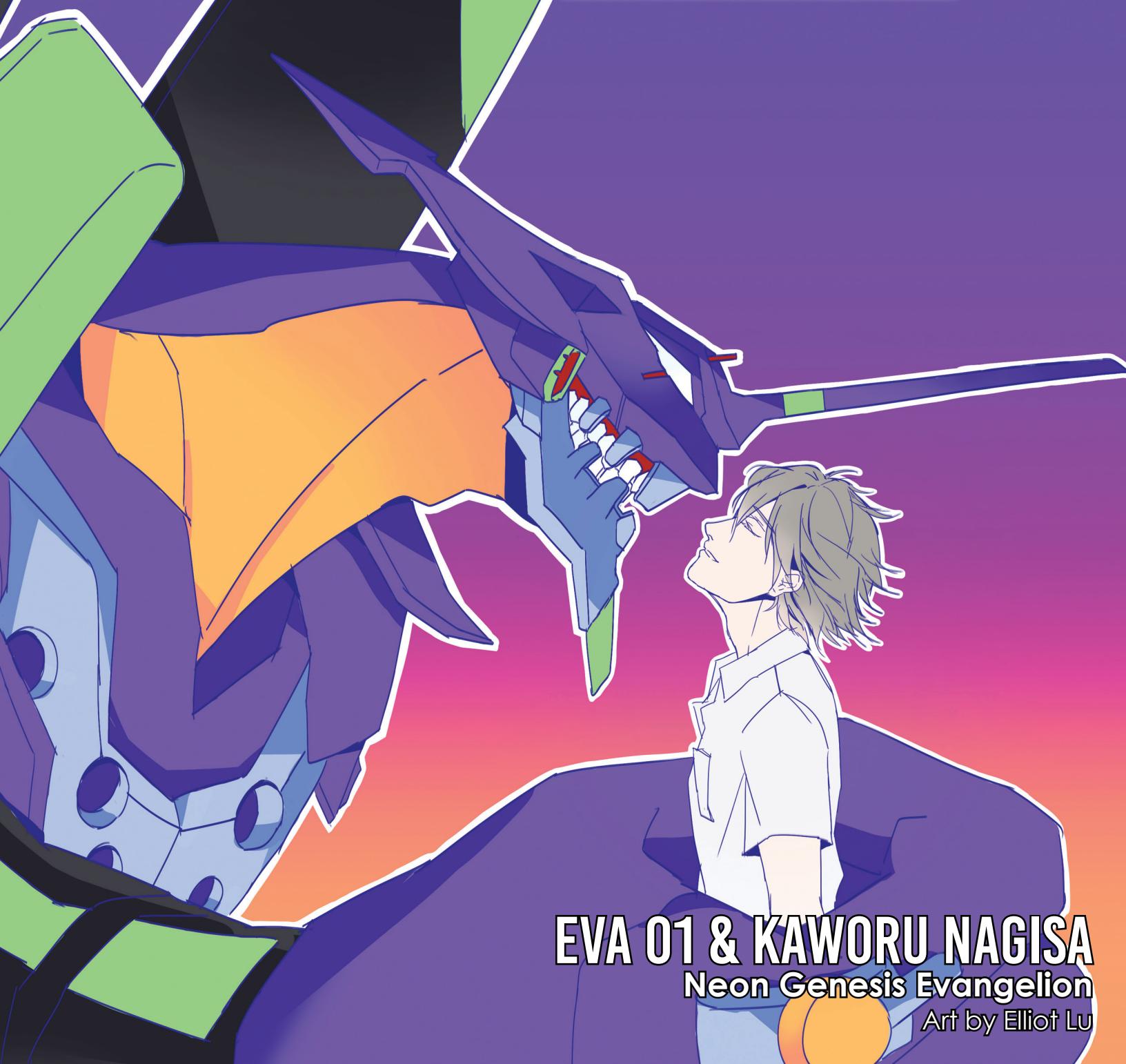


THE MECHA ISSUE

CAL ANIMAGE ALPHA presents

Konshuu

Volume XLVIII, Issue VII



EVA 01 & KAWORU NAGISA

Neon Genesis Evangelion

Art by Elliot Lu



EVANGELION ETERNAL: PARODY AS REVIVAL IN LEGEND OF THE PIKO PIKO MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

JAMIE YOU

3RD YEAR, COGNITIVE SCIENCE

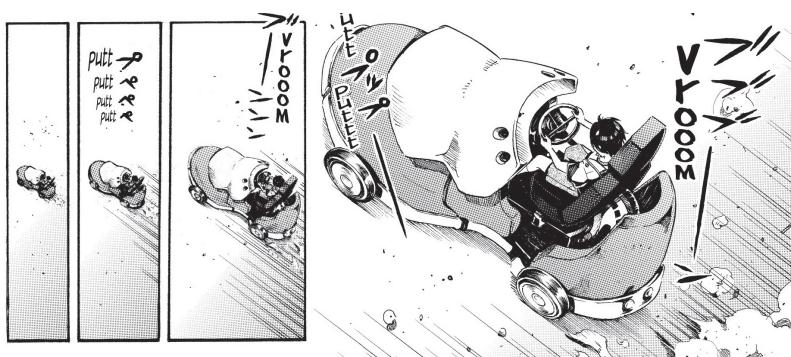
STAFF WRITER

Gen 4 'mons in Pokemon Go... Ah, finally my life is complete.

Warning: Minor spoilers for Evangelion

Neon Genesis Evangelion is a franchise with so many untranslated spin-offs that you can hardly make heads or tails of what's worth looking into. *Legend of the Piko Piko Middle School Students* may seem like a lackluster entry at first glance. It's a gag manga, for one. Yet Piko Piko, at just two volumes currently, has already established itself as a much-needed breath of fresh air.

An alternate universe where the kid pilots train with video games, not EVA units, to defeat the otherworldly Angels, Piko Piko has just the most barebones skeletal structure in common with the original anime. The core characters are caricatures of themselves, NERV and Seele have mutated into nonthreatening, bumbling organizations, and key psychological concepts of the original are reduced to punchlines.



How could any of this be appealing? Contrary to expectation, it's all to help Piko Piko achieve its full impact. The manga recognizes its purpose and executes it with ruthless efficiency. No motif is too holy to spoof, no canon moment too serious to parody.

At its best, Piko Piko blows the dust off some of the anime's melodramatic, self-serious moments. So much of Eva's hallowedness rests on pregnant pauses, painful tensions, and words unsaid. In direct contrast, there's an excess of words in Piko Piko, as characters spell out jokes, engage in back-and-forth wordplay, and talk themselves into silly situations.

Resultantly, Piko Piko's cast feels far more reflective of actual human beings than the original series, especially during this age of social media. This manga provides an ample dollop of mundane, day-to-day interactions, and its absurdities feel no more out of place than what we might pass around nowadays in viral videos or screencapped text posts.



Unlike other lighthearted spinoffs like *Girlfriend of Steel* or *Shinji Ikari Raising Project*, Piko Piko doesn't attempt to justify itself with a linear storyline or sensible consequences. Ever wanted to see Shinji and Asuka fistfight Gendo? Dying for Kaworu to crush up and slurp potato chips through a straw? Thrilled by the idea of our kid pilots having a fun time together and not emerging horribly traumatized? There's all that and more within the densely packed pages of Piko Piko.

What this manga doesn't have much of, surprisingly enough, is fanservice. That's not to say that the series is chaste - Asuka drops multiple F-bombs, and sexual innuendos fly left and right, mostly as jokes on fanservice and doujinshi culture. But the lack of boobs and butt for the sake of boobs and butt means that the female characters are written as characters first, "females" second, which is another area where the original Evangelion often falls short.

Regardless, *Legend of the Piko Piko Middle School Students* is not for everybody. Its breakneck, pop culture-ridden humor may prove too irreverent for hardcore Eva fans. At the same time, it's not fully enjoyable without a working knowledge of Evangelion.

Therefore, it's best to come home to Piko Piko after you're done being depressed by the anime or the original manga adaptation--or, heaven help you, *End of Evangelion*. But hopefully you'll find, as I have, that it's a warm and refreshing manga to come home to.

HOW A MECHA ANIME GAVE ME DEPRESSION

 **SHAO-LON YEH**
1ST YEAR, COMPUTER SCIENCE

STAFF WRITER

I cried multiple times while watching this

Warning: Vague spoilers for Code Geass

When I started watching anime, I never had an interest in mecha because mecha in American media is mainly mindless entertainment with giant robots. But one day, I decided that I would watch a mecha and I somehow decided on *Code Geass*, and my outlook on mecha was changed forever. Watching *Code Geass* was one of the best and worst decisions of my life. Best because it's one of my favorite anime and worst because my emotions are now constantly in a state of disarray. I can't karaoke the first opening without crying.

One of my favorite things about *Code Geass* is the over the top characters. Teen edge-lord Lelouch by himself makes this show worth watching, but add in other characters like selfless childhood friend Suzaku and absurdly powerful student council president Milly and you have a recipe for drama. Unlike most anime, *Code Geass* doesn't have a well-defined good guy. Everyone has their own reasons and explanations behind their decisions and many actions explore the complex spectrum of morality. For example, Lelouch tries to overthrow a colonizing superpower for his sister but does so by being a terrorist. Contrasting that, we have Suzaku who tries to change the empire from the inside but sacrifices Japan in the process. The relationships between the characters and their character development make this anime extremely interesting and causes you to empathize with them. When I was watching this, I was really invested in the characters which was a huge mistake because everyone dies and I died along with them.



This part killed me

Another reason why I like this anime so much is because the battles actually involve a sensible strategy. Anime that rely on the power of friendship or willpower are good sometimes but can get pretty cringey very quickly. In *Code Geass*, every fight is determined by strategy and the person who outsmarts the other wins. I also don't like anime where the main hero suddenly gets a random power up in order to defeat the villain. So I really liked the way that *Code Geass* handled Geass, the supernatural powers that Lelouch and some other people had. Geass caused some characters to be more powerful than others, but Geass still has its limits and leads to bad consequences if used too much.

Now, I can't talk about a mecha anime without talking about the actual mechas themselves. The mechas in *Code Geass* are super cool and the animation on them is flawless. There are so many different mechas but the best one is obviously Suzaku's Lancelot (don't @ me). Almost all of the mechas in *Code Geass* are black or really dark colors, so Lancelot's white and gold appearance makes it superior already. Not only is Lancelot's appearance the coolest, it also has the hottest pilot, Suzaku. Many mechas, not only in *Code Geass*, use guns, but guns are boring because they take no skill. Lancelot double wields sparkly swords which is super epic, and it also has thrusters that allow it to quickly change direction in mid-air which is also really cool because mid-air battles are the best. Another weapon Lancelot has is the F.L.E.I.J.A, which is a bomb that obliterates all matter. Also, with a name like Lancelot, you already know the mecha is pretty bad@ss.



Best mecha boy

WHAT GOES INTO A MECH?

ZIANA DEEN
3RD YEAR, ARCHITECTURE

I take psych classes for fun.

STAFF WRITER

I'm not going to lie, for the longest of times, I thought mecha was pretty boring. I had grown up with *Gundam Wing* and *Transformers*, but for some reason, people going into mechanical suits to fight one another was kinda boring. One summer, I binge watched 50 episodes of *Gundam Seed Destiny*, and it was so boring that sometimes, I'd skip ahead to the plot, which interested me much more. Because of the obvious bromance between Athrun and Kira (who doesn't ship the two?).

It wasn't until *Code Geass*, when I was slightly more mature, that I was able to appreciate the finesse that was mecha. Yes, I still did find the mecha fights utterly boring, and yes, I did prefer the politics and intrigue of the plot more. But at this age, I was at Jeanne Piaget's stage of formal operation (I've been studying for my psych class, so bear with my nerdiness please), which meant I was more capable of analyzing abstract and hypothetical situations. I started caring less about the mecha as weapons between two people and more as their machinery. This is probably one of the earliest indicators that I would be interested in the functionality of the technical, which probably has now evolved into my architecture fangirlness. But I digress.

Mecha anime show people getting into the mechas. They show people using them. *Gundam* designs and weapons have evolved over time and storylines. Most mechas are humanoid in shape, but some shows, such as *Voltron*, depict mecha as animals. Some have charging points, others have been ordered to be cleaned. Traditionally, mechas are usually just machinery, but there have been overlaps with biotechs, in which cyber integrated beings are operable by a pilot – *Neon Genesis Evangelion* is an example of such.

But has anyone ever questioned how mechas work? Has anyone actually broke down the amount of existing metal that would go into making a machine 20 times the size of a human? How about the controls? There has to be some insane coding and wiring that goes into these mechas to make them move as swiftly and fluidly as they do. Each model has a specialized weapon that require even more material and finesse design. Not to mention the people in these anime who pilot the mechas – pilots in our world have to undergo insane tests, it only makes sense that mecha pilots would too. *Gundam Seed* had the interesting theory that only Coordinators, super enhanced engineered people, could operate

gundams. There was a whole episode about how a Normal (like you and I) tried and failed to operate a mecha in a fit of jealousy (he suffered a mental breakdown soon after). This is unrealistic in our world, since Coordinators don't exist and it'd be super limiting and unfair.



Furthermore, think of all the possibilities. In *Code Geass*, they use a mobile suit to make a huge pizza. We could use mechas in construction of high rise buildings and homes (I'm an architecture nerd, sue me). On the flip side, mecha could also be used as weapons of mass destruction and war.



Currently, there exists prototypes of mecha, but nothing is presumed to be mass produced for successful implementation. But we go to one of the most important schools, our disciplines enhancing these questions. If anyone can figure out how mechas work the way they do, I feel it should be us. I mean, what's a more fun way of overlapping our passions and our majors than creating and understanding a quintessential anime symbol? I know I've had more fun loving anime this way and I'm sure you will too.

WHY EVERYONE SHOULD WATCH MECHA



ETHAN CARTER
2ND YEAR, MATH AND DATA SCIENCE

STAFF WRITER

It's not just cuz big robots are cool

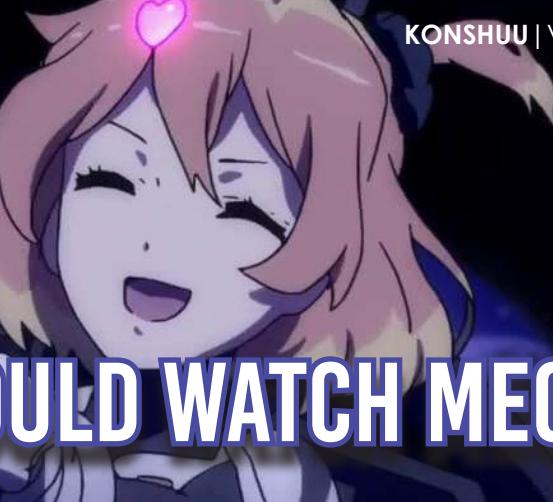
There is a bit of a stigma surrounding mecha anime in the west. There are people who will dismiss any anime with mecha in it, claiming it's "childish," "unrealistic," "mindless," or that "it's all the same." Even people who are fans of more popular mecha anime like *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann* or *Evangelion* will subsequently end their venture into the genre, perhaps under the assumptions that they have seen the best the genre has to offer. While not totally baseless, these complaints are a result of a short-sighted view into the genre. Just because an anime happens to have a giant, piloted robot does not mean it has to adhere to a particular plot structure or theme. The mecha genre is incredibly rich and diverse, with shows spanning all sorts of other genres, targeted at all sorts of audiences. In short, there's a mecha for everyone.

Macross is a mecha franchise known for two things in particular: love and music. Each series in the franchise features both of these aspects as central themes. Fans of drama and romance will be captivated by the relationships and love triangles seen throughout the shows. And with genres ranging from Japanese pop to rock 'n' roll, any fan of anime music will surely find something to enjoy. *Macross Delta*, the most recent series, even has a full idol group, if you're into that sort of thing.



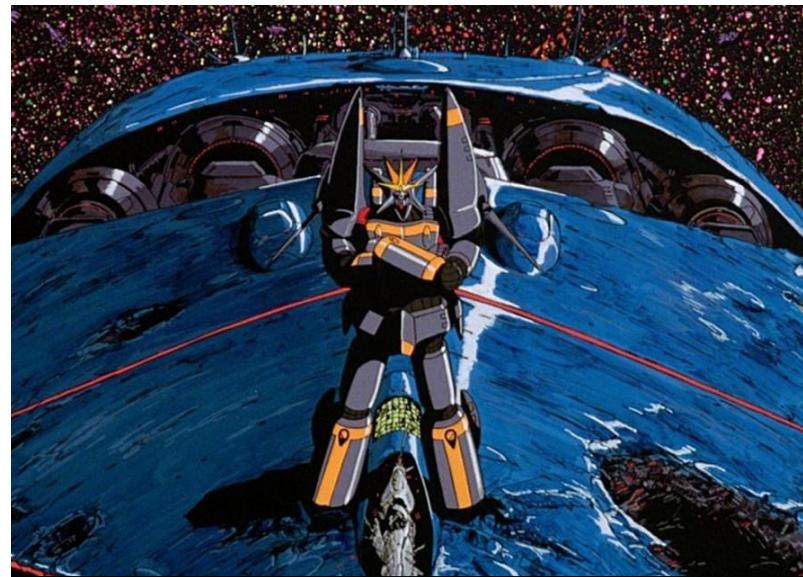
Step aside Love Live

For those looking for a more mature, realistic show, the mecha genre offers plenty. *Gundam* (a franchise that most recognize but have not experienced) concerns itself with themes like war atrocities, and the role of children on the battlefield. The *Patlabor*



OVA series is a more light-hearted, though very realistic, example of the mecha genre. This show, which borders on slice-of-life at points, centers on a rookie policewoman who joins a special police division which uses giant robots to fight crime.

Fans of the hot-blooded action of *Gurren Lagann* should check out the similarly hot-blooded *Getter Robo* franchise, whose themes of evolution and overcoming adversaries through willpower served as direct inspiration for TTGL. And speaking of inspiration, the *Evangelion*-inspired series *RahXephon*, which has a similar focus on psychological themes, but more spotlight on romance, is a great pick for people wanting more *Evangelion*. Fans of either series would be interested in watching one of Gainax's earlier works, *Gunbuster*, featuring similar psychological themes to those found in Eva, and a hot-blooded protagonist that would fit right into TTGL.



Gunbuster's titular mech doing a pose that would make Kaminarimori proud

And, of course, if descriptions like "unrealistic" and "mindless" catch your attention, there certainly are a plethora of shows for you. Shows like *Mazinkaiser SKL*, or *Getter Robo: Armageddon*, where things like "a coherent story" and "making sense" take a back seat to pure action. Based on all of this, I feel it's wrong to dismiss a genre based on the stereotypes associated with it. Having giant robots really does not say much about its content or plot. When it comes to mecha anime, just like with any other anime, the only way to know if it's something you'll enjoy is to watch it yourself.

GUNDAM, WARS, AND TECHNOLOGY



BENSON PENG

2ND YEAR, ENGINEERING AND PHYSICS

STAFF WRITER

Is it time to create a mecha?

When Elon Musk tweeted, "It is time to create a mecha," I was lying on my bean bag, listening to "Mobile Suit" from *Gundam UC* OST, and gawking at a picture of NZ-666 Kshatriya. I knew the moment I saw the notification pop up on my browser that it would be special. Am I perhaps witnessing the birth of Anaheim Electronics, the mega-corporation of the Universal Century timeline responsible for producing the RX Series Gundams? Or is this tweet the first hint of the master plan of Aeolia Schenberg, the inventor of Gundams and Orbital Elevators in the Anno Domini timeline, to eradicate all wars? Aside from my outburst of Chuunibyou (a mythical disease characterized by adolescent delusions), there is a rare quality of the *Gundam* franchise that I rarely find in any other anime: a conjunction of giant cool mechs and reflections about the world around it.

One of the most essential themes in the entire *Gundam* franchise is its firm opposition to wars, and as the setting of the newer *Gundam* series change, so does the face of wars. The original Universal Century Gundams of the 1979 era mostly features total wars between superpowers that harks back to memories of World War Two. The Principality of Zeon, which uses the existence of New Types as an excuse to wage wars against the "inferior" Earth Federation, is an indirect reference to the Axis powers of the war. In newer Gundams such as *Gundam 00*, the show is a youthful and rebellious outcry against both *Gundam*'s old formula and the current state of the world: total wars are replaced with proxy wars fought by three different superpowers --- Union (US), AEU (EU), and Human Reform League (China/Russia) --- in a zero sum game for prestige and resources in a post oil world. And this time, instead of having a civilian thrown into a *Gundam*, we have a disillusioned ex-child-soldier from a terrorist organization birthed from one of the proxy wars in Middle East voluntarily take up arms to fight against the "twistedness of the world" that is the scourge of war.

It is rare to see an anime that actively confronts the subject of different kinds of wars.

Despite its variation and changes, *Mobile Suit Gundam* is perhaps one of the oldest continuing anime franchises, and has pioneered the genre of "real robots" as opposed to the more prevalent "super robots" at its time. Real robots do not have quasi magical abilities and use conventional, albeit futuristic weapons. For example, one of the most fearsome weapon system in nearly all *Gundam* universes are the "Funnels" and its derivatives in other timelines. A Funnel is a type of cluster drone weapon that operates in swarms to overwhelm enemies using its mounted beam cannon. In the real world, perhaps as a morbid surprise, shadows of Funnels begin to show up in several defense projects involving smart missiles and smart drones. I am often surprised how accurately the *Gundam* franchise depict future technologies. The devastating power of the funnels fascinates and scares me with its implications. The space colonies on the five Lagrangian Points of the Earth - Moon System showed me fascinating applications of orbital mechanics.

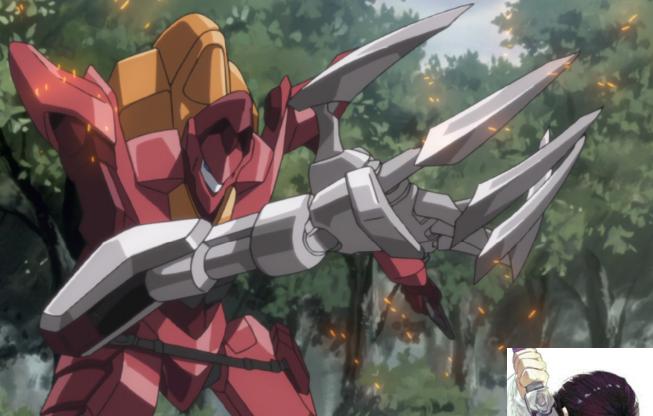


Earth Sphere Map

The Orbital Elevators in *Gundam 00* intrigued me so much that I once bothered my physics professor about it in one of his office hours.

Gundam, for its monstrous size, thousand year lores, and brutal confrontation to real world problems, may not be a show that everyone enjoys. But if you enjoy realism in mecha, love epic mecha battles, and ponder heavy, serious narratives, then *Gundam* is a show you won't regret watching.

STAFF PICKS FAVORITE MECHAS



Guren MK - 2 | Code Geass



OS Michael | Shaman King



Shinkiro | Code Geass



Bananya | Bananya



Banshee Norn | Mobile Suit Gundam UC



Lagann | Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann

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AIGIS
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