



RANDOM ANIME NEWS

ADV Announces Full Metal Panic

In Regular and Special Editions in June

ADV Films has announced that it will begin releasing the anime series *Full Metal Panic* in June with a regular DVD edition and a Special Edition. The first DVD holds four episodes (running time 100 minutes) at a

\$29.98 MSRP. The

Special Edition includes the first DVD, a t-shirt, and an art box designed to hold all six volumes of the series at a \$44.98 MSRP. Based on a manga (which is currently being serialized in ADV's

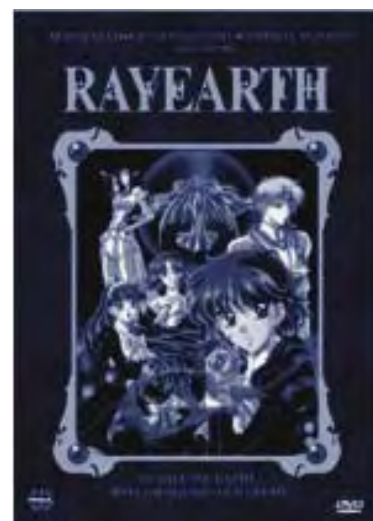
Newtype

magazine), the series features mecha combat, martial arts, international criminal intrigue, high school politics, and teen romance. It's directed by Kouichi Chigara (*Gate Keepers*, *Phantom Quest Corps*) and produced by GONZO Digimation (*Hellsing*, *Blue Sub No. 6*).



Manga Entertainment To Release Rayearth OVA Series

Manga Entertainment has announced that it will be releasing the three part original video animation series *Rayearth* on DVD on April 29, 2003. The OVA was released after the anime series *Magic Knight Rayearth* in Japan, and carries the truncated name to distinguish it. The lead characters are three young girls who've recently graduated from junior high and are called on to save the world. DVD features include a photo gallery, character bios, trailer, and both English and Japanese 5:1 surround sound. Running time is 180 minutes; MSRP is \$24.95.



The property is from a manga by Clamp, and it's been a bestseller in the U.S. from Tokyopop, which is relaunching the series in the "authentic" manga trade paperback format this month. Media Blasters has released the original anime series under the *Magic Knight Rayearth* title.

DVD Penetration To Reach 75% By Year's End According To Video Distributors



This week's Video Business includes a story from the National Association of Video Distributors annual conference indicating that most video distributors expect to see DVDs increase to about 70-75% of their sales by the end of 2003. For 2002, Baker & Taylor sales were about 55% DVD, but during the fourth quarter DVDs were capturing some 60-65% of the sales. Extrapolating from these trends and from first quarter sales in 2003, most of the distributors interviewed by Video Business indicated that a 75/25 breakdown would be about right for Q4 of 2003.

Since pop culture retailers are dealing with collectors, and the quality of DVDs is inherently better than VHS tapes, the switch to DVD has been much more rapid in that market. Many anime companies have stopped releasing VHS tapes altogether, and now big online retailers such as Anime Castle are liquidating their VHS stock. Only the biggest titles with huge TV exposure (e.g., *DBZ*) are still released in the VHS format, and by next year at this time, the triumph of the DVD format in anime may well be complete.

Tokyopop Announces Five New Manga Series

Including *Escaflowne*, *Saber Marionette J*

Tokyopop has announced five new manga series for launch in July. The lead release is *The Vision of Escaflowne*, written by Aki Katsu and based on the anime series. The *Escaflowne* feature received a limited theatrical release in the U.S., and the series had a brief run on Fox Kids in 01. Both the feature and the series were released in regular and special edition DVDs from Bandai (see "[Bandai Readies Escaflowne Releases](#)"). Bandai Toys also included *Escaflowne* in an anime toy set in 01. The shonen (boys) storyline features a schoolgirl whose tarot experience transports her to an alternate world where she battles an evil empire with a young prince she finds there.

Saber Marionette J, written by Satoru Akahori, is also based on an anime series released in the U.S. by Bandai. The story takes place in a world with no women, where

men have developed female androids to take their place. The hero finds three special androids (*Saber Marionettes*) that have the ability to feel emotions, and hold the key to mankind's salvation.

Wild Act is a humor manga by Rie Takada that stars a groupie looking for celebrity memorabilia. *Zodiac P.I.* is a shojo-ai series by Natsumi Ando that stars a female character that can foretell the future and uses her skills to turn herself into a magic detective. *Confidential Confessions*, a three-part series by Reiko Momochi, features real teen problems, including teen prostitution, rape, HIV, stalkers, suicide, and sexual harassment.



Viz Gets Rights To Rurouni Kenshin Manga

Inclusion In Shonen Jump Likely



Viz, LLC has acquired the rights to Nobuhiro Watsuki's samurai manga series *Rurouni Kenshin*. The Cartoon Network has been running the anime version of *Rurouni Kenshin* during its daily Toonami block, where despite considerable censorship of the bloody samurai saga, it has been attracting a lot of attention. The anime series is based on Watsuki's manga, which started running in the Japanese *Shonen Jump* in 1994. With its premier spot on TV, *Rurouni Kenshin* has tremendous potential. Media Blasters, which produces the English language version of the anime series, has reported a definite bump in sales thanks to the Cartoon Network exposure.

So far Viz is playing it cool as to whether or not the *Rurouni Kenshin* manga will appear in the American version of *Shonen Jump* or not, but given the fact that Shueisha, the manga's Japanese publisher, is Viz's partner in the American *Shonen Jump*, it appears likely that *Rurouni Kenshin* will join the *Jump* lineup in the near future, especially considering so many other *Jump* titles have ties to anime series on American TV.

Manga Sales Strong In Europe Too

With manga collections topping bookstore graphic novel sales (see "[Manga Continue To Dominate Bookstore Sales](#)") in the U.S., it is interesting to note that this phenomenon is hardly confined to the U.S. Sales of manga blossomed in Europe in the early 1990s, when titles such as *Dragon Ball* topped the charts in Spain and Italy. While sales of manga on the continent have suffered at times from an over-abundance of titles, manga titles are still doing well — something that should give pause to those who think the current manga boom in U.S. bookstores is a flash-in-the-pan fad.

Here are two examples of manga's continuing popularity in Europe. In France the manga series *Hikaru no Go* — which is based on the Japanese board game "Go" — has not only led to an increased interest in the game itself, the manga series is selling more than 10,000 copies per volume, not bad for a comic about a game that most westerners have never even heard about. Meanwhile in Germany, Carlsen Verlag's version of *Shonen Jump*, the monthly manga anthology magazine, *Banzai* sells 130,000 copies per issue — a very strong performance given the size of the German market.

Sponsors



ADV Offers Sailor Moon Season 1 Uncut

Out In July—Age Rating: 15+

ADV Films is set to release the uncut first season of the classic anime series *Sailor Moon* on July 15, 2003. This DVD-only release includes all 46 episodes on eight disks. Each episode will be presented in the original Japanese with English subtitles. The DVDs come in two 4-disc cases, which are contained in a high quality, foil-stamped, custom art box. The *Season One Collection* has a running time of 1060 minutes and a suggested retail price of \$149.98.

The new ADV collection will have an age rating of 15+, which should provide some indication of the

amount of censorship in the Americanized version of *Sailor Moon*, which original U.S. rights holder DIC bowdlerized for U.S. TV audiences. DIC's cuts were far more extensive than just covering up

the subtle nudity of transformation scenes. Six episodes were cut out entirely and two others were combined into one. The original music and opening sequences were redone by DIC, which also censored violence, adolescent romance, and the story's gender-bending and homosexual elements. The final episode with its unflinching acceptance of death as a necessary possible consequence of a righteous fight was particularly hard hit by DIC's transformation of the series into a U.S. children's release.



Cowboy Bebop Strong in Limited Opening

With two anime features in the top 30 features in the U.S., these are heady times for *otaku*, who have been battling for public acceptance for anime (and the ability to see their favorite films on big screens with good sound) for years.

Cowboy Bebop: The Movie opened strong on 19 screens in New York and Los Angeles last weekend, grossing \$234,000, according to Box Office Mojo. That puts its per screen average at \$12,000+, second only to *Good Thief*, which opened on even fewer screens (9).



Spirited Away grossed \$1,034,000, off 41% from its \$1,765,000 last week, on approximately the same number of screens (714). That brings it to \$8.9 million since it opened last year. It was the #18 film for the weekend.

