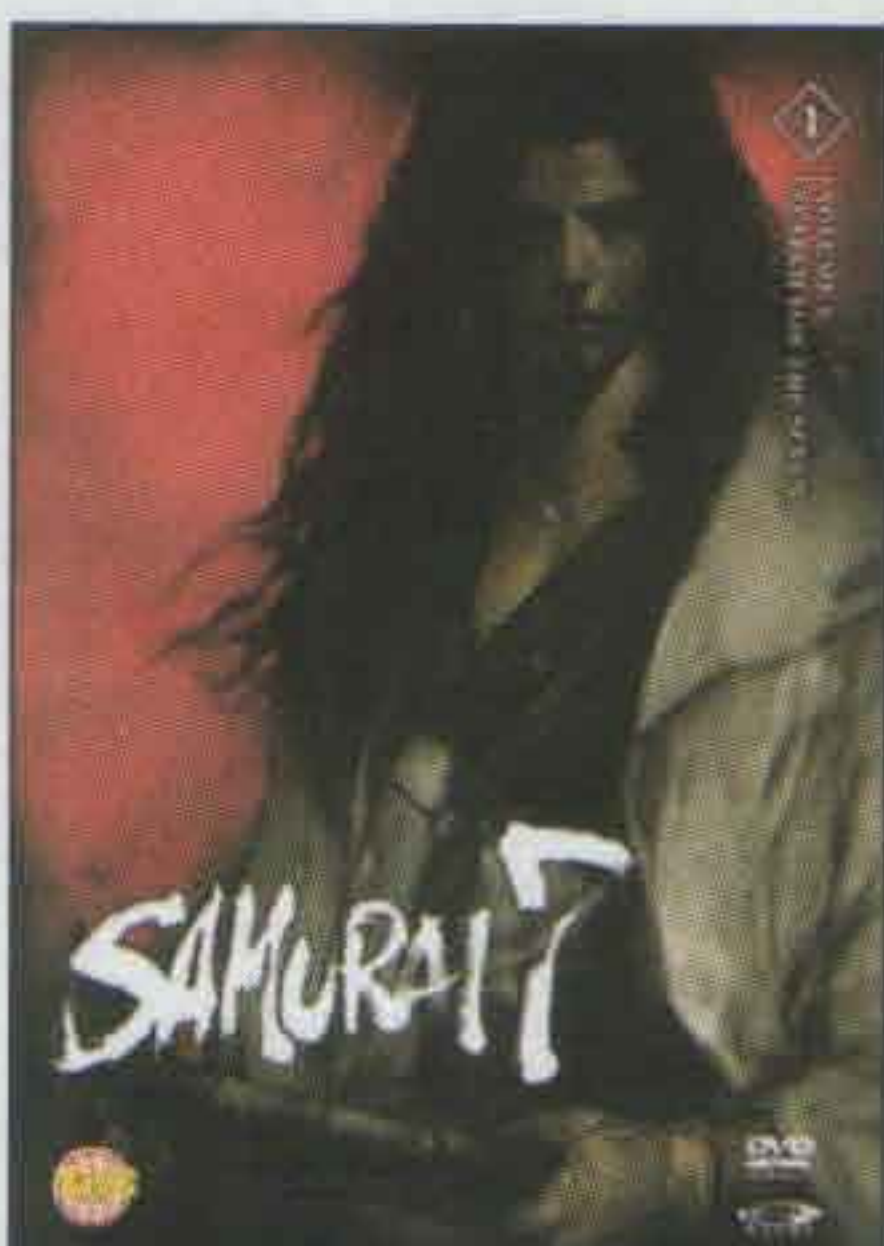




SAMURAI 7: SEARCH FOR THE SEVEN



FIGHT THE FUTURE – FEUDAL STYLE



• 13 FEBRUARY • MVM •
• 15 • 1 DISCS •
• £19.99 • 105 MINS •

IN A POST-APOCALYPTIC future marred by war, Japan has returned to a feudal era where famine is rife and villagers are besieged by the Nobuseri, gigantic mecha-bandits demanding rice. Eventually the villagers of Kanna are faced with starvation, and the village elders decide to hire a samurai for protection.

Kirara, a Mikumari or Water Priestess and Kanna's shrine maiden, possesses a mystical pendant that allows her to dowse for water; a precious commodity in a land stuck by famine... but her crystal can also lead her to the right samurai. So she volunteers to go to the city of Kogakyo to seek one out, accompanied by her sister, Komachi, and Rikichi, a peasant.

Based on the late Akira Kurosawa's acclaimed film *The Seven Samurai* and lavishly animated by GONZO, *Samurai 7* takes Kurosawa's vision and gives it a futuristic feel,

whilst also retaining the feudal ethos by emphasising the misery of the villager's lives.

For example, during the first episode, Kirara and her companions have their rice stolen within minutes of entering the city and a young samurai named Katsushiro Okamoto rescues them. However, the bags of rice have split leaving piles of the precious foodstuffs covering the city streets. Rather than just jumping to the point when they have retrieved the rice, several minutes are devoted to the characters' attempts to re-bag it, pushing home the fact they are starving and that every grain is precious.

The first four episodes contained on the first disc are essentially concerned with setting the story and introducing the seven samurai of the title. These include the wise but solemn Kambei Shimada, the man-turned mecha Kikuchiyo and the smartly dressed Kyuzou. Each of the samurai have their own reasons for joining together to protect Kanna and yet these are put aside to protect a village which can only pay them in the amount of rice that they can actually consume.

Samurai 7 was originally shown on Japanese television in 2004 and each high-definition

episode cost an amazing ¥32,500,000 (around £160,476) to produce. With an upbeat J-pop opening theme sung by idol Nanase Aikawa and a more mellow ballad for the ending theme, courtesy of Rin, *Samurai 7*'s musical score is otherwise dominated by authentic Japanese instruments, as befitting a tale concerning a futuristic feudal tale.

After the epic feel of the episodes themselves, one of the

THE SEVEN SAMURAI

A jidaigeki or Japanese period-drama, Akira Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai* (Shichinin no samurai) was originally filmed in 1954 and followed seven ronin (masterless samurai) as they fought to keep a Japanese village safe from bandits, even if it meant losing their lives in the process. Widely recognised as Kurosawa's most successful and internationally recognisable movie, *The Seven Samurai* has inspired countless others films including spaghetti westerns, *The Magnificent Seven* and *Battle Beyond the Stars*. However *Samurai 7* is the first remake to have been approved by Kurosawa's estate.



nicest touches are the next episode previews which take the form of letters written by Kirara's sister Komachi to the villagers they left behind and include her perspective on the various samurai they meet.

The combination of a futuristic setting with feudal undertones makes *Samurai 7* an interesting take on Kurosawa's original film, but much of the mythos is left unexplained in this first DVD. What is the nature of the war in which both Kambei and Shichiroji fought? Who invented the gigantic mechanical beasts now piloted by bandits? Hopefully answers to these questions will be revealed in subsequent volumes.

LESLEY SMITH

DVD Disc Extras

Samurai 7 is presented on a single disc with both English and Japanese audio tracks in Dolby Digital 5.1. Both dubs are equally good and the subtitles are faithful to the original Japanese script, complete with honorifics. The extras however are a little bare-bones, comprising of character profiles for Katsushiro, Kirara, Komachi and Kambei, a promotional video, clean opening and closing themes and trailers for Tenjho Tenge and Burst Angel.

ANIME ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★

