

Digimon Fusion Episode 1 - Mickey Goes to Another World

Review:

This is my first review for the blog, which goes to the first episode of Digimon Fusion, Mickey Goes to Another World. Now, for those of you who don't know, Digimon is a Japanese anime series in which data-based life forms known as "Digimon" (short for Digital Monster) pair up with human children in order to save their world (and sometimes ours) from the plans of various bad guys. Think Pokemon, but with cooler monsters and more serious plotlines than "gotta catch 'em all." Saban dubbed the first three seasons starting in 1999, followed by Disney buying the rights in 2001 (along with Power Rangers) and dubbing two seasons. After this, the series went into a period of inactivity for *six years* (in America, at least,) before Saban bought the dubbing rights back (again, along with Power Rangers) in order to air the latest season, Digimon Xros Wars, as Digimon Fusion.

You see, this show has been a favorite of mine (second place next to Power Rangers) since I was a little geek back in '99. I've seen every season except Data Squad (the fifth season, it wasn't on a channel I had, unless it was on ABC the whole time and nobody told me), and although some folks prefer the Japanese version (you are all entitled to your opinions,) the English dubs will always hold a place in my heart. So, with the newest season beginning this year, I figured I ought to check it out for old time's sake. I'm glad I did, because this episode is pretty good, if not the most fun I've had watching a dub kid's anime in quite some time.

The plot of the episode (and consequently, the show) centers around Mickey Kudo, a young basketball player who has recurring dreams about leading an army of Digimon into battle against a large, evil army (there seems to be a lot of that going on in Saban shows lately). His dreams start to become reality when he answers the call of Shoutmon, an energetic (and awesome) little red Digimon who wants to become King of the Digital World. This sends Mickey, along with Angie (his best friend) and Jeremy (a kendo player and self-proclaimed "arch nemesis" of Mickey) into the Digital World, where they help Shoutmon and his small band of Digimon battle an evil Digi aptly-named MadLeomon. During this fight, Mickey discovers he has the ability to unleash a power called "Digi-Fuse," combining Shoutmon and his friends into stronger, more awesome forms. This leads to Mickey and company winning the battle, and in the process catch the eye of a couple of rival humans (with their own Digimon teams) and a pantheon of shady-looking characters who MadLeomon appears to have been working

for (these are probably the bad guys, at least for the first half of the season).

The episode does a pretty good job setting up the storyline, and I found the characters to be very likeable. Mickey reminds me of both Tai and Davis, being athletic, comical and laidback, but serious when the moment calls for it. (his voice even sounds like Davis', is it the same guy? I'd have to check.) Jeremy is Joe reincarnate, with bits of Izzy sprinkled in (his love for video games.) Shoutmon is already becoming one of my favorite Digimon (besides Flamedramon and Renamon.) I like his design, his attacks are awesome (Bellow Blaster is epic,) and his goal to become King of the Digital World sets him apart from past partner Digimon who just want to protect their human (not that there's anything wrong with that). If the title of King of the Digital World was awarded via Democratic Method, I'd vote for this guy in an instant.

I found the voice acting to be solid for the most part, and the the writing is less reliant on puns than previous dubs (although the puns weren't as bad as everyone makes them out to be.) This leads to some pretty funny and great moments. I just love Mickey's line as he passes to his teammate during the game, right after he winds up for his epic spinning jump shot ("... and then totally fakes you out." Classic.)

Another great moment at the game, when Mickey faints from exhaustion, and Angie dives in to save his face from the unforgiving hardwood floor with a pillow she conveniently had on her for just such an emergency. This is totally random and out of left field, but that's the kind of thing this show was famous for back in the day (besides the cool monsters and epic storylines, of course). Jeremy's introduction is great (especially in comparison to how he acts in the Digital World, where he basically freaks out all the time), and if you don't get at least a little choked up when Mickey talks out how Shoutmon is alone and he knows what that feels like, then you're probably a machine.

The intro song (kind of an Usher-style techno beat) isn't as epic as say Seasons 3 or 4's, but it's not bad. It's still catchy, and I found it popping up in my head from time to time throughout the day. The rest of the music is fairly solid, with the rock beat that plays during the title card scene being my favorite track. All in all, it always fits the tone of what's going on, and that's the most important part (besides sounding awesome, of course.)

The animation is what you'd expect from an anime involving monsters and robots, meaning that it's all beautifully drawn. The fight scene is pure eye sugar, and I love Shoutmon's expressions as he executes his attacks (just pure, epic rage). The fact that this is all in HD is just icing on the Firey Fastball-throwing, Sun Sword-slashing cake.

I noticed that the dynamics for Digimon and their human partners are different this season. In seasons past, Digimon would be paired with humans 1 to 1 (except in season 4, where the kids morph into Digimon), whereas here, a group of Digimon are paired into groups with a single human as a leader or “General” as the show describes it. Another difference is the ability for partner Digimon to heal themselves by entering the Digivice of this season, the Fusion Loader (which looks pretty cool, by the way). These things help set this season apart from ones past quite nicely.

After the episode, a cute little skit plays out in which a TV-headed robot describes a Digimon, which in this episode's case is Shoutmon. I guess this could be fun for younger viewers, but it's my least favorite part of the episode.

Overall, I enjoyed this episode. It's a solid beginning to the season, and a great way to bring back the series after such a long hiatus. Welcome back, Digimon. I've missed you.

Final side note: I couldn't help but notice a few familiar characters from past seasons in Mickey's dream. Hmmm... Digimon Mega Battle, anyone?