

SPOTLIGHT

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The first *Mobile Suit Gundam* anime, first aired in 1979, has since become one of the tent-poles of Japanese pop culture and has gone on to inspire countless sequels, spinoffs, feature films, manga, magazines, action figures and many imitating series. At first glance *The Origin* appears to be just another in a long line of adaptations but this project from Yoshikazu Yasuhiko, a key member of the anime's staff, aims to retell the original story that launched the franchise over 35 years ago.

The Origin follows civilian teenager Amuro Ray as he's thrust into an interstellar war between the Earth Federation and the Zion separatists, a faction of humans born in space who long to gain independence from the 'earthnoid' Federation forces. The key to victory on either side lies in the use of mobile suits, giant pilotable robots that are able to bring down conventional battleships nearly single-handedly when put in the right (or wrong) hands. By either chance or fate, Amuro finds himself in the newest Federation mobile suit codenamed the Gundam. He fights prodigiously in his first enemy encounter and soon rises to the ranks of ace pilot, renowned on both sides of the battlefield. Amuro's talent is especially noted by famed Zion pilot Char Aznable who becomes determined to take the young maverick down.

While typically this kind of plot would work only as mere framework for a bunch of awesome robot battles strung together (of which there are plenty by the way), it becomes a compelling story that portrays both sides of the conflict fairly evenly, each faction having well-defined philosophies and reasons for fighting. The action plays out both on a large scale between armies in fast-paced space skirmishes and more personally in the rivalry of Amuro and Char, all of which is propelled by Yasuhiko's marvellous artwork. The library owns all 12 lovely hardcover volumes that offer dozens of full-colour artwork, bonus drawings and interviews with leading contemporary manga artists expressing their fondness for the series.

- *Review prepared by Jordan Bowden, Library Assistant*

