



# Best Anime From The 1990s: Our Top 30 Picks (Series & Movies)

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“Back in my day anime was way better!”

Well let's put that statement to the test as we look back at the best anime series & movies that came out during the 90s.

Whether you were alive back then or not, I think we can all agree that the 90s anime aesthetic is just plain comfy. There's a lot to like here!

## 30. Key the Metal Idol



Feeling uncomfortable in your own skin is, unfortunately, normal.

But when you have to question whether you're human in general, it can only get worse.

That's the fate of our protagonist, Key. She has to go on a grand Pinocchio adventure of making 30,000 friends in order to become fully human. Don't question the number just roll with it.

Along the way we get some stern criticism and an allegoric look at what it means to be an idol in Japan. The show can get very weird, and really screws you up in the head from time to time.

But that's the charm of the show and what makes it so recognizable.

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## 29. Blue Submarine No. 6



In Blackfish 2: the Aquarian Avengers, the world has largely been submerged under water and is being attacked by fish-human mutants.



So our “I’m too old for this” protagonist dusts off his old snorkel and joins the crew of Blue submarine no. 6 to defeat the scientist behind all of this.

I think the show aged well. It’s only a 4-episode OVA but manages to set up its world pretty well. Plus it makes fish girl waifus a thing.

The CGI makes you want to cry, but at least it has that 90s nostalgia feeling to it. And if nothing else, it’s quite a different show to what you’ll find streamed today.

So if you feel like having a palate cleanser and have a few hours to spare, give it a look.

## 28. Fushigi Yuugi



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Sing it with me now: oh it's a 90s isekai, oh yes it's a 90s isekai.

So two girls get sucked into a book and have to find all the celestial warriors to summon Shenron, I mean Suzaku, in order to gain three wishes.

But all of that is secondary, really. As this is primarily a shoujo anime. Therefore you'll definitely feel the love tonight as constant sparks fly between these characters.

In addition, the main couple's love gets tested at every twist and turn, how romantic.

Later on some complications happen that crank up the difficulty here, but honestly through and through the show is about love. So if you're looking for a good old fashioned romance this show has you covered, all with that lovely 90s vibe.

## 27. Master Keaton



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Watching Master Keaton doesn't feel like you're watching a single story. It's more like watching a **compilation of dozens of narratives** with Keaton as one of the few constants.

The man himself is very intelligent and has an extremely diverse skillset, making him useful in most situations.

Be it about archeology, insurance, or a survival type scenario, Keaton has you covered.

There's also a fair bit of romance, as Keaton is lowkey a dreamer/romantic as well as plenty of humor. Especially whenever Keaton's dad is around.

Overall it's an extremely feel-good show that can teach you a thing or two along the way.

## 26. Martian Successor Nadesico



Of all the mecha shows mentioned in this list, Nadesico is probably the most light-hearted one, kind of.



The show almost feels like a slice of life/harem show that just happens to deal with giant robots on the side.

It both pokes fun at, but also embraces, a lot of tropes from its time, akin to Gurren Lagann for example. And it even has a mecha show inside of the mecha show. How mecha meta.

However, it's not all fun and games. This anime is very detailed and has plenty of heavy subject matter too.

And oh boy, it does **not hold back** when reminding us of how many people die in a war. And yes, it still is one of the lighter shows. The 90s were a sad & brooding time okay?

## 25. The Irresponsible Captain Tylor





If you're longing for a "genius protagonist" type show then I would highly recommend The Irresponsible Captain Tylor.

It centers around Tylor and his climb through the ranks in the midst of a space war.

The man is brilliant. Rick and Morty fan levels of genius, but he's also very laid back and zany.

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The man is such a masterful tactician that he leads one ship against a fleet and comes out unscathed.

He also must have a way with women, as he both seduced a spy and made her turn to his side as well as gain some... um favors. From a princess!

He is honestly putting the standards for men too high and I can't appreciate that.

But the show itself? Yeah, I can appreciate that.

## 24. Serial Experiments Lain



This show is best described in two ways: experimental, and being way ahead of its time.

It came out in 1998 and yet eerily predicted the importance of technology and how it would affect society.

It's **beyond trippy** with lots of symbolism, a killer soundtrack, and some nightmare fuel thrown in here and there.

It almost feels like a shounen where instead of the protagonist becoming stronger as the show goes on, they become more aware and depressed.

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If you're into computers and want to see what the presumed future of technology was back in the 90s, check out Serial Experiments Lain.

Or if you're fascinated with the human mind and how it can be affected by its surroundings I definitely recommend this show.

## 23. Digimon



Now if you want to call out Digimon for being a Pokémon rip off, just think of every isekai you've ever seen.

Now that we got that out of the way let's talk about the show.

I personally really liked the anime as a whole. The Digimon looked really cool, the evolutions were hype as all hell, and the cast was surprisingly diverse and complex.

I especially admire the fact that it handled some mature subject matters like death and divorce, so it actually has a factor of rewatchability for its now older audience.

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While the anime does closely follow some of the game series, I would argue it also stands alone. You can love the Digimon anime without needing to pick up any of the games.

## 22. Dragon Quest: Dai's Great Adventure





I feel like with Dragon Quest, a lot of attention falls to the games while the anime is revisited mostly out of nostalgia.

And admittedly, I think the anime itself is one of the weaker entries on this list.

But it has left behind a 90s legacy nevertheless. It's a pretty generic, but also a pretty good shounen with some interesting powers and lots of good fights.

I also wanted to bring it up as it's getting a 2020 adaptation and I think the odds are high of it getting the Hunter x Hunter treatment and dropping the fluff material, as well as polishing up the animation.

Also, if you pick Dai in Jump force I dislike you as a person.

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## 21. Hell Teacher Nube



If you're looking for some of that good 90s spooky horror then I suggest you watch the hell out of Hell Teacher Nube.

It's about a teacher who's also an exorcist. And also has a demonic hand. Wild I know.

The show is basically a monster of the week type deal where all kinds of spirits plague the teacher and his class.

I wouldn't call it gory, but it definitely has that old-school edge to it. As a lot of the monsters are just unsettling and exorcisms just seem like murder with extra steps.

Nevertheless, it's engaging as all (teacher) hell and it's a perfect choice for Halloween.

## **20. The Magnificent Zorro**



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Zorro is such a well-known character even beyond anime that I don't think I have to introduce him at length.



This anime ran from 1996 to 1997 and gave us all the sword whipping, justice fulfilling, identity-hiding goodness we've come to expect from the franchise.

For the better part of the show, the tone is actually really light with tons of comedic relief in each episode. Only to get **way more serious** by the ending.

And trust me, it's a good ending.

So if you want a classic vigilante-type show and more Z cuts that one can count, feel free to revisit The Magnificent Zorro.

## 19. Initial D



I think it's time to get Fast, Furious, and (sexually) Frustrated.

Initial D is all about street racing and the subculture that comes along with it.

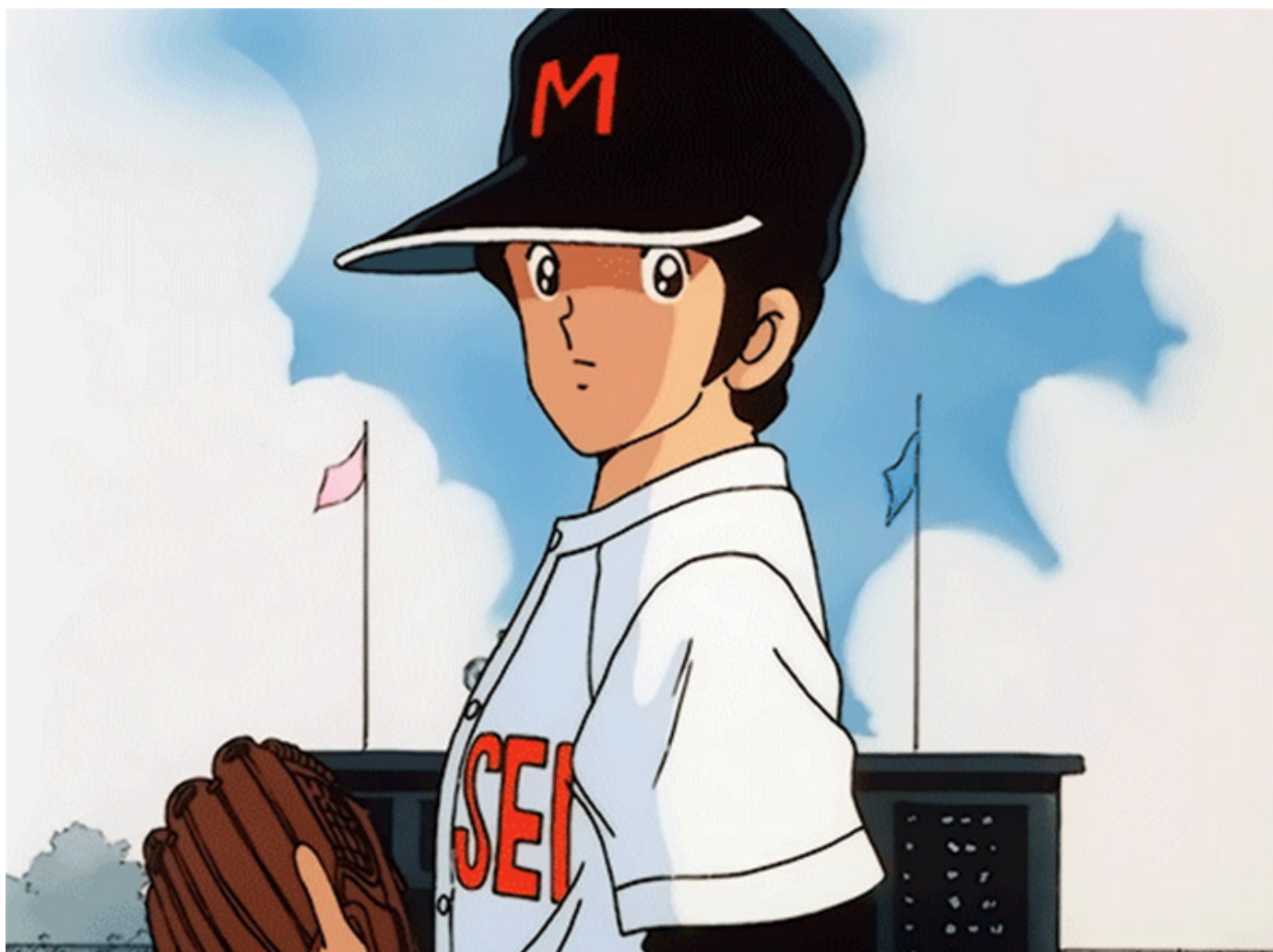
It almost feels like a modern sports anime/shounen in the sense that every episode holds a new race, with each one holding a lot of suspense and a big payout.

There's a background romantic plot, but definitely don't get into the show looking for a romantic drama. It's all about the cars and how to use them as efficiently as possible to claim the Drift King title.



You even come out of the show learning a lot about cars, which is not something you see everyday. So definitely give it a shot, just be warned of chunky CGI.

## 18. H2



Time for some “swing batter batter” in this fantastic baseball anime.

Airing in 1995, H2 follows two boys with the forehand strength of a 40 year old virgin as they try to build their baseball team from the ground-up.

The rest of the team is comparatively terrible. So all of the stakes are on our two protagonists, meaning that whenever they’re off-screen, not a lot is going to happen.

When they’re at the plate though, oof, be prepared for that strike 3 hype.

The show also has a lot of romance intertwined with the story but if you want any closure on that end I suggest picking up the manga. Both are great for hardcore baseball fans, but also great in general.