

'Speed Racer Show' races into the Magic Bag Theater

By JOHN MONAGHAN
SPECIAL WRITER

He's more than just a badly animated memory from the late '60s. "Speed Racer's" cult status, most alive in TV-aholics age 25-35, roars into the Magic Bag Theater on July 9-10 with three original half-hour episodes compiled by "Speed" freak Jerry Beck.

The brainchild of comic book artist Tatsuo Yoshida, Speed and his Mach 5 debuted on Japanese television in April 1967. The 52 episodes, syndicated statewide by Trans-Lux Productions, went underground in the late '70s when stricter standards for children's programming objected to the show's violence.

Beck, who distributes vintage and current Japanese animation through California-based Streamline Pictures, tracked down the original 35mm negatives for "The Speed Racer Show." He notes that "it's still the same animation that you see on TV, but it's really crisp and clear and looks like it was shot yesterday."

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MOVIES

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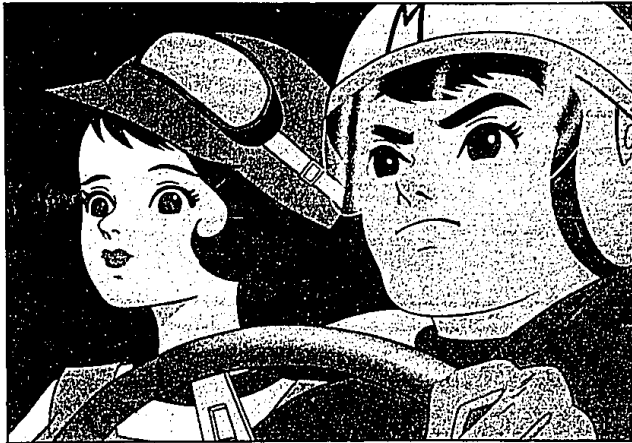
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"It's an obscure cartoon show that I really love," says Beck. "So does the creator of 'Ren and Stimpy,' John K, who says it's one of his major influences in terms of style. It's an offbeat story about a space character with that '60s future look that's so cool and campy now."

Vintage kid commercials appear between cartoons. Rocky and Bullwinkle peddle a long-lost cereal called Sugar Jets. Casper the Ghost lectures about traffic safety, an odd concept according to Beck, because "basically you have this dead kid telling you how to cross the street."

What keeps the "Speed" cartoons so popular? "I can't quite figure it out," says Beck. "I think because it was off the air for such a long time that a lot of kids from that time have fond memories of it today."

If you have a comment for John Monaghan, call him at 953-4977, mailbox number 1836, on a touch-tone phone, or write him care of Street Sense, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.



Cult status: Comic book artist Tatsuo Yoshida was responsible for creating "The Speed Racer Show" that went from TV cartoon fare to cult status when U.S. initiated stricter standards for children's programming in the '70s.

SCREEN SCENE

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters throughout metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

MAPLE THEATER

4135 W. Maple Road, Bloomfield Hills. Call 855-9090 for show times. (\$5.75 evenings; \$2.95 twilight)

"Much Ado About Nothing" (USA — 1993). Kenneth Branagh, the force behind "Henry V," returns to Shakespeare with this delightful film adaptation of the popular comedy. Branagh, real-life wife Emma Thompson, Michael Keaton, Denzel Washington and Keanu Reeves star.

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show times. (\$5; \$4 students and senior citizens)

"Brother's Keeper" (USA — 1992). 7:30 p.m. July 5-6. This fascinating documentary focuses on New York dairy farmers whose lives are changed forever when one is accused of the bizarre murder of another.

"Map of the Human Heart" (USA — 1993). July 5-10 (call for show times). Vincent Ward's ("The Navigator") epic story of an Inuit man and a French Canadian woman caught up in conflicting forces of love and warfare before, during and after World War II.

"Fellini's Interview" (Italy — 1989). July 7-13 (call for show times). This autobiographical "documentary" by Federico Fellini takes the viewer on a magical mystery tour of Cinecittà, the

Roman movie studio where he made the great films of his career.

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gin at dusk (around 10 p.m.) and are usually accompanied by a short. Call 747-2278 for information. (Free)

July 6: "Alien" (USA — 1979). Ridley Scott's epic about an unwelcome spaceship stow-away who meets its match in two-fisted Sigourney Weaver.

July 6: "Dirty Dancing" (USA — 1987). The surprise box office hit still sends hearts fluttering in this story of a naive young woman in the summer of 1963 who comes of age with dance instructor hunk Patrick Swayze.

July 7: "Roman Holiday" (USA — 1957). The surprise box office hit still sends hearts fluttering in this story of a naive young woman in the summer of 1963 who comes of age with dance instructor hunk Patrick Swayze.

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