

Magic Knight Rayearth Anime

Season 2

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Intro

Remember how Rayearth 2 was a thoughtful, philosophical look at the nature of personal choice and the value of community? Well, season two is...not that!

We're Lucy and Robin, and we'll be your guides through CLAMP's Wonderland!

Check-In

- At one point we were going to spend two episodes on season 2, but we threw that out the window! It just didn't have a clean enough break to discuss only one half at a time. So, here we are!
- I'm gonna talk about rats lol

Background

- We're still in the end of 1994 thru 1995 here, remember
- The first half of the anime had pretty high production values and allowed the manga pretty closely!
- The second half fluctuates in animation quality much more, though the designs remain intricate and art beautiful--and it diverges much more!
- As far as I can glean from articles and interviews, the anime had always been planned to be basically two seasons, and this is likely to have been connected to the deal for the manga ALSO running for a sequel series.
- The first half of the manga ended around february of 1995, and second half began in March 1995. This anime would end in November of that same year.
- CLAMP didn't have the second half written from the very beginning, as we established in the manga episodes. They had to scramble and crunch to get it ready to go--and you've heard me go on in the manga conclusion episode about how much I think they succeeded!--
- But it means that this anime was IN PRODUCTION before they had the manga completely planned. CLAMP were very involved with the production at the same time they were busting out the manga (and finishing RG Veda, working on X, etc) and I'm frankly amazed it all turned out as well as it did. Mick and Monoka worked on designs, Ohkawa did work with the director and series writer on the scripts.

- That being said, it diverges so much that it really is a different story, as Ohkawa explained afterwards when fans balked at some of the differences.
- I'm also not sure why the series is 49 episodes long--is that a common number for a season? I thought that was 39? Did it get 10 more episodes than expected at some point? Maybe that's more-or-less a year's worth of weekly episodes?
 - It certainly didn't last as long as sailor moon...
 - But it has left its own kind of legacy!

Summary (kind of)

- **Ok**, since we know going in that there are a lot of differences between the manga and the anime, I think it's important to start with the things that stayed the same.
- The basic set-up is the same. The girls' are heartbroken by their experiences in Cephiro, meet at the Tokyo tower, and are summoned back mysteriously. Cephiro is falling apart without a pillar, no one knows who summoned Hikaru, Umi, and Fuu, and there are three invading countries that are also vying for the position of pillar.
- Autozam, Chizeta, and Fahren are left mostly unchanged, but we do get to spend a little more time with them, which is nice.
 - **Hikaru** spends time in Autozam and gets to know Eagle and the gang, Umi spends time in Chizeta befriending Tarta and Tatra, and Fuu spends time in Fahren with Aska and her attendants.
 - In each case, they are kinda rescued, kinda abducted by Eagle, the twins, and Aska, respectively, when a battle goes poorly and, uh, explosively.
 - Throughout each of these encounters, they are still more-or-less enemies--and Umi and Fuu do battle, mostly as duels that utilize their weapons of choice from their school club backgrounds--but it gives the Knights a chance to explain the issues with the pillar system, and it gives the other countries a chance to explain their own reasons for wanting to become Cephiro's pillar.
 - Ultimately, Chizeta and Fahren reach the same conclusions as in the manga, where they want to help Cephiro but do not want to actually rule it.
 - Autozam pretty much gets there too, but Eagle's plot line diverges a bit from the manga, so we'll talk more about them later.
- **Most** of the familiar faces from the manga are in the anime as well, with a few interesting exceptions.
 - Since the anime killed off Presea in the first season, but she was alive, well, and active in the second half of the manga, the anime brings her back...kind of.
 - At first, we are told that Emeraude's final wish was to bring back people who had died in season 1, including Presea. However, around episode 13 we learn that Presea is actually not Presea at all, she's Presea's twin sister (who we do eventually learn is named Sierra).
 - Sierra is determined that the girls not learn about her true identity. In fact, she even initially lied to Clef about who she was. The only one who actually calls her on this is Alcione, towards the end of the series.

- Speaking of which, do you remember how we weren't sure Alcione even died in season 1? Well, she didn't, and in fact is part of the brand-spanking-new plot line we're gonna talk about in a minute.
- So, let's start talking about the bigger changes.
 - They've removed the concepts of "roads into Cephire" entirely. The invading countries are just invading in airships, showing up at wildly different times and on a schedule that has no in-universe explanation...
 - And their "strength of will" is shown in other ways.
 - At first I assumed this was so that the Road to the Pillar could be unique, but they also changed that entirely.
 - In the anime, the crown Emeraude wore is still around, and it's apparently an object that will change to suit the next pillar.
 - It sits in a room full of magic, killer water, and only someone who is worthy of becoming the pillar will be able to enter the room and come out alive.
 - Basically, they kind of mashed the road thing with Mokona's alternate dimension. This means there are lots of ominous shots of the crown reacting to things or glowing as it changes itself to fit the new pillar.
 - Hikaru and Eagle are still determined to be capable of becoming the pillar, but most of the other parallels between them are dropped.
 - Eagle is still dying, but they never explain why. He does eventually come around to being on Hikaru's side in the battle (which...we'll talk about soon). But he isn't given the same gravitas as in the manga.
- OK, it's time to talk about the Evil Villainess in the room.
- The big change to this season of the anime is with the addition of a new villain, Lady Debonair, and her underling, Nova.
 - From the very first episode, we see hints of a shadowy figure and a pink haired girl.
 - About a quarter into the season, these characters are fully revealed...but they don't really play much of a role until around the halfway point.
 - The villainess is like 3 sailor moon Bad Bitches taped together and we kind of loved her
 - The pink-haired girl looked like the Director's earlier lemon OVA series protagonist Iczer 1...
 - But with a touch of Vegeta from Dragon Ball--especially his first outfit, which has the wild shoulder pads--which lead us to discover that Iczer 1 predates Vegeta's debut in Dragon Ball so his armor's look COULD BE INFLUENCED BY HER
 - Also, I feel I should mention that *this* Vegeta reference is NOT MY FAULT. This was my boyfriend's observation, and then everyone else had to talk me into it. I do think they're right, though.
 - But I digress...
 - Although they are both around, and even make themselves known to the characters, they don't actually impact the plot much in the first half of the season. For the most part, things continue on as they did in the manga.

- The only real difference Debonair and Nova make early on is to Hikaru, who is getting glimpses of them in nightmares and visions that she conceals from her friends.
- Debonair has also added Alcione to her ranks, basically using her in the same way Zagato did, attacking the Magic Knights and the castle of Cephire.
- **Lady Debonair** seems like an external threat at first but we quickly learn she's more intrinsic to their world...and (maybe a little too early) she reveals that she is a manifestation of the despair in the hearts of the people of Cephire.
 - She has a pretty dire goal: “ my wish is complete annihilation, absolute darkness, and elegant void.”
 - **Man**, I forgot about the “elegant void” part. She is SUCH a sailor moon villainess!
- Nova, however, is apparently part of Hikaru. She was made *from her, for her*...whatever that means. She's also obsessed with Hikaru, and wants to kill anyone she loves.
- About halfway through the season, Nova defeats Rayearth in battle, breaking Hikaru's sword and therefore severing her connection with the Rune God. In order to get it back, Hikaru needs Presea to help her re-forge (thru ~dance~) the sword.
 - Nova invades while Presea is making this sword for Hikaru, locking her in a...psychic battle of wills? Where Nova tries to break Hikaru's strength of will/heart by convincing her none of her friends actually love her and that Lantis will never love her back on account of her, well, killing his big brother.
 - **It also** takes 5 episodes for this to play out! Mind you, its not taking up the entirety of these episodes, which are the part where Fuu and Umi, having to fight the invaders from Chizeta and Fahren without Hikaru's help, fail and are taken prisoner, etc, as we mentioned earlier.
 - But it is still a large chunk of the season with Hikaru and Nova trading the same few lines about whether her friends loved her or not.
 - Significantly, however, the big realization Hikaru gets from this whole encounter is that Nova loves her--because she hates herself. This is how much the end of the first season affected her.
- **Debonair** and Nova do take on a stronger part in the second half of the series, and ultimately become part of the driving force for the climax.
- The climax is...so different, guys.
 - **In** the manga, the endgame kicks off when, despite convincing Fahren and Chizeta's champions not to try to become the pillar, Eagle refuses to back down because of his own complex and tragic wish.
 - Cephire is about to crumble, but Hikaru and Eagle's wishes, their strength of will, opens the path to the pillar and they are supposed to undergo the trial--fighting each other above actual Earth
 - And of course, Mokona is revealed to be the realtor of Cephire and the pillar system and earth, etc etc.

- The Mokona stuff simply does not happen in the anime. And that means everything has to work completely differently.
- Instead, Eagle, who we spent enough time with earlier to like (and for Hikaru to have developed feelings for I GUESS???), launches his last-ditch attempt at an invasion. And he actually succeeds in getting into the castle--to seek out the pillar's crown!
 - Debonair is also breaching the castle to get the crown.
 - But a blinding light and Emeruade's voice burst from it before she can snatch it with her long villainess fingernails--a light that also knocks out Eagle and pretty much everyone else who was converging on that room to stop her.
 - While she's passed out from this, Hikaru sees a vision of the past, when Lantis and Zagato once discussed whether Cephire's flowers would still bloom without the pillar, and later scenes where Zagato and Emeraude deal with Lantis leaving. Scenes that more or else occurred in the manga.
 - Now Eagle is their prisoner, but since even in the anime Lantis has history with him and now so does Hikaru, they let their guard down significantly.
 - Nova comes at Eagle revealing that Hikaru has feelings for him, too, but mostly to hurt Lantis, who she wants to destroy in order to, well, destroy Hikaru emotionally.
 - Lantis defends him, but when Hikaru shows up to stop Nova, Nova just kisses Lantis to mess with her head! What middle school drama! Debonair calls her back before this can go anywhere else, though
 - a real 'Guys my mom's calling I gotta go' moment.
 - Also Eagle eventually escapes but its such a repetitive story beat that we're kinda cutting a whole cycle out of our synopsis--actually we've done that multiple times because a direct play-by-play is convoluted and confusing with repetition! Also we'd be here all day.)
- This has been some pretty dire times. But the girls are all together for the first time in a while and Hikaru actually talks to Umi and Fuu about everything that's been going on with Nova, which strengthens their bond again! We even get a glimpse of some of the conversations that permeated and led the plot of the manga. They understand that their fear is causing the monsters to get stronger, and they also agree that they all share a wish to protect this place where their friends live.
 - That's great, but Eagle has a wish, too. He is back in the castle, pounding pavement (well, marble) to get to the crown room.
 - Lantis and Hikaru, understandably, want to stop him!
 - He is willing to risk everything to touch the crown, and Hikaru ends up also reaching for it, if only to keep him from doing it, and another bright light flashes--
 - But it doesn't kill them! In fact, the last of Princess Emeraude's power saved them kind of from being hurt and kind of from being the pillar, it is slightly ambiguous about which.

- We get some more flashbacks here, which yes, felt kind of redundant to us when we watched it, too.
 - So that's how we find out in this version that they are both capable of becoming the pillar.
 - While Hikaru and Eagle are passed out from this, Clef finally asks Lantis while he left--which was to find a way to end the pillar system. Clef agrees that before anyone makes a decision, they should all know the full truth of how it works, at the very least--even if it means no one will step up and Cephire will crumble.
 - Aska, Tarta, and Tarta all assemble...
 - It feels like something big is going to happen!
 - Only we're kind of waiting for the pillar's crown to reform into a shape that will tell us whether its Eagle or Hikaru who'll be the next pillar. So while there is tension, there's no...action.
- Here's where Debonair and Nova come in to push the plot forward.
 - Nova attacks Hikaru, but a pendant Lantis gave her 'protects her' and so Nova runs off to attack Lantis, instead.
 - She pulls him into a pocket dimension and, we find out soon, is using him to power her own Mashin!
 - Clef can't stop her because hurting her would hurt Hikaru too, apparently!
 - Hikaru goes to Eagle for help with this, since she knows Eagle loves Lantis, too.
 - Eagle helps her understand her feelings a little bit. That love is a thing you can't control, like how Emeraude couldn't control her feelings. That's why Hikaru loves Lantis even if she's afraid, as Nova said, that he won't love her back.
 - He also admits he wants to be her friend, not her enemy--but he still can't control the feelings that govern his true wish.
 - He says he's time is almost up. He can't let Autozam die, but eh also can't let Cephire die. If he becomes the pillar, he'll save Cephire, but he begs her to let the people of AUtozam come to cephire to survive, even if they try to invade rather than come peacefully.
 - Then he asks what she would do?
 - We don't hear what she says. Instead, she helps him explain his plan to Clef, that he has to try to help get Lantis back even if it kills him--he chooses to die a warrior's death.
 - He tell Hikaru that Lantis loves her and is tougher than he seems, it takes a lot to break him (lucy giggled) Lantis will keep his promise to come back to someone he loves. Eagle will also keep his promise.
 - I giggled because it seems strange to imply Lantis doesn't look tough! He looks like an immobile stone

of unfeelingness. I was not getting “weak, easily crushed” vibes from him AT ALL.

- I thought it was a rough sex giggle lol

- For a moment, the girls are gathered around waiting for the crown to choose the pillar, discussing the pillar system and fate of Cephiro, and we get a hint about Hikaru’s plan. But then the Mashin call to the girls and they Get In the Robot to go fight Nova.
 - This takes two prongs of attack--Hikaru has to out-talk her, and Eagle has to save Lantis to stop her robot from being a threat.
 - Nova’s still a dangerous enemy--but she is unravelling a bit because Hikaru’s feelings are breaking through.
 - Although we learned early on that she is a shadow of Hikaru’s heart, we learn in the last few episodes that she’s specifically a reflection of the doubt and regret that Hikaru felt during the final battle with Emeraude.
 - In that moment when she helped kill Emeraude, Hikaru believed that people can only be with their loved ones in death. Which is why Nova is so determined to kill everyone Hikaru loves.
 - Debonair has also been telling her that Hikaru *wants* her to kill all her friends. That this will make Hikaru happy.
 - Despite how close he is to succumbing to...space consumption or whatever it is in the anime, Eagle rushes in to rescue Lantis, which powers down Nova’s mech--but also uses the last of Eagle’s strength.
 - And Eagle dies! Which really upset us!
 - Debonair turns on Nova, discarding her for Hikaru to dispose of--
 - But instead Hikaru is able to accept Nova, and learn to love the parts of herself that are dark and sad. Nova is reabsorbed, and...that’s that, I guess.
- Meanwhile, what’s left of Cephiro is quickly crumbling around them, and Debonair launches a last attack.
 - The characters put a lot of effort into trying to get Debonair’s location out of Alcione, who has been a sad prisoner for QUITE A FEW EPISODES, and she finally reveals that Debonair is hiding in Cephiro’s “underside,” before being killed by Debonair.
 - RIP Alcione, you lasted much longer than we expected.
 - Cephiro’s “underside” turns out to literally be, like, under the castle or something...it’s not super clear, actually, and I had assumed it was an alternate dimension until all the normal people were able to follow the Rune Gods to the battle.
 - Anyway, they fight Debonair, all the while waiting for the new pillar to be revealed. Because remember, Debonair may be our main focus right now, but the *actual* problem is that Cephiro is crumbling around them...and

- defeating Debonair won't really change that. They need the pillar, but since that can't be rushed, I guess they might as well fight Debonair.
- They remind us that Debonair is a reflection of the negative feelings of the people of Cephiro, and kind of drive home the idea that she is gathering strength from their fear and doubt.
 - There's a big call to the citizens to believe in Cephiro (and the magic knights), and they're bolstered by the champions or Fahren and CHizeta as well as the children's experience with the magic knights inspiring them to have hope.
 - It is a very 'clap for tinkerbelle' moment that I historically love, but...well, we'll discuss later whether it worked perfectly well here.
 - This power of will from the citizens merges with the crown of the pillar to power up the sword of the gattai'd (combined) version of the three Mashin, and Hikaru has become the new pillar
 - She defeats Debonair with a big old sword attack--but maybe most importantly--
 - While she's all powered up, she also decrees that there will be no pillar system--Cephiro will belong to the people who live there.
- With the battle behind them, and a new, better system in place, the girls are able to go home.
 - In the last shot, the girls meet again at Tokyo Tower, another year later. They don't seem to have any way to necessarily get back to Cephiro, but they can see a lovely Cephiro in the clouds, and they talk about how they'd like to visit again and see everyone *without* a life-or-death battle.
 - And...that's it!

Discussion

- OK, so, there's a lot to unpack here.
- I guess an easy place to start is with the length of the series. This time they had to stretch 3 volumes into 29 whole episodes, and...it showed, right?
 - Obviously the main way it does this is with the addition of Debonair and Nova as a completely new plot line. Hikaru is dreaming about Debonair and Nova from the beginning, but though they reveal themselves to everyone pretty early on, she doesn't mention this until after the half-way mark.
 - This makes it harder for me to see them as an actual threat, especially early on, because none of the characters are treating them like one.
 - I'm sure this was to draw things out, but I wish they had stayed nightmares until much later in the show. It might still have been a bit frustrating that Hikaru wasn't telling anyone about them, but it at least would have been understandable.
 - We were yelling at the screen for Hikaru to just TELL HER FRIENDS about what was going on, but it does fit with the

emotional development (well, her own breakdown, really) that she couldn't bring herself to do that.

- Or at least, I understand that was the intention.
- It still felt really, really off...
- We do also get more screen time with all the characters, which is nice, but it didn't feel like we got more development for any of them,
 - It was more like we got to see the same beats, the same conversations, repeated multiple times. And not in a way that felt like intentional repetition. It just felt...long.
- However, in our viewing party we did agree that it probably wouldn't have felt so laggy if you were watching it one episode a week. It would have probably worked just fine for the audience at the time it was intended for.
 - But, would it have worked for a home-video audience?
 - (Robin you had thoughts about this)
 - Yeah, I think that it was so much more normal for that period, the 90s, for anime to be drawn out with repetitive plot points and ages passing with n real character development because, as you said, it works ok for tuning in once a week--but even at the time VHS/home video audience was a big part of the anime market and how money was made, and selling them a ton of tapes mattered more than giving them a succinct, focused story I guess? It was just how the business worked at the time. I know that at 12 i would have eaten up every episode, even if I was frustrated by imperfections.
- The second half of the season, episodes 35-49, had better pacing, in my opinion, but it still felt like a drag at times.
- It also had this frustrating problem where they'd get really close to solving something, but they *couldn't* because they still needed like ten more episodes, so they had to back away from whatever it was.
- It just left things feeling really up-in-the air.
- Like, they could have resolved things with Chizeta and Fahren while Umi and Fuu were captives on their ships, and they almost did. But there were too many episodes left, so they had battles that felt really unnecessary for where the characters were, and then put off actually reconciling with those countries until closer to the end.
- Honestly, I think this would have been a much stronger series if it had been, like...ten or fifteen episodes shorter.
 - Hard agree. We're in an era where lots of anime--I'm thinking of Demon SLayer in particular--are so focused and tight in their storytelling that the kind of repetitive stuff we're complaining about just feels like a throw-back. The expectations now are for something so much faster-paced than they used to be. But that doesn't mean every way they stretched this out worked well.

- I think we're finding places where the fact that there WAS NO MANGA TO WORK FROM and where Okhawa didn't want the anime to spoil the manga (which she's outright said in interviews was a factor in the differences between the two despite her involvement in writing this) end up being kind of a co-morbid writing trap.
 - There were ways to use all these pieces more efficiently, but if they actually need to be not-efficient, then there wasn't necessarily any incentive to do that
 - Plus, hindsight is 20/20 and they ah d to originate and FIND some of teh solutions we're deeming imperfect! And I don't want to lose sight of that even as we critique and discuss this.
- The significance of the pillar felt really different in this season, as well.
 - This part of the manga was all about how broken the pillar system was, and how our main characters were upset at the prospect of having to find a new pillar.
 - YEAH, like, from the first few pages, the main three discussed how they felt about the role they played in the last tragedy and agreed they never wanted to have any regrets like that, so the manga has this -less-fighting-more-cerebral approach from them--they wanted to understand everything before they took action.
 - It actually guided and gave some structure to the whole second arc of the manga!
 - However, the significance of the pillar system barely came up in the first half of the season, and really never got the same level of respect and concern that it got in the manga. It felt like the horror of that battle with Emeraude, while not gone completely, was kind of...softened.
 - I think this was a side effect of how long the series was. Really, the fact that the girls are concerned about getting a new pillar system could be resolved with one conversation with Clef or Ferio. It would only take a few people talking, and they would all be on the same page about not wanting a new pillar, or making completely sure that a new pillar would know what they were getting into...or having a new pillar rework the system entirely (Hikaru's eventual solution).
 - In the manga, there's a tension there, wondering who will talk first, and there's enough going on in short enough time that you don't wonder why they're not talking.
 - In this, there was plenty of time to talk, so it felt like they all just either forgot, or didn't care as much.
 - The pacing in general was so plodding that it left plot holes everywhere. Like you said, in the manga there's no time or space for tension to overstay its welcome and soften into ambivalence. Everything happens quickly, with only a couple spots for anything like a rest beat, and in those spots, precious little bits of character development come out!
 - Here, it just stretches out so you're left wondering why everyone is just standing (or laying) around waiting instead of hashing things out, making a plan, training with their magic, or SOMETHING.

- Of course, they also changed the climax completely.
- Because they didn't have the MOKONA IS GOD plot twist AT ALL
 - Mokona was sidelined into just a mascot character with a mini arc with Primera--at first antagonizing her, even noming down on her (Lucy's boyfriend loves Mokona and wanted it to eat her so bad) but finally protecting her at the end when the castle was crumbling.
- YEAH ABOUT THE END!
- In the manga, it's kind of a philosophical discussion between Eagle and Hikaru, with one of their lives on the line, and literal God hanging out hoping they will come up with a better system.
 - In this, it's a side problem. They focus so much on Debonair, but they didn't really tie Debonair into the problem of the pillar.
 - They easily could have had these things be more connected!!
- Ok, so, let's talk about Debonair and Nova.
- We were really excited about Debonair. She has such iconic Sailor Moon Big Bad energy, and at first she hit all the right notes.
 - But it never felt like she was fully integrated into the rest of the story.
 - In that big battle, it's hard to be really invested in Debonair, when the real problem is the lack of a pillar. Defeating Debonair won't necessarily do anything about Cephire crumbling. It only *did* because the crown decided to pick Hikaru in the middle of the battle. And they didn't even tie the crown thing into them having to prove their worth or something, like they did with the Escudo, so it wasn't like she was *earning* the position as pillar by battling Debonair.
 - It didn't have to be this way. They established early on that Debonair was connected to the unrest and fear in Cephire. If they'd established that she was gaining strength as Cephire crumbled, or if they'd made it so that she was actually destroying Cephire, then it would have connected to the rest of the plot.
 - I think this would be less annoying for people who haven't read the manga, but I kept wanting to yell "forget about Debonair, go talk to that damn crown!"
- Nova also felt like a real missed opportunity.
 - Her design was cool, as it did make sense to try and give Hikaru a more personal enemy, but ultimately it felt like she took Hikaru *away* from the rest of the plot, and kept her from connecting with Cephire and the other characters as much as she could have.
 - Nova's ostensibly a foil for Hikaru, but she doesn't really exhibit, like, a dark side of Hikaru's personality or anything.
 - She's just a little ball of murderous chaos.
 - The closest she gets is having a twisted version of Hikaru's love for everyone, where instead she only loves Hikaru and doesn't want her to love anyone else.
 - But...they didn't really establish that Hikaru loved everyone, aside from her good-natured-protagonist energy.

- This is much more pronounced in the manga, and while these things did run at the same time and may have served to bolster each other, I'm not sure this is the explanation for what happened here...
 - Then, there's some messy stuff with Nova's motivation.
 - As we said, early on her "love" for Hikaru seems selfish and manipulative, and it seems like her desire to kill everything Hikaru loves is either, like, some side effect of being Hikaru's "shadow" (she has inverted emotions) or some unhealthy way to make sure she has Hikaru all to herself.
 - But no, we're told that it's because Hikaru believed, if only for a moment, that people can only be with their loved ones in death.
 - Then, we're quickly told that Debonair has been telling Nova that Hikaru *wants* her to kill off her friends. That Debonair has been manipulating her.
 - So which is it? Is she following an innate drive inspired by Hikaru's darkest moment, or has she just been manipulated by Debonair? Is she showing obsessive love, or making a conscious decision that ignores literally every interaction she's had with Hikaru?
 - While it's *possible* all these things could be true, it feels muddy, at best. And mostly *unnecessary*.
 - Like Debonair, it really felt like she was separate from what manga-readers would see as the main plot of the series. Which was a shame, because I really liked her in a lot of ways.
 - Hey interestingly enough, Ohkawa mused in an interview with the director that "The role that Nova carries in the anime is actually Eagle's role in the manga."
 - Oh, that is interesting!
- To me, Debonair represents the kind of big, epic villain battle that it felt like the manga purposely shied away from.
 - She was like another version of Zagato. Or at least another version of the Zagato they *thought* they were fighting for most of the first season.
 - She was *just* evil, and it wasn't even complicated-evil. Yes, she was a manifestation of the citizens' doubts, but they barely did anything with that. If they'd built that into the rest of the plot, maybe tied the deteriorating castle into people's diminishing hope using some actual visuals or plot beats, she could have been way more effective.
 - After everything the girls went through with Emeraude, they didn't need another Big Bad. They needed to work together to solve a systematic problem.
 - Debonair just felt like a big distraction from a problem that was much more interesting than she was.
- Yeah kind of as a corollary to that, there was way more fighting in the anime! The end wasn't really resolved with a big robot battle in the manga--certainly not with one that escalates and powers up beyond the robot battle at the end of the first half, with Emeraude. And that REALLY defies robot manga/anime logic!
- The anime definitely went there, though.
 - I loved that Fuu and Umi found foils within Aska, and the sisters.

- Their battles felt well thought out and structured--even though they kind of repeated for stretching-out-the-plot reasons more than needed beats.
- It was used pretty darned well, and the manga maybe could have done more with that!
- The production, helmed by someone who worked battles into his own sexy creations a decade earlier, had wonderful effects in the fights, a lot of thought and care and art went into making them feel big.
 - In some ways the grandeur of this really is what the manga, which is very light and tight and focused and mostly conversations rather than fights is missing.
 - In others it just kinda squanders a lot of the actual themes/development/structure of the manga by having them fight rather than talk things out. Since that was. The point of the second half of the manga!
 - They are actually pretty complimentary! Having both, like with sailor moon, does feel like a more complete picture, even if they diverge in ways we did not adore.
 - Yeah, there definitely were more of them, and they were pretty cool!
 - You have Robin to thank for any of those battles actually making their way into our summary, by the way. I have Battle Blindness, and my brain just turns off whenever action or fight scenes happen.
- How about how different the relationships were!
 - They killed Eagle to remove the love triangle, UGH
 - They didn't totally straighten up Lantis and Eagle, at least?
 - But also there was a lot of Geo/Eagle moments
 - And Clef/Umi moments--he's the one she's thinking of when Fuu thinks for Ferio
 - They handled the stuff with Umi softly letting down Ascot pretty well in this, I thought.

Some other things that bugged us:

- How old is anyone?
- Even the characters point out that the way people in Cephire look has nothing to do with their actual age and everything to do with their "will"...or their self-perception, or whatever.
- This got us thinking of Princess Emeraude. Which is her "true form," the childlike version, or the adult version?
 - Our friend Caitlin Like posited that the adult version is her true form, the person she would like to be, but she kept herself in a childlike state because she had to be focused on Cephire.
 - I think her adult form represents her own sexuality, her own feelings for herself and Zagato. Maybe her quote "selfishness"?
- We can also consider Ascot, who willed himself into a teenager form due to his crush on Umi.
- And we're still not sure if Clef is an ancient child or a Hobbit (though Robin is pretty sure he's a Hobbit).
- Theme: obsessive love
 - Wasn't really in the manga...except maybe Emeraude and Zagato?
 - They say at one point that Emeraude fell in love with Zagato partially just out of a need to love someone and be loved.
 - And yes, they were kind of at odds...but they still seemed pretty mutually into each other.

- I suppose you could argue that it was Emeraude's obsessive love for Zagato that prompted her to summon the knights and everything...but I think the manga is pretty clear that she was just being a girl who fell in love, and it was the system, not her feelings, that were at fault.
 - But boy, this season is full of obsessive love!
 - Ascot
 - Nova
 - Primera, I guess?
 - Alcione
 - Also, they really drop this in the second half, huh?
 - Maybe they shouldn't be lying to the girls *again*? Presea/Sierra.
 - Why is Hikaru's bond with rayearth dependant on the sword??? They are not related???
 - Poor Eagle!
 - Caitlin really was upset by how he was handled in this. And I can see that. It kinda sucked!
 - If we were going to do this...how would we do it?
 - I would have connected Debonair, as a physical manifestation of Cephir's desampir, to the people who are causing her and to the actions of the knights so that we could understand how that system worked and actually use it for some structure! And definitely not have them wait around for teh crown to decide, UGH THAT WAS NOT GREAT!
 - Yeah, I would have made the ties between Deboniar and Cephiro, and Hikaru and Nova, clearer. I might have removed Nova entirely. I like her, but I feel like she detracted from so much of the character stuff that I liked in the manga, and I don't know if we needed that.
 - I also would have added more about the invading countries. I wanted to actually see what those countries were like, not just the ships. Imagine if the girls had actually been taken back to the countries? It could have used of episodes, given reasons for why people couldn't talk about stuff, and further developed all the characters.
 - But, it is what it is. Overall, I don't hate this series, and I certainly don't think it's unwatchable.
 - I think it's better if you haven't seen the manga, but even my boyfriend, our designated Rayearth newbie, felt like this season was kind of a let-down after the ending of the first season.
 - Part of me would love to see what a new adaptation would be like, especially with all the years of video-game isekais between then and now. It could be done really well.
 - I mean, I'd rather get a decent Tokyo Babylon anime or an editing to X, but I'm just saying, I wouldn't be mad if they remade Rayearth.

Outro

Speaking of adaptations, though, our next episode will be on the Rayearth OVA! Neither of us have seen it before, so this should be interesting.

Until then, you can follow us on twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram @Clampcastpod, on Facebook as Clampcast in Wonderland, and on our website clampcastinwonderland.com.

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Thanks for coming with us on our journey through CLAMP's Wonderland!

Until next time, remember that everything will be alright—

—and try not to lose an eye!