WARNING: This video is about an incredibly violent film that basically traumatized me as a kid with its bleak imagery, intense sexual violence, and just sheer brutality. I am going to show you a lot of that stuff, so consider that before you continue watching.

For most of my teen years, if you had asked me what was the worst anime I'd ever seen, I would've responded with Ninja Resurrection. It would eventually have been so long since I'd seen it that I couldn't even remember it well enough to know just how bad it was, but when I first started to use a 10-scale to rate the anime I'd completed, I made a whole to-do out of giving Ninja Resurrection a negative-two. You could say that it had offended and even traumatized me to a greater extent than any other anime I'd seen at the time, so I had a unique brand of ire towards it. Rewatching the two-episode OVA today, I actually kind of really like it. To explain both why I hated it so much when I saw it at age 13 and why I found myself enjoying it at age 28, I need to explain both the context of how it was originally presented to me, as well as how I've changed as a person over the last 15 years.

For starters, let's get to the bottom of exactly what Ninja Resurrection is. Created in 1997, there were two forty-minute episodes produced of this OVA series by studio Phoenix Entertainment out of an unknown number of planned episodes--the series was clearly cancelled, however, as many OVAs from the 90s often were. High-budget home-video releases had been a massively successful industry in the late 80s, before the Japanese economic bubble burst. One of the few ways in which 90s films and OVAs were able to sometimes live up to the status of their 80s forebears was in the burgeoning rental market for anime in the UK and United States. Enough people had taken home Ghost in the Shell, Akira, Ninja Scroll, and later stuff like Evangelion or even Tenchi and Love Hina, that it was seen as reasonable to bring even relatively shoddy OVAs to America for sale and rent because people might take it home in the vain hopes of finding another classic.

Results were extremely mixed. Ninja Resurrection could never have amounted to much more than a curiosity if only for the fact that it wasn't successful enough to even get completed. Before I even start telling you whether or not it's something you might enjoy watching for yourself, I have to acknowledge that there flat out is not an ending, nor does it even feel like we've made it far into the story by the end of episode two. I have to imagine there were intended to be six or seven episodes in the vein of Giant Robo. But even as I say that, I want to make clear that comparisons to Giant Robo in terms of what the OVA was trying to accomplish aren't entirely unwarranted. I think this OVA was lowkey extremely ambitious, and just either wasn't interesting enough to enough people to be successful, or simply came out too long into Japan's economic crash that pulverized the 90s industry for anyone to have money to spend on it. And frankly, it can't reach the heights of even what is present in the very first episode of Giant Robo, but in fairness, Yasuhiro Imagawa was a lot more experienced when he made that show than director Urata Yasunori was when he made Ninja Resurrection--which was only his second major credit after having been the Chief Animation Director on Giant Robo. That's a pretty central role to a series which absolutely excels in that category, so I hope the cross-reference has your ears perked for more about Ninja Resurrection, as it should.

Before Giant Robo, he'd also done episode direction for Venus Wars, Patlabor, Yawara, some weird mecha kids shows including a Tetsujin 28 modernization from the early 90s that I've never even seen mentioned before, Akiyuki Shinbo's Metal Fighter Miku, and baseball classic Princess Nine, handled by the studio he seemed to soon become chief director for, Phoenix Entertainment. We'll talk about all of this in more depth later, but for now let's focus on the movie in question.

Ninja Resurrection is in fact an adaptation of a classic Japanese literary novel released in 1967 by prolific ninja author Futaro Yamada. If you've ever heard of this man, it's most likely because he also wrote The Koga Ninja Scrolls, which have had popular adaptations in the form of a long-running manga, several anime seasons adapting that manga, and a live-action film adaptation of the novel called Shinobi. Futaro Yamada wrote a fuckload of other novels after debuting with that one in 1959, and the vast majority of them were about ninjas and involving elements of Japanese history and folklore. If Ninja Resurrection's source material Makai Tensho, is anything like it's anime adaptation, then it's probably safe to assume that Futaro Yamada's novels were incredibly fucked up.

It wouldn't even surprise me to discover this, because Futaro Yamada was able to become a novelist after having been recognized by Edogawa Rampo. Now Rampo himself was one of the most influential and popular authors in contemporary Japanese literature, credited with defining the style of Japanese mystery writing for decades to come. But hearing him described this way doesn't exactly do justice to his almost psychologically aggressive writing style designed to bend the reader's mind, and the graphic themes, twists, and imagery depicted in his work. Rampo is also credited as the creator of the "ero-guro" movement in Japanese literature, which would translate to movements across the spectrum of visual entertainment in the form of adaptation and homage over the decades. If it seems insane that something as conceptually intense as ero-guro could have been such a central facet of Japanese culture, you need to consider the following: firstly, that Japan was a very sexually intense place until the mid-1900s, with a military known to have raped their way through China and Korea during World War 2, and with dismal stories shaping their mythology. Their modernization and development of a new identity involved not only drawing attention to the evils and horrors of their culture and history, but also putting on display the trauma that their entire country has seared onto their souls from the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the nuclear fallout which caused countless deformities and illnesses across the country.

Ero-guro wasn't necessarily meant to be sexy or titillating, but horrifying. If it aroused you, it expected you to think about how it spoke to your nature as a bestial human to feel that way. It was meant to commentate on the horrors of man, uniquely understood by this culture that was mutated and destroyed by the bombs. It also wasn't necessarily trying to be as violent or as shocking as possible, but to use those elements to unnerve the reader over the course of a captivating mystery thriller storyline.

But the lineage of ero-guro and its cinematic adaptations makes a direct throughline both to live-action Z-cinema such as Takashi Miike, which was sometimes literally funded by the Yakuza and went out of its way to be totally fucking insane, and anime, which had really pushed sexual, violent, and psychotic elements to the forefront because the abstraction of animation allowed it to be even palatable enough for consumption. And every time something was successful by way of pushing the envelope of violence and sexuality, it meant that something else had to come along and push things even farther.

Enter: Phoenix Entertainment studio. They got their start making Urotsukidouji.

Explaining what Urotsukidouji is exactly is a story in and of itself, but if you've seen the movie and feel similarly about it to how I do, then it'll probably give you a good sense of how you'll feel about Ninja Resurrection. Personally, Urotsukidouji is one of my outright favorite anime films. It is aesthetically absolutely incredible, with crazy monster design, color work, awesome animation everywhere, a totally ludicrous and over the top apocalyptic narrative reminiscent of Devilman, and tons of rampant sexual content. While the movie is hard to just treat as pornography, since sexual scenarios are almost always immediately followed by truly horrifying scenes of intense violence and horror, but it's still definitely easy to classify as pornography, and this was incredibly alluring to Western fans who were introduced to the 1987 film. Truthfully, Urotsukidouji seems like an insanely ballsy release, and is really the only thing of its kind--a serious feature-length film made for theaters with movie-quality animation that goes way farther with its violent and sexual content than any other film that visually engaging. It was produced by Yoshinobu Nishizaki, who co-created arguably the most important TV anime of all time, Space Battleship Yamato, which he produced many releases of. However, he also produced Odin, which is known for being an insane clusterfuck with way too many resources behind it. Urotsukidouji could be called that too I guess, but it's just so utterly insane that it works for itself. It was written by absolute madman Sho Aikawa, who would go on to write things like Neo-Ranga, the original Fullmetal Alchemist adaptation, Concrete Revolutio, and many other batshit nuts anime stories.

For what it's worth, Urotsukidouji's existence wasn't totally unprecedented. It was based on a popular pornographic manga that started in 1986, and they would end up making tons of OVAs adapting it and re-adapting it weirdly. The gamble of bringing this over-the-top and insanely racey story beautifully to life seemingly paid off too, because Urotsukidouji was another hugely important show to bringing edgy, adult animation to home video in the US and UK, and eventually leading to the anime boom that brought viewers like me into the fold in the early 2000s.

Phonenix Entertainment would not immediately attempt to cash in on the success of their ero-guro masterwork however, nor even the main creative staff at the heart of Urotsukidouji. Rather, two of the producers who got their starts on that film would become executives on the production of one of the most ambitious OVA projects ever completed, and easily the best OVA series of the 90s: Giant Robo the Animation. Directed by the legend Yasuhiro Imagawa

intersected by his making the first and most beloved of the 90s spin-off Gundam series, Mobile Fighter G Gundam in 1994, it was a seven-episode tour-de-force which took from '92 through '98 to release in full, going over time and over-budget in the process. Based on one of the oldest and most classic Giant Robot manga in existence, and incorporating other works from the author's catalog, it is often seen as both Imagawa's masterpiece, and the ultimate modernization of the strengths of older robot stories. While it had dark moments and elements of fanservice, it was worlds apart from the ero-guro style of Urotsukidouji, and is all around a much more respected work with a devoted cult fanbase.

But as much as people love Giant Robo, the success of the series is mostly attributed to fans by the clarity of personal vision from director Yasuhiro Imagawa. So little is said about Phoenix Entertainment, that when I saw their name as the studio behind Ninja Resurrection, I thought that I'd never heard of them.

Phoenix Entertainment had a weird trajectory over the course of the 90s. What few productions they helmed shared more producers than leading creative staff, at least until the back-end of the decade. Alongside Giant Robo which ran through the bulk of the decade's mid-section, they produced a couple more pornographic OVAs. One of those was a five-episode adaptation of another manga from Urotsukidouji author Toshio Maeda, this one called Gedou Gakuen, released in Japan in 1995, and making it to the US in 1999 on VHS and DVD apparently as late as 2012. While I wouldn't be surprised if this OVA was also pretty good, it doesn't share creative staff with the Urotsukidouji film. Nonetheless, it made perfect sense for Phoenix to adapt this story, not only because they'd already been successful with the original author's other work, but because his manga La Blue Girl had an anime adaptation by studio Dandelion which was just as influential. Obviously Gedou Gakuen didn't have nearly the same success as the other adaptations, possibly just because it came out late enough that anime's presence in the West was already shifting away from the crazy sex and violence of the early 90s rental scene, and into the increased presence of TV anime like Pokemon, Sailor Moon, and Dragon Ball Z on mainstream worldwide television.

Worth noting as well is that starting in the mid-90s, Phoenix Entertainment opted to become practically the only animation studio ever to produce full-blown pornographic yaoi OVAs. Seriously, as much bl as gets adapted to animation, yaoi porn in animation is an incredible rarity, and Phoenix Entertainment would produce three entries to the genre, starting with the Legend of the Blue Wolves in 1996, which clearly had some production put behind it, so kudos to them for entirely cornering the market on yaoi, and using it as an excuse to stay alive all the way into 2007 with the production of Close the Last Door--two years after their website had last been updated, and three years after their last prior production of the yaoi OVA Sensitive Pornograph. Before that, their only 2000s work was The Urotsuki, which obviously represents one last return to the Toshio Maeda well for three more episodes. But for all intents and purposes, I think Phoenix Entertainment spiritually died in 2000--and I'm going to try and get to the heart of what did it in.

It's hard to say what Giant Robo might've done to Phoenix Entertainment financially with its overlong production, but the studio did put out another set of two fifty-minute OVAs from another interesting director in the form of Shin Kaitei Gunkan. This one is about a submarine in the wake of World War 2, and comes from the same director as Doomed Megalopolis, The Big O, King of Thorn, Argento Soma, and episode 33 of the Studio Khara Animators Expo, who also served as an animation director and storyboarder on Giant Robo, and was an assistant director on Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind. Kazuyoshi Katayama really deserves his own video, but this is the last of his intersections with Phoenix Entertainment.

In 1998, with Giant Robo finally completed and behind them, Phoenix Entertainment seemed to be ready to get right into some big new projects, including yet another long-form series of OVAs, and a 26-episode TV sports anime. The show in question was Princess Nine--actually a very innocent and slice-of-lifey show about a high school girls' baseball team. It was directed by Tomomi Mochizuki, who by this point had directed studio Ghibli's TV movie Ocean Waves, a Kimagure Orange road film, a cult-beloved 6-episode OVA called Here Is Greenwood, the first and best season of Ranma 1/2 and parts of Maison Ikkoku, episodes of Touch and Creamy Mami, and he downright CREATED the magical idol series Fancy Lala. Right after Princess Nine, he was going to handle parts of Yokohama Shopping Log and Twin Spica, and would later direct House of Five Leaves... along with... Pupa. And Battery. Yeah, weirdly he's got plenty of flops of just unmemorable shit all throughout his catalog, and some baffling decisions. He wrote the script of friggin' Touka Gettan, the porn tie-in show that told its story entirely backwards. Weird shit.

Princess Nine is a cult favorite that always got decent reviews in magazines of the time, but I don't think it really took off. They had a manga tie-in, and the anime came to America, but it certainly wasn't a hit here. Sports anime has always struggled to make an impact in the USA, and the series didn't get any continuations in Japan in the way that most successful sports anime tend to. Maybe it was never intended to run past episode 26, but it certainly doesn't seem to have been the studio's biggest success.

But at long last, it's time for us to address the ostensibly actual subject of this video: 1998's Ninja Resurrection. If Giant Robo's production didn't kill Phoenix Entertainment, and Princess Nine's lack of relative success didn't do it, I have to imagine that the downfall either started with the controversial branding and cancellation of Ninja Resurrection, or that 2000's Sin the Movie did the deed entirely on its own. But we'll get to that later.

In a certain sense, the production of Ninja Resurrection made plenty of sense. Phoneix Entertainment had built their success on two backs: high-effort, aesthetically-interesting OVAs even in an era where those were barely getting made by anyone, and extreme ero-guro sex and violence. While Urotsukidouji is kind of trashy pornography by comparison to literary ero-guro, there had been an incredibly successful action movie which stood on the strength of its powerful visual aesthetic and intense scenes of sex and violence in 1993, called Ninja Scroll.

Ninja Scroll is clearly inspired by the ero-guro ninja works of Futaro Yamada, with its main character, Jyubei Kibagami, sharing part of his name with the famous Jubei Yagyuu character. The first of the Jyuubei books is called Yagyuu Ninpuuchou, whereas Ninja Scroll's Japanese title is Jyuubei Ninpuuchou. As such, Ninja Scroll is not actually an adaptation of one of Yamada's stories--it has about as much to do with the original stories as Django Unchained has to do with the original Django film. More than anything, Ninja Scroll is ultimately seen mostly as the visionary work of genius director and visual artist Yoshiaki Kawajiri, and its consistently phenomenal visuals and airtight screenplay have given it recognition as a nearly flawless animated masterpiece. While its fusion of 80s action movie machismo into the horror-infused traditions of ero-guro and intense depictions of titilating sexual violence will probably keep it from commanding the same respect that Ghost in the Shell and Akira have maintained over the decades, it cannot be understated the impact that this film had on the American audience for many of whom it was the first thing they'd ever seen which was anywhere remotely close to this intense in the world of animation. If you were already a fan of shlocky gore films, it was like a gift from god.

As mentioned before, Urotsukidouji from Phoenix Productions had been extremely important for many of the same reasons as Ninja Scroll, even if it wasn't quite as accessible or respectable as a film. Still, Phoenix and its core creative staff had put together one of the richest OVA experiences of the 90s with Giant Robo, and there was no reason not to think that there might be enough talent between the staff members, even without Yasuhiro Imagawa or Tomomi Mochizuki around, and without having to rely on adapting the works of Toshio Maeda. The idea of Giant Robo animation director Yasunori Urata stepping into the director's chair to create a visually-driven, high-quality, multi-part adaptation of a Futaro Yamada novel sounds relatively promising--especially to someone excited about more works being adapted in the same spirit as Ninja Scroll.

It gets even more exciting when you start to have a look at it, and quickly notice what feels like a strong influence from Hellboy author Mike Mignola. This influence crops up in some surprising places across Japanese media. Cult beloved manga author Douman Seiman for instance sites Mignola as a primary influence, but his work is often also paid homage to in the works of studio SHAFT and director Akiyuki Shinbo. Interviews with SHAFT staffers have mentioned the popularity of Mignola's work amid certain key members of the studio, and I can't imagine that it's a coincidence that Urata had been an episode director on Shinbo's Metal Fighter Miku, nor that Ninja Resurrection's character designer would later design the transformed heroes of Shinbo's SoulTaker anime. You may in fact have experienced some of Urata's visual fixations and Mignola influences if you watched the original Hellsing adaptation, as he directed that as well, and even handled episodes of the second Jojo's Bizarre Adventure OVA, for which legendary director Satoshi Kon also directed episodes.

Unfortunately, Urata only ended up directing a small handful of works from 1998 through 2002 before receding back into minor production roles, and eventually seeming to disappear from anime altogether. I don't know if Urata just gave up on directing after facing several failures, or if

he just didn't enjoy doing it enough to continue, but we can get a pretty good sense of how his work contributed to the downfall of Phoenix Entertainment by looking at the two works he directed which were neither another Toshio Maeda adaptation released in 1999, nor Hellsing: those being 1997's Ninja Resurrection and 2000's Sin: the Movie.

What caused Ninja Resurrection to get canceled after just two episodes, released in 1997 and 1998 in Japan, and 1998 in America, I do not know. There could have been a lot of hype surrounding the series, considering that legendary manga author and Getter Robo creator Ken Ishikawa created a manga adaptation of the same novel for release alongside the OVA. His manga concluded in the span of a volume, but the anime was just left open-ended after an assumable lack of success. Maybe the show was just too bleak and intense to sell all that well--as crazy as Ninja Scroll got, it never seemed to be going out of its way to just be as dark and heinous as possible, nor was it trying, as Resurrection clearly was, to be more gruesomely violent than almost anything else on the market. While it wasn't outright pornography like Urotsukidouji, the sexual violence was just a touch more intense than Ninja Scroll, and it was clearly intended to be more of a horror story than a satisfying action flick.

But when it came to the OVA's reputation outside of Japan, there was a massive elephant in the room which, if you knew about this movie at the time, you've probably been absolutely dying for me to talk about this entire video--Ninja Resurrection, as released in America, was billed as a direct sequel to Ninja Scroll.

While you can probably see the logic of this decision based on everything I've told you so far, and it almost certainly drove more attention to this OVA than it might've gotten without the name recognition, much of that was negative attention due to the fact that aside from sharing influences, Ninja Resurrection has nothing the fuck to do with Ninja Scroll. None of the same staff worked on these films, nor were they made by the same studio, nor were they even licensed by the same company. ADV had straight-up ripped off the logo from Manga Entertainment's English release of Ninja Scroll, and used the fact that the main character had the same name and a very similar character design to tie their OVA release into the narrative of a much more popular film released by a different company that has nothing to do with Ninja Resurrection whatsoever.

Now, imagine being me in 2002. A couple of years prior, I had been introduced to Ninja Scroll though an older cousin, and even though I was way too young to be watching it and had never seen anything even in the realm of that level of violence and sexual content before, the fact that it was all animated and had such badass action meant that I absolutely loved it--and my cousin Boyd, four years older than me and a huge fan of slasher flicks, was completely absorbed in the film and lead straight into the world of anime.

So naturally, Ninja Resurrection was one of the first DVDs that he picked up once we had access to a DVD player circa 2002, and I distinctly remember him playing the second episode at my house, and me shying away in fear at the scene of a woman getting ferociously raped by a

monster man early into the episode. Everything else I gleaned was dark and horrifying, so I tried not to pay attention or stay in the room. It would be another year or two before I'd find myself properly giving the OVA a chance and watching both episodes all the way through, and that was when I became truly traumatized by the stark plot turns and horrific imagery in the first episode, and the absolutely insane ending of the second one, which ironically is all the more haunting and bleak because of the fact that the story was never continued. It essentially ends on the lowest and darkest point that it imaginable could have, and this has only increased the infamy and uniquely gross feeling that the OVA leaves you with after watching it.

Make no mistake, Ninja Resurrection is indulgently and absurdly dark and brutal. It goes out of its way to show as much violence in as graphic of detail as it can imagine, and has no problem sexualizing rape scenes, even if they tend to be utterly horrifying. You could almost say that it stands somewhere in-between Ninja Scroll and Urotsukidouji on the intensity scale, but whereas Ninja Scroll is still on some level a fun and relatively lighthearted action flick, and Urotsukidouji is so preposterous and over-the-top as to be hilarious sometimes, Ninja Resurrection is just an onslaught of darkness and grimness. I probably would still hate it for that today, if not for the fact that its visual tone is just so fascinating.

Revisiting Ninja Resurrection with the visual lexicon that I have today, it's very clearly intended to be a horror series first and foremost, and I think it's very effectively horrifying. There's been this completely ridiculous idea floated around that anime can't successfully tell horror stories for some retareded reason, but this movie completely fucking traumatized me when i was a kid just as much as seeing the original Texas Chainsaw Massacre had. In particular, the scene which had stuck with me was when a demonic old man chops the heads off of a pair of innocent children so that he can tell the messianic figure leading his rebellion that the enemy Yagyuu ninja had killed the children himself. This way, the man will become consumed with rage and unleash his full power, and even if he gets himself killed by Yagyuu's own ruthlessness to actually use those childrens' skulls as a distraction in the fight, he can still be used to impregnate the old man's daughter with the soul of Satan. Fuck!

When I was a kid, the senseless murder of those children and the bleak way that their heads were displayed to the viewer had really fucked me up. Just thinking about it would keep me awake at night sometimes. But that wasn't the only scene which stuck in my memory from that day forward, because I hadn't even seen the completely insane ending of the second episode yet, which I'm just going to have to describe in full.

So the last ten minutes or so of Ninja Resurrection open on this very atmospheric and satanic scene of a woman about to be sacrificed in some kind of ritual. Attending the ceremony are four resurrected demonic forms of evil historical samurai figures who'd supposedly parished. We have seen them raping and eating random women and seemingly proving unkillable by the Yagyuu ninja clan's scouts. Also attending is the demonic old man who's pretty much been the direct force propelling all of the evil, crazy shit that's happened so far.

With the clash of lightning, the woman's body raises into the air, and then clearly begins getting raped by some kind of supernatural force. In the sense that this is a kind of attractive woman having sex with a ghost, I suppose you could say that this is a fetishistic scene. When I was later fourteen and very lonely and had no idea how to find porn on the internet, my spank bank basically consisted of any sexual imagery I'd happened to glean from any of the anime and manga that I'd seen. Could thinking back on this scene and trying to parse whether it was more arousing or terrifying have caused me to develop an appreciation for ero-guro in the long run? The scene of a demon raping and eating a girl earlier into the episode certainly gives a similar vibe to the type of scenes which often occur in Berserk, and which are the one element which some readers tend to shy away from when appreciating that manga. Personally, all I have to say is to remind you that Urotsukidouji is one of my favorite animated films of all time. I obviously don't give a shit anymore about watching demons raping people and tearing them apart, and frankly the last ten minutes of Ninja Resurrection are rapidly going to reach an artistic level of absolutely insane gore and shock horror.

The sexualized content of the rape scenes in Ninja Resurrection actually doesn't last very long. I wouldn't even be surprised if this contributed to the OVA's lack of success, considering how easily Phoenix Entertainment could seemingly go back to the well of pornographic Toshio Maeda adaptations. Very quickly, the woman's body begins shaking erratically, communicating some kind of possession. Then her body begins building and morphing as if getting torn apart from the insides, and it's at this point that the imagery is already grotesque enough to make the hairs on your neck start to rise in anticipation. Before long, a pair of hands start to emerge from her throat, clearly beginning to break her body apart. Parts of a body start to spring from her midsection and face at once, and soon her torso is just entirely split open, like a cocoon from which emerges the butterfly of what is unmistakably satan. In the process of slowly emerging from this carcass, Satan basically ends up tearing her body completely to pieces. By the end of the scene, we'll see her essentially pulped on the ground, as Satan immediately shrieks hellishly in unending pain at the moment of his birth. And then, with a powerful swiftness, the second the screeching is over, Satan and all of the demons spring into action and take to the roof of the building, clearly fully prepared to jump into action and starting to do Satan's bidding in the name of taking over the world.

From there, we cut directly to a crowded festival in what we would assume is a major city in this era of Japan. Satan and his four vassals appear amid the crowd and just start butchering them en-masse. There's just like a solid minute of huge swaths of people getting torn to shreds at once, ending in the Satanic crew spreading out to begin their conquest of Earth, and that's IT. That's ALL YOU GET. If you, like me as a kid, had no idea that this OVA had been cancelled, then you might have just assumed that in context the ending of this OVA is that Satan fucking comes back to life and takes over the world by just murdering everyone. Even though we only really see the beginning of this conquest, the concept is obviously still metal as fuck, and it had always given me the impression that this OVA was almost like a pure celebration of evil. The bad guys win, the main character has barely done shit at all, and wasn't even really the main character of the first episode, who had his arms torn off, then was raped by the daughter of his

supposed mentor as he died, and then had the top half of his head left on a cross. This shit is just relentlessly fucking dark. There's also this whole extensive theming around the persecution of Christians in Japan at some point in Japanese history, which largely went over my head but gave it a unique tone in that it was so distinctly Satanic in a judeo-Christian sense.

When you think about it in the context of other stories which lean so heavily on judeo-Chritstian apocalyptic imagery and feature intense demonic action and sexual violence, such as Devilman or indeed Urotsukidouji, the whole project starts to make more sense. Devilman had received several OVA adaptations in the late 80s and early 90s, and even though the best of those had itself only lasted two episodes, more in the vein of stories like were certainly welcome to fans at the time. When you consider the way that Giant Robo was dedicated so heavily to the styles and stories of classic manga, it wouldn't be surprising at all if Ninja Resurrection had been intended to throw back to the absurdly dark and apocalyptic stories of Go Nagai and Ken Ishikawa; which would of course also justify the connection to Ken Ishikawa's own manga adaptation of the same story which released alongside the film.

When you think of Ninja Resurrection as the directorial debut of Giant Robo's chief animation director which attempts to fuse the styles of classic apocalyptic manga, the whole lineage of demonic ero-guro and ninja mythology which owe their lineage to Futaro Yamada, and the color aesthetics of American comic book author Mike Mignola, driving comparisons to the influences of his art on the works of Akiyuki Shinbo, all at the behest of the same producers and studio who brought you Urotsukidouji, the OVA is actually incredibly interesting, and leaves me honestly wishing I could have seen where it was supposed to go in the later episodes, and just how insane it might've gotten.

It's at this point that I'd feel remiss if i didn't inform you of the single most badass scene in the entire OVA. I had completely forgotten about this from watching it as a kid, but I'm certain that this part is what kept people like my cousin Boyd returning to this OVA as something which they ultimately found some value in, even if it obviously was neither an actual sequel to Ninja Scroll nor nearly as good of a film.

So as I've described before, early into the second episode we see a girl getting raped and killed by a huge demonic man. Right after this, a demonic shinobi shows up to remark on how the other demon has been doing this every night, to which he responds that the shinobi had been doing the same thing the night before. So, you know, this is what these guys do, they just rape and eat random young girls all the time while they wait for Satan's birth. The shinobi points out that they are being watched, and then throws a sword through the chest of the scout whom Jyuubei had sent to figure out what was going on in the castle.

The demonic shinobi then takes to the roof to confront an array of other Yagyuu ninjas, and the tension ratches up as they suddenly emerge from the tiles of the building itself to take on the enemy--though it is also suggested at one point that many of these ninja are just illusory forms projected onto small animals. Whatever they are, the demon allows all of them to plunge their

swords into his guts at once, and sure enough we are treated to detailed shots of his intestines spiling across the roof. However, he is unkillable, and soon he begins to animate his own intestines, using them as tentacle whips. From here, the demonic shinobi proceeds to tear through a score of attacking ninjas using his guts as sword in addition to the one in his hand, and this scene is what my people call in my culture "fucking awesome."

So yeah, if any more shit like that was going to happen, then I would've liked to see it. The same scene appears to happen in the Ken Ishikawa manga, so maybe it's in the original book? If it is, then I would very much like to read that book. Whatever the case may be, this was just one of a handful of incredibly memorable visual sequences in the film, including the stark red and grotesque shots of just piles and piles of dismembered bodies impaled onto spikes at the end of episode one. That is some album cover shit right there.

Ninja Resurrection also leaves some pretty major plot threads hanging, which you'll likely start thinking about more once you know that this story was left incomplete. At the start of episode two, Juubei is portrayed as being friends with this pair of beautiful young women who are also the strongest warriors among the small village that Jyuubei lives with. Word comes from the castle that all young women are being summoned there, and this is what inspires Jyuubei to begin investigating what's going on in the first place.

It's probably safe to assume that after the events of this episode, the Yagyuu clan was going to fully mobilize an offensive on Satan and his forces, and Yagyuu was also going to have to try and rescue the pair of young women from the start of the episode. Maybe some kind of tragically heinous things would've befallen these nice girls, or maybe they would've emerged as heroes in their own right and saved Jyuubei's ass like the girl in Ninja Scroll was constantly doing. We have no idea, because they don't show up again in the episode. We also never learn anything else about Jyuubei's weird past in which his father I guess took his fucking eye out because he was trying to convince him that a true warrior doesn't need a sword to fight? Was that theme ever going to come up again? I have no idea. Episode one honestly feels like it was meant to be more of a prologue to the proper story, and episode two feels like the beginning of a series which easily could've gone on for a while still. Obviously the book is out there and even the short manga if we need a more concrete ending, but the anime was still its own beast, and who knows what ideas it might've had in store, even just visually.

Alas, Ninja Resurrection stands today incomplete and underrated with a sordid reputation thanks to its highly disturbing content and themes, bleak non-ending thanks to getting canceled, and the dubious marketing tactics which ADV used to bring it to the West in the late 90s. Researching the project has certainly left me with a new list of interests in things to check out, and rewatching it definitely got me curious about the director and wishing that we'd got to see him grow and evolve as a filmmaker.

Unfortunately, his main other work with Phoenix Entertainment would be the fifty-minute year 2000 film Sin the Movie--a tie-in to an American frist-person shooter by Activision released on

PC in 1998. Sin had a controversial launch, with bad loading times and glitches attributed to the launch having been rushed to compete with Half-Life during the holiday season, and may have hamstrung it from even being able to. The game was eventually patched, and is even considered good by many, but it certainly didn't have the impact to justify some weird Japanese animated tie-in film, and said film certainly didn't deserve the marketing push that I remember it having with ads all over anime magazines.

The plot of Sin the Movie is all over the place, as is the design sense with the odd use of something resembling the original game's character designs. If there's anything going for the movie, it's that the scenes of intense violence are pretty crazy, and early into the film one of the main characters of the actual game is horrifically killed, which I have to imagine would've been a shock to fans of the game.

Maybe it's not too surprising that Urata's next work would be with studio Gonzo, considering the odd fusions of CGi and 2D animation which are highly reminiscent of what that studio was doing at the time. Being a Western media tie-in was also in vogue at the time for studios which had seen success in the West with home-video releases, as Phoenix had obviously done with Urotsukidouji, but considering not only that the Sin movie kinda sucks, and the game was never that big of a deal anyways, and the anime industry was slowly moving away from the rental market and into the TV and home video release markets, Sin just wasn't really the right project at the right time, and probably didn't amount to much for anyone involved.

As stated previously, all that Phoenix Entertainment ever did after this was another Urotsuki OVA and two yaoi OVAs in the early 2000s before they went completely silent. Urata likewise only directed Hellsing, and then did episode direction on various early Gonzo shows, Negima, Eyeshield 21, Blood+, and a bunch of Rockman anime, likely as a freelancer, before disappearing from anime around 2007.

If Urata has done anything outside of anime, or the producers behind Phoenix Entertainment went on to any other ventures is beyond the scope of my research for now. I'd have loved to see Urata continue to develop his style across future works, or even to have gotten more of Ninja Resurrection, or at least more adaptations of the works of Futaro Yamada. All in all, I'm just extremely glad that I decided to re-investigate this OVA on the basis of the strong reaction to it which I'd had as a teenager, and to have been pleasantly surprised by just how much there was to sink my teeth into. I like to think that my relationship with this OVA is positive at this point, and I'm glad for whatever fucked up shit it must have done to me by sitting around in my subconscious for all that time.