

ANDY: How did CN/Toonami learn about Big O to begin looking into airing it?

DEMARCO: A friend of ours at Bandai America, a man named Ken Iyadomi, sent us a tape of just the opening song and animation. We were immediately like "WHAT IS THIS AND HOW DO WE GET IT ON TOONAMI." At that point, the show had not yet premiered in Japan.

Why was Big O chosen to air on Toonami? What made it special? What drew you or your team to it, especially since it had failed in Japan and was cancelled—cancelled on a cliffhanger, of all things, too?

Most of the Toonami team are people that grew up on giant robot/tokusatsu shows like Voltron, Ultraman, Gaiking, etc, so we were already primed to love the design of Big O. Combined with the clean, Batman The Animated series influenced animation and the great Queen-esque theme song, we felt like it was a show that might connect with a broader audience in the US.

When did you get the idea to help produce more Big O? What was the catalyst to put yourself and CN in that position? What made Big O so special to pursue something this big?

That idea came from Mike Lazzo, who runs Adult Swim. He was a big fan of the show and suggested to me that we call Bandai and see if they might be open to creating another season as a co-production. It's not really that the first season performed particularly well; it's just that we really loved it and wanted more!

Director Kazuyoshi Katayama recalls CN having two requests for season 2: more action and to "reveal the mystery." Can you elaborate on that?

That may be his recollection, but that's not mine. When developing season two, it became clear that the creators (particularly the writer, Chiaki Konaka) were interested in exploring the philosophical concepts behind Paradigm City, and in a larger sense, the UNREALITY of the world of The Big O. The scripts got very esoteric. However, we did not tell them to reveal the mystery per se. My direct note, and I quote, was "you don't have to explain WHY everything is happening, but you do have to make it clear WHAT is happening." They nodded their heads and said that made sense! That was really the only major note, to be honest.

How much input did you have in Big O's production as executive producer? Is there anything that happened that you feel personally responsible for?

I was pretty hands off once we were happy with the story for season 2. After that it was pretty much just looking at storyboards, animatics and cuts, all of which were great and I had no comments on.

How does it feel to have produced a second season of an anime and to bring it back from the dead, doubly so considering the era (it would be another 13 years before this kind of thing happened again with FLCL Progressive and Alternative) and your previous uninvolvedness with the series?

It feels great, I love that show and I think the people who love it, like yourself, REALLY love it, and the fact that people are still talking about it years later lets me know that we weren't alone in thinking it was something special!

Are you satisfied with Big O season 2? What, if anything, would you change if you could do it all over again?

I love the ending of Big O. When we got to the last episode of season 2, I thought it struck a great balance between what could be a definitive ending, or a stepping off point for another part of the story. As far as changing anything, I wouldn't do anything differently.

Tell me more about that giant Big O statue at Williams St. I'm immensely curious about that.

Ah! That's right outside my office, I'm looking at it right now. Basically, in some of Bandai's marketing materials, we saw a photo of the statue at an anime convention. We asked them what happened to it, and they told us it was in storage and was likely going to be destroyed, because it was built for just that four days of a con. We asked if they might be willing to mail it to us, and they said sure, as long as we paid for shipping! It cost 8k to ship over, and we unboxed it and carefully assembled it here at Williams Street, where it has greeted folks entering the building ever since.

How did Big O change Toonami?

Well, it's fair to say it's one of those shows people seem to remember loving and watching on Toonami, and was a gateway for some people into other giant robot shows. So in that way, it helped Toonami be what it is today.

How did Big O change you?

For me, Big O was my first real co-production and my entry into the world of Japanese tv production. I learned a ton, all of which I brought to bear on FLCL 2/3. I don't think there would be original anime on Adult Swim if not for the positive experience of making Big O S2.

What's your favorite aspect about Big O?

The relationships! Roger and Dorothy are both fascinating characters, you immediately root for them and hope they'll be okay.

Do you have a favorite character, mecha, or episode?

Dorothy is my favorite character, hands down. As for a favorite episode, I'm very partial to the series finale. I think the way they explode the mystery of Paradigm City only to reset everything was fascinating. My favorite mecha in the show is The Big O, but I also love Big Duo, especially the Mummy disguise version!

Where did the "Cast in the Name of Good" edit/censorship come from? Was that done in-house?

That was done in house at the request of our Standards and Practices department, who were worried that parents of young children would have issues with invoking God before a giant robot fight.

Have you ever met anyone from studio Sunrise? Kazuyoshi Katayama, Keiichi Sato, Chiaki J. Konaka? Are there any good encounters/stories you had with them?

I've met them all; I very much enjoyed chatting with Konaka-san in particular. They were perhaps worried I would be a more typical tv executive and told me they were relieved I just seemed like another "otaku!" Hahaha.

How do you feel about Big O now compared to how you felt about it back in the year 2001? 2003?

I feel great about it, and I look at my Big O Boxed set and my Soul of Chogokin Big O statuette with great pride.

Finally, any personal or professional plans for Big O and its 20th anniversary?

Nothing is being planned that I know of- the show was not very popular here and was even less so in Japan- but if I hear about anything happening, Toonami would love to be a part of it.