

KONSHU

Mecha

vol. 55 #6



Asuka

Neon Genesis Evangelion

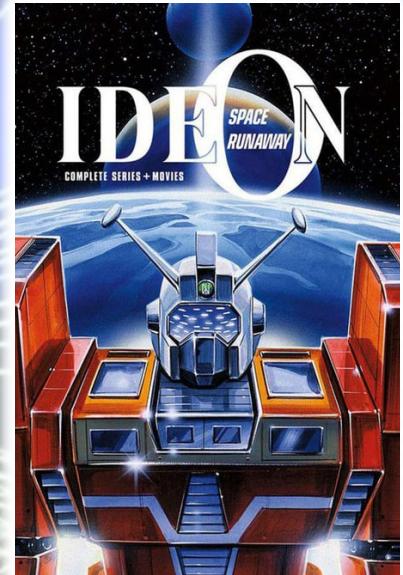
Art By Heaven Jones

THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED SERIES!

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

DENSETSU KYOJIN IDEON (SPACE RUNAWAY IDEON)

A true classic of robot anime from an auteur of the industry, *Ideon* ostensibly is the story of human conflict with a group of aliens. Of particular focus is the titular robot, which has mysterious origins and a truly bizarre set of capabilities which have existential implications.



Spring 1980, Sunrise
Directed by Yoshiyuki Tomino
39 Episodes

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

SHINKANSEN HENKEI ROBO SHINKALION



Winter 2018, Spring 2021, OLM
Directed by Takahiro Ikezou
76 Episodes (\$1), 41 Episodes (\$2)

Has shinkansen transforming into mecha in some great henshin sequences. In some sense it feels like the revival of classic super robot anime in the modern age. *Shinkalion* shares common elements with the *Brave Series* to the point where it almost feels like an honorary installment or spiritual successor. The CGI action sequences are surprisingly fluid which makes for engaging battles. Overall it's a bizarre, but fun experience that also includes references to other media such as Hatsune Miku, who just happens to be a recurring pilot character for some reason, or *Evangelion*, which also has its cast appear.

ZETA JA NAI



TONY T.

2nd Year, Economics and Data Science

Silent Voice > Anime Ja Nai

Writer



1986's *Mobile Suit Gundam ZZ* falls in rather unique territory, or, as unique as a piece of media can get in a franchise which largely remains the same between entries, in a subcategory which hinges on the basic concept of selling toys to children, in a medium which celebrates mediocrity which caters to fans with identical products year after year. That sounds incredibly negative, but plenty of *Gundam* mecha anime have remained enjoyable for me and numerous other fans, more than four decades since the franchise's inception. Most often this is under the promise of presenting morally and tonally complex worlds with interesting political or militaristic implications.

In its very early moments, or even in its initial premise, *Gundam ZZ* promises none of this. As the only *Gundam* entry to directly follow a previous one's final episode with little to no time gaps, the aptly-named *Double Zeta* brazenly establishes the difference between it and its predecessor, *Zeta*. Where *Zeta* was a complex military narrative with a number of distinct political factions, intense interpersonal drama, and a general serious tone, *Gundam ZZ* concludes its first episode (largely a recap) with the now-famous "Anime Ja Nai", or "It's Not Anime" opening song. This may seem inconsequential to those without context. *Zeta*'s final episode, true to the construction of the rest of the series, is incredibly grimdark, with over two-thirds of its main cast either dead, missing in action, or in a coma. Airing the week after *Zeta*, *ZZ* thus completely shifts the tone to something far more light-hearted and more comedy-focused. This has resulted in its general lack of popularity amongst even the most ardent fans, with a large number generally skipping the series for the next chronological entry, *Char's Counterattack*.

As someone who did stick through all 47 episodes of *Double Zeta*, though, something unusual overcame me as I continued through. *ZZ* became entertaining. It isn't as though *ZZ* suddenly changed, resulting in a higher level of quality, but rather, I began to realize what Tomino Yoshiyuki, in his often confusing wisdom, was attempting. Rather than continuing after *Zeta*, the first half or so of *ZZ* works as a palette cleanser for the brutality that viewers of *Zeta* are just coming off of. In that way, though *ZZ* does later shift to a middle ground between its initial silliness of having teenagers completely outwit established hardened military personnel and a political landscape more akin to the original or *Zeta*, its greatest strength comes from complimenting its predecessor. It suffers, then, from being categorized completely as a different show. With all its differences, *ZZ* should, in a categorical sense, definitely be

distinct from *Zeta*, but the separation misportrays *ZZ* as a strange side entry, when its start should really be considered a sort of declining action from the climax of *Zeta*'s ending. In no better way is this shown than the finale, which strongly concludes plot points from both series in a succinct, if not somewhat contrived manner. It is definitely of lower quality, but I believe said quality shift is exaggerated and misinterprets *ZZ*'s intentions. After all, the first episode of *Double Zeta* aired right after the last of *Zeta*, and they share chronology in rather crucial ways - one would never watch *Double Zeta* without first having seen *Zeta*.

Though I play defense for *ZZ*, there are certain obvious missteps that are completely warranted. I find no fault in the followup having more levity than its predecessor, but *Double Zeta* struggles in characterizing certain stoic *Zeta* characters like Haman Karn or Bright Noa. Of particular note is Haman Karn, who is relegated from a commanding, intimidating presence, to yet another love interest for *ZZ* protagonist Judau Ashta. On that note, the series severely over relies on the plot contrivance of female characters having unrequited love for a male character, especially Judau. While this was and is always an unfortunately prevalent piece of character development for many female characters in *Gundam*, it may be at its absolute worst in *Double Zeta*. Finally, there are certain elements of *ZZ* that, whilst played for comedy, read as rather troubling and problematic, most notably in the character of Elpeo Ple.



Outside of those faults, I still do not believe I can call *Double Zeta* a great series. It has too much tonal inconsistency, narrative contrivances, and overall lack of care for the media it is founded upon, for me to claim that. What I can say, though, is that I consider it at least an adequate followup to *Zeta* in that it pairs up well as a complement. The majority of *Gundam* fans seemingly begin *Double Zeta* with the expectation of a typical *Gundam* series. Under that lens, it is natural that the discussion around the series is that of disappointment. Yet, *Double Zeta* isn't a standalone entry - it is the only actual direct followup series within the franchise, and I can't fault the experimentation, especially because it wasn't entirely ineffective. 目新しいアニメじゃない, *ZZ* is a worthy counterbalance and follow up to *Zeta*.

STARSHIP TROOPERS: THE FIRST HARD SCI-FI MECHA PIECE OF FICTION IS... FASCIST?



BLAKE MORRISON

2nd Year, English and Japanese

"Come on, you apes! You wanna live forever?" –unknown platoon sergeant, 1918
"Who the hell cares? I don't want to die here like a dog, you asshat!" –the sergeant's platoon, probably

Writer

"A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects."

—Robert A Heinlein



Starship Troopers, the 1959 science fiction novel by Robert A. Heinlein as well as the 1988 OVA adaptation, features some really cool mecha. That is, it features these armored-suits used by the soldiers of the Mobile Infantry. What's the Mobile Infantry? Oh, they're the shock troops of the Terran Federation. And what's that? Oh, in this novel's vision of the future, the Terran Federation is the singular and unopposed human world (and interstellar) government ruled by a military oligarchy. The common people still vote for their representatives, but only those who have served at least two years with the Federation, usually as part of the military, are enfranchised. The Federation is also at war with this alien species, Arachnids, but most people just call them bugs because they look like them. The Arachnids are also described as being "communal entities, the ultimate dictatorship of the hive" and a showcase of "just how efficient a total communism can be when used by a people actually adapted to it by evolution." I'll remind you that *Starship Troopers* was written by a pro-military American at the peak of the Cold War. And who are the human heroes who oppose the biologically communist threat of the Arachnids but the Mobile Infantry, equipped in armored suits and rocket launchers that can fire nukes at socialist bugs with the ease of a boy firing spitballs at a beehive. These gallant soldiers don't question orders, they follow them. To the

T. They strive to terminate the communist-coded threat of a species whose motivations they don't understand. As far as the military brass lets them know, coexistence between the Arachnids and humanity is supposedly impossible. Their orders? Kill or be killed. So they kill. I hope that I don't have to point out the painful irony of this premise.



But notwithstanding all its fascist red flags, *Straight Troopers*, the novel and the OVA adaptation (a fairly loose adaptation, that is), still features some really cool mecha. As the title of this article suggests, the Mobile Infantry powered armor is, as far as I know, the first instance of a real robot mecha in fiction. While the early 50s saw the release of super robot mecha anime like Astro Boy and Gigantor, it wasn't until *Mobile Suit Gundam* in 1979 that the real robot genre of mecha anime started in earnest. To clarify, a "super robot" is less based in hard sci-fi technology than it is in soft sci-fi elements like magic and mythical origins; it also isn't usually piloted by the protagonist directly through a cockpit but rather through voice commands or telepathy. Conversely, a "real robot" is manufactured through conventional means, mostly uses conventional weaponry, and is piloted directly. The Mobile Infantry powered armor, appearing in print almost a full 20 years before the first broadcast of *Mobile Suit Gundam*, fits the real robot definition like a glove, a fully mechanized one, with thrusters and launchers for armaments, and maybe a cup holder or two.



The only objection I can see to the powered armor being a real robot mecha in the sense that the Gundam is a real robot mecha is the difference in scale. Indeed, many artistic renditions of the powered armor make it look less like a mecha and more like a suit of, well, armor. However, descriptions in the novel make it clear that, although the powered armor is worn like a human wears their skin in order not to interfere with the user's sense of traversal, the armor itself is more than a thin layer of metal. Think Master Chief or the Doom Guy but much bulkier, with built in rocket launchers, and the ability to propel its user great distances with rocket thrusters. The powered armor, both in its depiction in the novel and in the 1988 OVA, is a fine-tuned killing machine, saddled with none of the samurai-esque grandiosity of Gundam designs, to compare it to one of many real robot anime mecha that overly stretch one's suspension of "is this really a real robot?" disbelief. But if the mecha was all there is to *Starship Troopers*, there wouldn't be much else to say. Some of you mecha enjoyers reading this might be fixated on the powered armor right now, but I'm sure most of you are still curious about and disturbed by the politics of the people using the powered armor that I front-loaded this article with. That said, the Mobile Infantrymen aren't the source of the problem here, but they do perpetuate it in their wilful ignorance of and subservience to a blatantly fascist regime. The Terran Federation is fascist, and *Starship Troopers*, the novel at least, tells us that this is a good thing. I know what you're thinking, dear reader. I'm thinking the same thing: What the fuck.



For as controversial as the novel it's based on is, the *Starship Troopers* OVA is a dry and tame piece of media, lacking all of the thought-provoking, if problematic, political commentary of the original. To be frank, the only reason I watched the OVA was to have an excuse to write about the novel for this mecha-themed issue of Konshuu. I regard the novel as worth reading at least once because it forces the reader to ask themselves uncertain and uncomfortable questions such as: What does it mean to belong to a state (or any group, really) and have the privilege to help decide its fate via enfranchisement? *Starship Troopers* claims that it means responsibility, the ability to recognize the needs of the group over the individual. More specifically, it claims that restricting political enfranchisement, a vote, to those who have served in the military and restricting higher positions in the government to high ranking military officials, will ensure civil stability. The foundation of this argument lies in how, through their service, veterans supposedly recognize the needs of the collective over the individual more than anyone else, and yet real-world history has proven such logic false time and time again.

with the many veterans who have become fascist dictators and undermined their own states with ethnic genocide among other atrocities. Nonetheless, the novel unabashedly portrays this system of rule by veterans as ideal, turning into full-on militaristic propaganda at times. "...all correct moral rules derive from the instinct to survive; moral behavior is survival behavior above the individual level," is what the novel's protagonist is made to believe by one of his "history and moral philosophy" teachers. Interstellar war between species is, in the view of the Terran Federation, the ultimate form of survival above the individual level, a social darwinist scheme of survival of the fittest species. Considering the loss of life that social darwinism has brought about just within our own species, it makes me shudder to think what pain it would cause on a interstellar, inter-sentient species scale.



I've hardly discussed the OVA adaptation of *Starship Troopers* so far because there's not much to discuss about it that the novel doesn't cover in greater depth. Given how its marketing emphasizes the powered armor above everything else, the OVA itself is surprisingly light on action until the final episode, from which all the images in this article were taken. Here's my advice: if you're a mecha enjoyer, you're better off skipping to the final episode of the OVA. Instead of putting yourself through the milquetoast coming-of-age snoozefest that is the OVA's first five episodes, read the book. The OVA depicts the powered armor in all its real robot mechanical glory, but it lacks any of the incredibly problematic yet thought provoking political and philosophical commentary of the original novel that to this day makes it a highly debated, and therefore valuable, piece of fiction. I think it's fairly obvious which side of the *Starship Troopers* debate I stand on. Although I appreciate *Starship Troopers'* clean and athletic prose, its gritty and believable depiction of interstellar warfare waged with its iconic powered armor, and its ability to baffle me with its politics, I unequivocally disavow all of its militaristic messages. Sure, I can see the appeal of morals like taking responsibility for one's own actions and getting to a point where you feel like you deserve the societal rights that are otherwise given to you for free. But if you impose those morals onto others and society as a whole, we're going to have a fascist dictatorship sized problem. In other words: no, Heinlein. Being able to do calculus and cook a tasty meal and write a sonnet and program a computer (being the so-called multitalented "competent man") still doesn't make it right to unquestioningly take orders from a fascist regime to genocide an entire species of sentient "insects." If specialization is for insects, then the mobile infantry is the most specialized mob of killer insects there is.

THE (F)UTILITY OF HUMAN PROGRESS



Nicholas Wonosaputra

3rd Year, Neurobiology and Psychology

robots r dum

Writer

Those who love *Code Geass* have a tendency to deny the notion that it is a mecha anime, or believe that it should at least be considered to be something beyond that. Personally, I'm not interested in genre or subgenre distinctions, but allow me to make a baseline observation: *Code Geass* has mechs. And lots of them.

The reason why one might go so far to deny this reality lies in how little the mechs actually contribute to the story. Even some of the show's creators seem to believe this, as the manga apparently forgoes mechs entirely (not that I've read it). After all, the role the robots have in the story is to be a commonplace tool of war that replaced the modest tank, as evidenced in the setting exposition dump at the start of every episode. Thus, it wouldn't be too far of a reach to assume that the robots, lovingly named knightmares, are present for the same reason that the angels in *Neon Genesis Evangelion* explode into crosses: because they look cool.



While I find the idea that the manga is capable of avoiding the use of mechs in its story to be amusing, I believe that knightmares serve an additional narrative function as a visual representation of scientific progress, which is often conflated with, if not equivalent to, the concept of human progress. Thus, the knightmares must be present in order to provide a contrast to the geass

be present in order to provide a contrast to the geass order, a religious sect whose supernatural powers are simply different manifestations of human ambition. The fact that geass, and the suffering and isolation it always entails, remains relevant in a society defined by its exponential technological growth serves to prove the notion that, "in every age in every place the deeds of man remain the same." *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*, from which the quote originates, utilizes the contrast between its sci-fi setting and our modern world to prove this point, while *Gundam* explores this concept through human and technological coevolution. *Code Geass*, for better or worse, simply chose the most efficient path by demonstrating the repetitive failings of a technologically advanced society within a 5-year timespan.

Aesthetically, the knightmares also borrow traits from the sleeker and sharp frames of the evangelions in order to stand out from the blocky architecture of its sister Sunrise franchise, *Mobile Suit Gundam*. This also allows the show to justify the ridiculous stunts these pilots are able to perform in these metal shells. These insane stunts, especially Suzaku's Lancelot's 1080° spin kick, sell the absurdity of every action sequence throughout the series. The imaginative power of animation is the best medium to go beyond the realm of realism, which is a big reason why I am so enamored by animation to begin with. *Code Geass* is capable of reigning in the chaotic nature of absurdism such that the internal logic of its world remains consistently on the brink of collapse, which maintains a greater meta-textual tension throughout its runtime as we await the project's demise.



THE 2 CENT CORNER

Do you like mecha anime? Why or why not?



Kev Wang
Writer

"I do like mecha anime! Mecha provides writers with the creative freedom to create vulnerable and realistic characters who can still go out there and kick some ass. They don't have to have insane acrobatic skills or magical powers or inhuman strength. For example, in *Darling in the FRANXX*, these weak, hormonal, immature, and frankly typical teenagers are tasked with saving humanity. Only with mecha does this make any semblance of sense."



Miranda Zhang
Graphic Designer
and Artist

"I've never been able to get into mecha anime, probably because I'm just not into giant robot fights, but I don't know if I dislike the genre or just the mechs. There are a few shows that I've enjoyed (e.g., *Code Geass*, *Eva*), but it might be because the story and characters were the highlights rather than the mech fights. I do need to watch more mecha anime though..."



Ewik Nelson
Writer

"I happen to like anime with mecha in them. I don't necessarily care about mecha."



Jen Zhao
Artist

"I haven't watched a lot of mecha anime so I don't have an definitive answer to whether I like them or not, but I did enjoyed watching *Code Geass* when I was in middle school because it was my chuunibyou era lol."



Heaven Jones
Artist

"I like mecha anime the same reason why I like *Pacific Rim* and *Godzilla*, sometimes all you need is big robots fighting."



Blake Morrison
Writer

"I like mecha anime, but not because of the mecha specifically. The best mecha shows I've seen (*NGE*, *Patlabor*, *08th MS Team*) are great because of the characters, with the mecha mainly serving to elevate the characters with spectacle and, if you're lucky, symbolism. Mecha can be cool, don't get me wrong, but cool robots aren't enough. The robots need interesting pilots."

What do you consider your favorite anime opening? What exactly do you like about it?

"I can't really choose a favorite but "Friendship" by Ritsuko Okazaki from *Say I love you (Suki-tte li na yo)* is one of the most interesting. Personally, I find the anime distasteful and creepy, but the opening is a beautiful piece of art, and the only one that I can say I wanted to skip less than the actual episodes themselves. It's also an object of intrigue because the entire name of the song is "Friendship ~For Suki-tte li na yo~", which wouldn't be so strange if the anime was not released 8 years."

"One of my favorites is *Nichijou* OP 1! It's one of the few openings I never skipped while watching the anime because it feels like it fits so well into the episode, almost like it's one of the episode's segments reintroducing the main characters. The animations are full of personality, and the song is too catchy! Everything about the opening is just so fun and cute! (And I love watching their little dances on repeat haha)"

"Possibly Sorairo Days from *Gurren Lagann*. It's epic like the show and makes me want to kick reason to the curb and do the impossible."

"My favorite anime opening is *Madoka Magica*'s opening "Connect." I think the cheerful lyrics and the sad lyrics really shows how deceitful this show can be for its first-time viewers and it is such a perfect fit for the show. Of course, it is also just objectively a good song and I still remember all of its lyrics till this day."

"My favorite anime opening is the 1990's *Sailor Moon* opening. I love the guitar parts and just the nostalgia."

"A Cruel Angel's Thesis. I don't think any anime will ever affect me as much as *NGE* has. I also don't think I've listened to any anime opening as much as I have to *NGE*'s. Like any sane human being, I like the chorus, but the best part starts at 'aoi kaze ga ima.' Fight me."

FULL METAL PANIC! IS FUN.

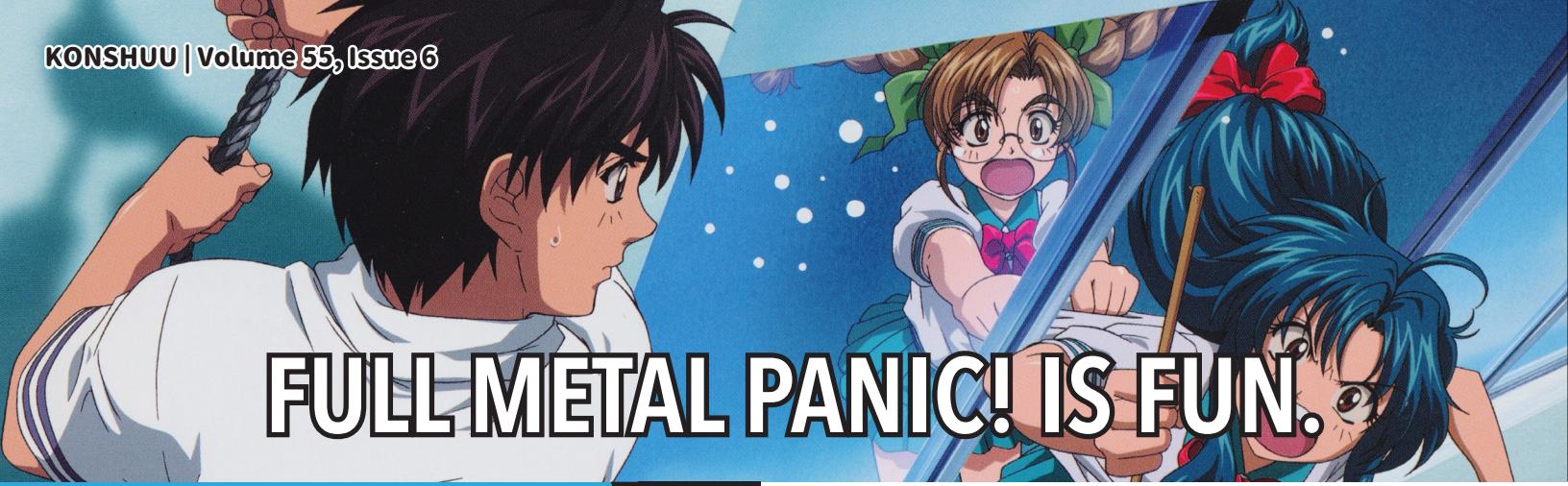


TONY T.

2nd Year, Economics and Data Science

Invisible Victory doesn't exist.

Writer



In an age where most lauded media seems to require metatextual knowledge of a genre as a whole in order to be interpreted, I occasionally find myself reminiscing over past eras of anime. Generally, I've started primarily watching animation from the 1980s and 1990s, though obviously, as a child of the 2000s, that era also falls within this purview. This is not to say that those eras were inherently any better than the current anime climate, but they are extremely different. Nowadays, for instance, most new fantasy anime fall under the umbrella term of *isekai*, and almost expect viewers to understand the tropes associated with that classification.

Having watched far too many anime, I am familiar with the vast majority of these tropes, but inherently, I feel that these series are weaker for not establishing its elements internally, instead expecting viewers to have already seen other media. Even worse are "genre-blend" series, which have gotten far more prevalent recently as well. Series like *Macross Delta*, for instance, expect its viewers to be familiar with two different sets of tropes - in this example, mecha and idols - with the main appeal not even being a decent story but rather a potentially intriguing "what if". Essentially, I personally believe that the current stagnation in anime highlights the importance of having media stand out on its own, irrespective of meta elements that could be related to it.

When considering the proper way to mix distinct genres, I immediately think about *Full Metal Panic*. It's not necessarily that the series is extremely well plotted or that it features the most in depth characters, but it simply achieves both the traditional



objectives of a military action series and a romantic comedy anime to somewhat adequate levels of success. The military action portions are occasionally difficult to get through because of the overabundance of factions and motives, but provide an interesting backdrop to a series which would otherwise be a generic odd-couple romantic comedy. The two halves of *Full Metal Panic* mix surprisingly well given the loose tone it adopts, at times being emotionally heartfelt yet at other times, equally nonsensical and silly.

Still, the first season of *Full Metal Panic* and the second season (in terms of narrative, not release date) *The Second Raid* can feel bogged down by tonal whiplash. That's perhaps part of the point - to juxtapose the issues suffered by a normal high school student lacking in existential stress with those of a soldier trained from childhood to precisely follow rigid rules. It's also something that naturally comes with mixing two genres that inherently have generally differing tones. Still, I'd argue that's part of why I still adore those two seasons. Flaws and all, they feel charming in how the jarring mood shifts are relevant in-universe. However, the spinoff season, *Fumoffu*, manages to circumvent these issues. By removing the serious militaristic elements from its active narrative and only keeping them as part of series protagonist Sagara Sousuke's character backstory, it manages to be utterly hilarious by having extremely exaggerated moments without any counteractive feelings of incongruity.

Sousuke's mindset is deliberately strange, but it doesn't feel contrived, which is the result of *Fumoffu* having a previous season with serious material to characterize its characters. It's just emphasized more notably as the boke portion of the all-too-common traditional Japanese manzai dynamic. This element present within *Fumoffu* is what truly makes *Full Metal Panic* a series I think about fondly as a whole, despite obvious issues. It works alone without context aside from itself, something sorely lacking in the recent decade of Japanese animation. One can easily surmise the basic ideas of the characters without needing to shift through the somewhat lacking first season, as several acquaintances of mine have. This has resulted in *Fumoffu* being fairly accessible as a comedy detached from *Full Metal Panic* itself. Still, I don't believe that's the preferable way to view the series, as it somewhat ignores the tone shifts that, yes, make it inconsistent, but also make it unique. Even nowadays, in the midst of numerous other series which attempt similar things, I believe that *Full Metal Panic* most successfully manages to merge the two. *Fumoffu* is by far the best season, but that's only with the context of the other two in mind.

YUUSHA-OU GAOGAI GAR - THE ESSENCE OF SUPER ROBOT



Max R.

3rd Year, Japanese

Yes, I originally watched it for the opening too.

Writer

Ever since the debut of *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann*, I have come to recognize my unique fondness for super robot anime and would eventually go on to enjoy what I've seen of titles such as *Kidou Butouden G Gundam*, *Shinkansen Henkei Robo Shinkalion*, *Nekketsu Saikyou Go-Saurer*, or if it counts, *Giant Robo the Animation: Chikyuu ga Seishi Suru Hi*. At the end of the day though, I would say that my favorite super robot anime is none other than *Yuusha-Ou GaoGaiGar*, which I feel perfectly embodies the essence of "super robot" through its presentation and charisma; it may seem like a common thread between my favorite anime, but beware if you're epileptic as it can be an extremely 'flashy' show in the literal sense and at some points I nearly felt like I was going to have a seizure while not being prone to them myself.

Yuusha-Ou GaoGaiGar or *King of Braves GaoGaiGar*, composed of a 49-episode television series followed by *Final*, an 8-episode OVA, is the final completed installment of Sunrise's *Brave Series*, a collection of children's mecha anime also consisting of *Exkaiser*, *Fighbird*, *Da-Garn*, *Might Gaine*, *J-Decker*, *Goldran*, *Dagwon* and *Betterman*, the last of which is actually a spin-off of *GaoGaiGar* that takes place within the same universe but supposedly differs quite significantly. There were plans for yet another sequel anime following the OVA's release, but it unfortunately never came into fruition due to the franchise's declining popularity; *GaoGaiGar* has also received projects in other mediums, though I haven't delved into them as of this moment. In stark contrast to other works I have discussed, much of my reasoning for enjoying *GaoGaiGar* is rather primal and straightforward, both tying in with the series's overall quality, but parts of it also attributable to a newfound sense of nostalgia I experienced while watching it as well as the general prospect of colossal robots smashing into each other; this nostalgic element largely relates to how *GaoGaiGar*, and the *Brave Series* as a whole for that matter, displays a striking resemblance to old *Transformers* anime, some of my first anime ever, in its mecha designs and the personification of said mecha; this makes sense considering how initial concept designs for *Exkaiser* were actually intended to be for *Transformers*, not that it's an incredibly relevant detail or anything, but it serves to further enhance my personal enjoyment of the series.

Initially, *GaoGaiGar*'s narrative is rather simplistic, concerning an alien invasion of Earth by sentients known as Zonders, able to possess and manipulate machinery to evolve to higher states

of existence. Suppressing said invasion is the GGG, a defense force specialized in dealing with extraterrestrial threats, and on the front lines lies the main protagonist, Guy Shishioh, piloting a mechanical lion, Galeon, that fuses with other machines to transform into the titular robot, *GaoGaiGar*. From here, the series escalates from seeming one-off encounters with the Zonders to eventually culminating in greater galactic conflicts between man and machine, all while boasting superb production values that eclipse previous *Brave Series* installments. This ever-broadening sense of scale coincides with values of heroism and bravery that the series emphasizes, just as its title suggests, as humanity confronts increasingly lethal obstacles. Now, it goes to say that the series is far from flawless, suffering from numerous issues, many of which are attributable to its pacing and writing, though simultaneously, *GaoGaiGar* is hardly the type of thing that I imagine people would watch specifically for its plot; the first twenty or so episodes more strongly adhere to a conventional monster of the week formula. During this time, background elements and cast members are still introduced so it doesn't feel to be a waste with their importance perhaps becoming more obvious in retrospect, though on an initial viewing, early parts can understandably feel to be somewhat of a slog. The show truly picks up around the halfway point where the situation becomes more grave, the scale of conflict expands dramatically, and another major character is introduced.

From here on out, the pacing becomes more abrupt, perhaps too abrupt towards the very end, but development upon development ensues to make for an overall more engaging experience in the latter half. *GaoGaiGar Final* cranks the 'epic' factor up even further, this time targeting an older audience and allowing itself more freedom to finally go all out. In terms of spirit, *GaoGaiGar* is at least loosely in line with titles such as the aforementioned *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann*, being quite a hot-blooded adrenaline rush on occasions with plenty of screaming attack names present throughout; its intensity best exemplified by how Guy's voice actor ended up outright destroying multiple microphones over the course of the series's recording. Aesthetically, *GaoGaiGar* is absolutely gorgeous as a title produced towards the tail end of cel animation. Its action sequences in regards to both combat and transformations are incredible and reinforcing the latter is an interesting emphasis on the logic of how some of the transformation sequences function, with meticulous detail put into conveying how individual parts would merge as showcased in *Final Fusion* in particular. Someday I feel that I would need to revise my thoughts after having seen *Betterman* and rewatching *GaoGaiGar*, but for now, the coalescence of these elements establish the series as what I can attest to be a staple recommendation for super robot enjoyers.

MIXED THOUGHTS ON REBUILD OF EVANGELION



Tony T.

2nd Year, Economics and Data Science

I didn't forget to mention 1.0. I just don't think it's even really worth discussing, as it's almost identical to the originals.

Writer

Neon Genesis Evangelion is an anime that needs no introduction, so I won't give it one. Frankly, though the original series and *End of Evangelion* is one of my absolute favorite pieces of Japanese animation, I can't really say I've ever had the urge to discuss it. Among other reasons, I believe that with how much analysis (and overanalysis) has been produced on the series, none of my opinions are really all that interesting. *Evangelion* is a one-of-a-kind anime with interesting direction from one of the industry's true auteurs, a poignant script, and phenomenal music. Criticisms do exist, but they themselves have been addressed time and time again. If there's one piece of media that I really have no desire to discuss formally, it'd be *Evangelion* (or perhaps *Lain*).

So, why does this article exist? Unfortunately, the name *Evangelion* no longer refers solely to the original 26 episode anime, or its direct film tie-in. *Rebuild of Evangelion*, a tetralogy of films reinterpreting the *Evangelion* narrative, is far more controversial than the original series. Though many still enjoy it for the pure spectacle of seeing gorgeous mecha animation and overall providing fanservice for the series (which, itself may be missing the point), the *Rebuilds* are often described as lacking significant depth compared to their source material. Even the latter two films, which many describe as returning to the confusion of the original series, are generally considered less satisfying than the original.

I have mixed thoughts on the *Rebuilds*. The most obvious point of note is that they're completely unnecessary. There are but few rational explanations that can better explain their existence other than cynical capitalism. The praise that 3.0 and 3.0+1.0 receive is, in my view, just as flawed as the popular view of *Evangelion*.

being confusing for its own sake, as I believe that perspective is buoyed by those who haven't properly considered Anno Hideaki's intentions (though this isn't to deny the existence of worthwhile criticism). 3.0+1.0 in particular seems to merge the worst aspects of *Evangelion* and the worst aspects of popular Hollywood film directing. Still, I believe that some parts of the *Rebuilds* distinguish themselves enough to be fun in their own right, even if I can't see the films as truly being *Evangelion*.

Though 3.0 + 1.0 tried to be an "intellectual" film by including normal *Evangelion* messages on the nature of living and reality, it suffers because that point has been already said better by the same director in *End of Evangelion*. It invites a comparison, and thus feels hollow with directing that feels intent on capturing a larger audience with less subtlety or nuance. To contrast, then, 2.0 represents the best of what the *Rebuilds* eventually became. Instead of trying to recapture the magic of *Evangelion*, the second film uses the series as a base to tell a fun story about a child overcoming personal issues. None of the characters in 2.0 really resemble their original counterparts. Least of all is Ikari Shinji, who resolves the film's climax by charging into battle not unlike the culturally constructed image of a robot anime protagonist. Yet, because 2.0 divorces itself enough from the conceptual focus of *Evangelion*, this isn't as damning. The relationship between Shinji and Rei within 2.0 invites more comparison to, say, Renton and Eureka from *Eureka Seven*, than their original interactions. In this way, it's easier to take at face value. I can get invested in the action and the drama, in spite of it lacking depth, because the film, if viewed alone, doesn't imply much more.

The *Rebuilds* themselves are completely unnecessary, but only several of them are actively aggravating. 3.0 and 3.0 + 1.0, by suggesting far the more emotional and conceptual complexities of the original *Evangelion* in their narratives, are utterly disappointing because they simply are not, and can not be, as good. 2.0, on the other hand, succeeds in being a fun boy-meets-girl action romance narrative because it purposefully doesn't allude to more depth. Though a bit overly simple, the film is structured as a fine enough individual story. Particularly, the film's final climax, with Shinji sacrificing the entire world just to save Rei, is something that would make no sense in the original series, but feels cool under 2.0's different implications. If anything, the elements in 2.0 that only make sense if one has seen the originals, such as Asuka's inclusion, actively weigh it down. One could easily make the argument that this means the films would be even better had they been their own individual product. I believe this is undeniably true, yet given the existence of *Evangelion* as one of the most overcommercialized products in history, I'm at least glad that one of the *Rebuilds* was fun.



Staff Picks:

FAVORITE ROBOT

SYSTEM-∀99 ∀ GUNDAM

∀ GUNDAM



TONY T.

Kansas' Dust in the Wind comes to mind.

CHOU TENGEN TOPPA GURREN LAG-

TENGEN TOPPA GURREN LAGANN



EWIK NELSON

We evolve, beyond the person that we were a minute before. Little by little, we advance with each turn. That's how a drill works!

SHINKIRO

CODE GEASS



ANGEL MENDEZ

JIBUN WO...

EVANGELION UNIT-01

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION



MICHAEL MADAYAG

The knife is the least of your concerns.

CANTI

FLCL



BLAKE MORRISON

God

METTATON

UNDERTALE



FELICITY A

Who doesn't stan this robot?

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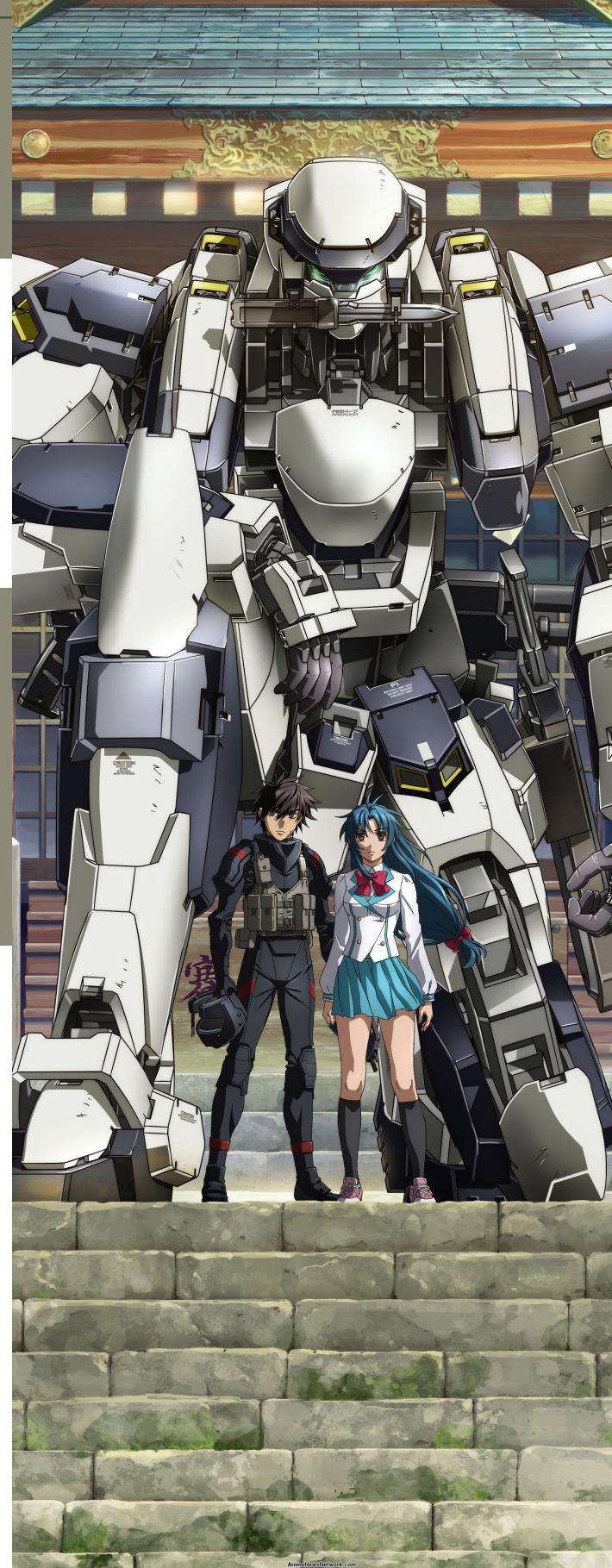
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Sousuke Sagara and Kaname Chidori

Full Metal Panic
Art By Xebec