

## OBAN STAR-RACERS

FILM ★★★ EXTRAS ★★

2007 • 312 minutes • U • £14.99 • Out now

**Directors:** Thomas Romain, Savin Yeatman-Eiffel

**Writer:** Savin Yeatman-Eiffel

**Starring:** Chiara Zanni, Sam Vincent, Alessandro Juliani

**A ragtag team of pilots from various planets compete in a galactic race with a young girl primed to win the prize: her heart's fondest desire. Aw.**

JOINTLY PRODUCED BY French and Japanese companies, *Oban Star-Racers* isn't typical Eastern anime. It's not exactly Western either, mixing influences from both schools of animation. But it's not unique in this – there's a long history of Franco-Japanese co-production, and *Oban Star-Racers* will strike a chord with anyone who grew up watching *Ulysses 31* or *Mysterious Cities of Gold*.

Eva Wei's life is a lonely one; her mother is dead and her racing team manager father never visits her at boarding school. After her dad misses her 15th birthday, she seeks him out, only to find that he doesn't recognise her. Adopting the moniker 'Molly', she poses as a gifted mechanic in order to join her father's team.

When Team Wei is picked by the government of Earth to represent the planet in the fabled Race of Oban, Molly stows away on their ship, and eventually becomes their pilot and Earth's best hope of victory. The prize of the Race of Oban is her heart's desire, and naturally Molly wishes to bring back her beloved mother. On the way she also begins to prove to her dad that she's a worthwhile and capable human being. It's all very sweet, actually.

The audio is English-only but the dub is a strong one and the cast composed of actors who put a lot of emotion into their parts, while the series' Japanese origins come out in the sparky opening and sedate ending themes composed by maestro Yoko Kanno.

The art style is pleasingly soft, with interesting character designs that are a refreshing change from more usual anime styles, and a fantastic line in 3D spaceships and racers.

The ragtag crew are engaging and the varied collection of aliens (who literally come in all shapes and sizes) is visually imaginative, all of which make *Oban Star-Racers* something quite special.

**Extras:** The extras aren't too shabby, with a Jetix promotional trailer, information on the racers, an art gallery featuring character, mecha and ship designs, alternative opening sequences, a trailer and a 'Race Against Toros' mini-game. **Lesley Smith**

### DID YOU KNOW?

*Oban Star-Racers* was based on a short movie called *Molly, Star Racer* that was created by Sav! The World. It premiered in 2001 and was set to remixes of various songs by J-pop diva Ayumi Hamasaki, winning various prizes, including the 2001 LEAF Award.

