

Magic Knight Rayearth

Wrap-Up

Lucy Robin

Intro

With the power of friendship and strength of heart, all worlds can be filled with light. This...is our last Rayearth episode!

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

Check-In

- This has been such a weird year. It's wild to think we're actually done with Rayearth!
- We're also wrapping up summer, even though it was 90s degrees today, so...yup.
- Originally we were going to do a full episode on the Rayearth game for the Sega Saturn, but we ended up just rolling that into this episode. That's not to say we'll never revisit it...but for now, this is it.

Discussion

So as I was trying to formulate my thoughts and also address little loose ends, I found myself consulting a wonderful fan resource, Shidou Hikaru15's wordpress site a LOT and I want to give them a massive shout-out because I don't own all those books nor have I done those translations, so it's just a TROVE. I think I'll need to ramble about ephemera and fandom's service of archiving at some point, but I just want to really give thanks to all the CLAMP fans we talk to and learn from on a daily basis, and the ones who put the hours in decades ago to pave the way. <https://shidouhikaru15.wordpress.com/>

We were pretty hard on the OVA! And it was pretty hard on us! I read up on the Wings of Hope special edition release on ShidouHikaru15's site, and it seems like it DID try to fill in some of the gaps that left us baffled--especially with Eagle's motivation and how he fit into the story at all other than the antagonist the action set pieces required. So it's good to know that there is A VERSION that holds together better, and a shame it's not the commonly available one. Super swanky special editions are frustrating!

They also brought up that while Ohkawa isn't credited with writing the script for that version, and is only mentioned as a creator for the main-line OVA, there are interviews from around the

pre-production time where she says she WAS writing it, so possibly CCS took over their lives and stopped that from happening, which is a pretty strong possibility.

Speaking of Ohkawa and scripting, despite any weird feelings we may have had about the choices and pacing of the second half of the TV anime, it seems she's credited with scripts for basically all of those episodes. She came in around ep 14 of the first half and kind of stuck around, so that's a very interesting look into the production there.

Yes, I second the shout-out to that site! (which will be linked in the show notes) It's such a great resource, and so lovingly created. I know I have seen the creator around twitter (etc.), and we really appreciate all your hard work!

Game

To start things off, I think we should talk about the game.

We watched friend-of-the-pod comic artist CJ Joughin stream a bunch of the 1995 SEGA jrpg! We did enjoy a kind of hybrid version (shhh!) emulation that maybe carried over more of the original Japanese voices and things than the actual limited release in the US. Speaking of that version! Here's some background:

There are actually several Magic Knight Rayearth-related games (and recently they've appeared in gacha games as well as editor Will's beloved Super Robot Wars.) By several I mean 5. Two for gameboy, One for super famicom (the SNES in the US), and two for Sega Game Gear, But the one we're covering, because it has a pretty special place in gaming history, is the Sega game from 1995 that was one of the very first games released for the Sega Saturn in Japan, but one of the very last ones that came out for it in the US in 1998. It was almost a launch title, but didn't make it out in the first wave, and then it was there in the US to turn the lights out on the console.

A quick note about the Sega Saturn. It wasn't a total flop of a console in the US but it honestly did not compete well with the Playstation and the Nintendo 64, but that may give you a sense of what this game was up against in the US—Final Fantasy 7 and Ocarina of Time! In Japan it beat out both of those and was released when 2d sprite-based JRPGS were still technologically advanced.

It was a massive undertaking to localize this game. Part of that was because they actually had to rebuild a TON of sourcecode when a lot of the original Japanese code was lost! Which—DAMN. But on top of that—it's a JRPG! It has a lot of dialog—this is back in the day when a JRPG would have text that displayed when you pressed the action button next to like...any object in the game. And they tried to keep that text funny and relevant. There're voices they had to dub, including, again, THE THEME SONG, and just so much dang work.

The version we played was altered from this localization and has some of the original voices added back in, but retained their text translations, which means Princess Emeraude is Princess Emerald, Zagato is Zagat, etc.

It's definitely an adaptation of the anime not the manga, and includes scenes from the anime—and newly animated sequences, too! In 1998, 2d animation in a game was treated by game review magazines as outdated and cheap, but NOW it just holds up so well and charmed the pants off of us. A reminder that the tastes of the time were so focused on this sense of 'moving forward' into a photo-realistic 3D world with the quickly advancing technology...and that means so much art from the time looks dated to us now. Of course, hideous 90s CGI is now an aesthetic people choose to employ on purpose, so like. WE ARE OLD AND IT WILL HAPPEN TO YOU TOO. But 2d animation and sprite graphics are timeless I swear.

The gameplay was fun to watch, though it made our friend a big fan of Fuu, since she has a ranged weapon. You get to tag-team between one of the three girls at any one time, while the other two trail behind in cute little sprites that walk behind whoever is active. There was something very natural about seeing this in game form, where you picked up power-ups, saved at fancy fountains, and leveled up. ALTHOUGH the new abilities and equipment and stuff are unlocked not by levelling up, but by hitting plot points in this game, which is a great nod to the story, even if its backwards from the way the JRPGS the story is based on actually operate! It also has mild platforming elements. And a lot of cut scenes, both with sprites and that cut to animation.

The story expanded and contracted around what would make for compelling dungeon designs. The Forest of Silence, for example, had a lot of recognizable elements—they met up with Ferio, couldn't use magic, etc. But there's a whole level with a villager as a character the girls are kind of tracking through a dungeon... In this game, the antagonists (Alcione, Ascot, Caldina, Lafarga) DIE after you defeat their boss stages and the cutscenes deliver whatever story beats this version has, so they don't have the same arcs at ALL. By building the story around dungeon-based level gameplay, it added an element that is really inverted from the experience of the manga and anime, where you're in a much more character-focused, inwardly-focused emotional space standing next to the heroines, as opposed to seeing everything as these set pieces the girls have to navigate. It really made me think a lot about gameplay in RPGs, and how they do or don't encompass the feeling of traveling, going on a journey or quest.

CJ, the friend who was streaming this for us, had some more to say:

"From the perspective of someone that grew up playing old school RPGs it's a good time. I definitely want to finish it for you guys in the future. I have some thoughts on pacing/character:

It feels fast. It feels like we're not given a lot of backstory/information on the characters. HOWEVER in relation to other sorta action RPGs at the time, it's not actually less than a lot of other games would give. It IS hard to go in remembering some aspects of the original series, but once we got to sections I didn't remember at all it felt like playing just about any other game

Like, I think comparing it to something like Secret of Evermore with a more... classic RPG twist"

This game actually has a degree of infamy in retro game circles, and is very valuable to collectors these days. As in, somewhere between 1 and 11 THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR THE US VERSION. Now, retro game collecting is in a very weird bubble right now and has become pretty inaccessible, but we'll see how long the possibly-drastically-inflated-price lasts. Games have a very strange place in like, the world of media. Conversations about game archivism are VERY heated because emulation and piracy are obviously not legal, but they're literally the only

way people can access some games that are considered classics--and even ones that just EXIST with no big obvious scholarship connection--and if the publishers who have the rights (and may not actually have functioning game code!!!) don't want to re-release them, then only the copies produced for dead consoles/outdated are out there and that's a bad way to keep these things in public consciousness. Film and TV history have similar eras of archival insufficiency, when people didn't necessarily value what was being produced--ask Dr WHO fans about the lost episodes of the original run in the 60s, which were sometimes recorded over! Since for a long time games have been seen as frivolous or even transgressively dangerous, there was no sense that this was art and culture we'd want to preserve--which is just so dumb because anything people make has meaning to people and a place in history! Material culture is as much our history as cataclysmic events. And ephemera is always, by definition, easily lost and passed over, but that doesn't make it unimportant.

It makes me reflect on how much we're missing in our CLAMP discussions because we don't have all the promo cards and magazine ads and TV spots that help really tell the story of where something was placed in material culture, what kind of money was being thrown around, who was being targeted by the ads, etc. That stuff can really help make a full picture, and we just don't have as much of it as we'd like. A great interview from the time is helpful, but without TV listings and book announcements and stuff like that, we just don't have as much data for corroboration. And this is popular media from like, 2-3 decades ago!

With so much 'ephemera' being digital these days, I know that I can search my email or twitter and probably find 100% of everything used to promote my book. But even I don't have photos of ever display in a book store, every drawing a kid makes inspired by my comics, every book report done on my book instead of a prose novel the teacher wishes a kid has chosen. I'll never know the full impact of what I've made.

Video games are so unique among media. The level of interactivity, the immersion--they ask a LOT of a player, in such different ways from a book or comic, and even profoundly different from passive media like TV and movies. Games were clearly a huge font of inspiration for CLAMP, especially this era, and I think that helps them connect with an audience of folks who were also playing games at that time--and since games are even more prevalent, maybe even ubiquitous, in the lives of kids now, there's a chance that something like Rayearth could stay relevant even with all the other Isekai works crowding it. The fact that this is only accessible to wealthy collectors, lucky folks who happened on it before the bubble, and people wearing pirate hats, is a huge shame.

Overall, I know we had a ton of fun with the game itself--not to mention playing it with our friend. It has a charm to it that seems to fit the overall series, even if with some of the gameplay changes. Unfortunately, we did not get to see it all the way to the end, but I can only imagine the shock someone might feel if they'd only played the game, and hadn't seen the anime or read the manga. It would definitely push me to go buy that other media, I can tell you that.

And speaking of other media...

Name Translations

- One thing we discovered after talking to a few of you online, is that there are alternate names for the three main Rayearth girls that appear in a lot of translations.
- These actually stem from early US dubs of the series, and were mandated by TMS, the studio that created the anime.
 - For the record, a lot of this information comes from the website Lost Media Wiki, and there will be a link in the show notes.
- There was a dub of the pilot made by Oceans Studios, and a dub of 13 episodes supposedly made by Summit Media group (though info on this is a little hard to come by). Both were made around 1995. The Oceans pilot is provided as an extra on the recent blurays. (source: [https://www.google.com/url?q=https://lostmediawiki.com/Magic_Knight_Rayearth_\(partially_found_TMS_English_dub_of_anime;_1995\)&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1627596435178000&usg=AOvVaw2pKlnrQYQr8Pkyefl0tt2l](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://lostmediawiki.com/Magic_Knight_Rayearth_(partially_found_TMS_English_dub_of_anime;_1995)&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1627596435178000&usg=AOvVaw2pKlnrQYQr8Pkyefl0tt2l))
- For both dubs, TMS provided the studios with translated names for the girls (and possibly other characters).
- Those names were Luce, Marine, Anemone.
 - You can bet we were excited about that Luce tidbit, especially!
 - These are more or less direct translations of the Japanese names.
 - “Hikaru” means “to shine” or “light up” in Japanese, and Luce literally means “light”
 - This is also where the name Lucifer--light bringer--comes from. I’VE THOUGHT ABOUT THIS A LOT, OK.
 - “Umi” is the Japanese word for “ocean,” and Marine means “from the sea.”
 - And finally, “Fuu” is one reading of the kanji for “wind,” and Anemone is the Greek word for “windflower.”
- We actually got to watch the Oceans’ pilot, thanks to Robin’s blurays.
 - It’s called a “pilot,” but if I’m remembering right, I think it’s actually like the third episode or something, instead of the first episode. They were definitely mid-adventure.
 - The dub was...not the best. But they were trying.
 - My big take away was that it had its own dub for the opening theme (the Summit dub supposedly did not), which means they’ve actually dubbed that damn song TWICE.
 - THREE TIMES--remember the game also has a localized version!
 - Wow, yeah. Damn.
- The later US dub, made by Media Blasters in 1999, did not use these names, however, and instead stuck with the original Japanese names. Since this is the only dub that actually got circulation beyond, like, a preview showing at an anime con, this explains why we hadn’t heard these names. But, the translated names (or some variations of them) are used outside of the US.

- According to Inu_Clamp on Instagram, who keyed us into this whole thing, the Brazil translations use Lucy, Marine, and Anne for the girl's names. I've also seen uncorroborated mentions of the names being used in other translations, which is really interesting!
 - Lucy looked it up and it seems like TMS mandated the name changes so they may have had that influence over other markets too.
 - But in the widely available officially localized releases in the US/English-speaking market, their original names have been retained.
 - Had it been re-packaged for American TV in the mid-90s they may have done that level of localization, but that isn't what ended up happening for us.
 - Yeah, it so easily could have happened! I think if it had followed Sailor Moon's trajectory more, we would have grown up knowing them by those names in the US.
- Thank you again to Inu_Clamp on Instagram, who brought this to our attention when they asked why we were using the Japanese names instead of the translated names. This was so fun to look into, and it is always my favorite thing when we're able to connect with fellow CLAMP fans and learn about our different experiences.
- If you like Inuyasha and CLAMP, you would probably enjoy their instagram account, so you should check them out!
- *Comment from Instagram:*

[inu_clamp](#)

This is the first episode I listened! I loved it! ❤️❤️ I have a question: isn't the girls names in English translated? I'm from Brazil, and here they translated their names in the manga to Lucy, Anne and Marine. I thought that came from the English version of the manga....

Things to Follow Up On

- In preparing for this episode, I re-listened to our previous episodes, and there are a few points I want to follow up on.
- At one point, Robin noticed some similarities to Alice and Wonderland, and we wondered if that would carry on throughout.
 - I suspect that it's a kind of background noise, like, subtly seeping in.
 - But classic elements like growing big or small, being threatened with beheading--nothing obvious like that ended up in it. Maybe you could strain the characters but even that I don't think is very manifest.
 - Yeah, it wasn't *not* there...and it was certainly present in our minds...but I wouldn't say it was a big connection they were obviously trying to make.
 - Although we know CLAMP likes Alice in Wonderland (they reference it often), we think most of the similarities here are more because Rayearth falls into other classics that feature normal kids jumping into a strange land.
 - There's Alice, of course, but there's also the Narnia series, and The Neverending Story, among others.

- Maybe even Peter Pan fits here?
- Which reminds me. We've mentioned "isekai" a lot when talking about Rayearth, but I don't think we've ever really defined it. For fans who are less in touch with current anime fandom, this term has become really common recently. The term, isekai, literally means "other world," but has come to refer (especially in weeb circles) to stories where a character is transported or reincarnated to a fantasy world...often a fantasy world that is also a video game. Think Sword Art Online.
 - This is not a concept that is new to literature or new to anime, but it's become a bit of a common term, and, well, the more you know!
- Back to Rayearth, we noticed some use of blossoms in volume 4, and we wanted to see if that carried on to symbolize promises or something, like cherry blossoms do in X.
 - But no, it does not. I did a very quick scan, but blossoms are more or less only used once, and it's really just in the normal mood-setting way of shojo manga. Feathers also make an appearance, but also without the built-up symbolism of X. Basically, they are familiar motifs, and that's about it.
- The anime also established this big, dramatic connection between the girls' swords and their mashin, but we didn't remember that at all from the manga...so we did some digging.
 - Basically, a connection does get established in the manga, but kind of gets lost in everything else.
 - Presea tells them early on that the "evolving weapons are the keys to reviving the mashin."
 - And when they finally do revive all the mashin, I'm pretty sure the swords *turn into* those bubbles they hang out in when they pilot the robots.
 - So, the swords are integral to the whole process...but I do think the anime kind of ran with that in an unexpected direction, without having actually clarified all that sword business (it was a very blink-and-you-miss-it kind of detail).

Twitter Questions/Comments

I think that's about it for follow-ups...now, time for the some questions and comments from our listeners!

Minnie @MinnieGrace_

It's a little stargazy but was struck that the MKR anime introduced Mokona being a video call where the manga had more of a temporary psychic link. Do you think CLAMP would have liked to change how that communication worked in the manga?

--Whether they would have liked to I can't speculate, but it definitely feels like a pre-smart-phone element. On the other hand, being able to get story across without having to draw anything additional really helps a comic artist hit deadlines! And it doesn't really impact the story that much with the general level of detail that it currently has.

--I would theorize that the psychic link was easier to convey in the manga, whereas the video call thing was more impressive in the anime...so maybe it wasn't so much a change they would have made, as a preference they had for the different media? Whatever the case, i think it would be interesting to see how they--or a modern studio--would handle that aspect now.

clampdownbook

@clampdownbook

Which CLAMP series not yet adapted into a game would you like to see get their game?

--If I knew I would live for like 200 years I'd spend a decade hand-making a late 80s-early 90s retro RG Veda JRPG and it would be perfect and beautiful. And Also I'd make Tokyo Babylon as a starkly designed visual novel. Imagine Clover as something like Journey??? Maybe the CLAMP secret is that all of their manga truly should become video games. The obvious answer is Angelic Layer, but I wanna actually make a battle doll damnit!

--I...weirdly want a Wish dating sim? Not necessarily one where you can have romantic relationships with everyone, but where you get different story lines you can explore with each character, and it all brings you to a fuller understanding of the overall story. Mind you, we haven't quite gotten to Wish yet, so that's me going on half-memories, but I think it could be fun.

Anile

@Anilelicious

I wish we get to play the game on switch. It was cute and adorable

--I KNOW RIGHT it's a great little game, and we thought it not only held up well but actually added a lot to the experience, since it's building on JRPGS thematically!

--yeah, I was just thinking about that the other day! It would be so perfect for the Switch. We can dream...

AIExtraterrestrial alien Kaplan

@alkcomics

Is the music in the game from the show?

--Some of it is adapted some of it is original! And again--ANOTHER DUB OF THE OPENING THEME SONG!

--I remember it being really charming, though!

Big thank you to everyone who sent us comments! We usually do a call-out for those on twitter a few days before we record the episode, so watch for that next time if you'd like to get your comments included. And we always do a call for comments leading up to April, for our Anniversary episodes.

Ok Robin...things are winding down, and while I think I could--and will--talk about Rayearth forever...it's time for some final thoughts.

Robin Thoughts

Rayearth's presence feels pretty light in the US at this point. But searching on Ami-Ami and other character goods stores makes it clear that Rayearth goods are still released frequently, and they receive figure sculpts more often than any CLAMP title but the massively successful Card Captor Sakura and Chobits, which just gets bishoujo type merch anyway. I think that its impact was overshadowed by Card Captor Sakura here, but since Rayearth was more contemporaneous with Sailor Moon, it just belongs to a slightly older era that was feeling out what a magical girl show could be in the 90s.

With all the anime is was clear that the director really wanted a high fantasy show not a Sailor Moon clone, and that unfortunately it shows its weakness there--because Rayearth ISN'T a strongly realized world, it can't be, it's such a high concept (and as Ohkawa said in _____, to paraphrase, spending too much time with the citizens of Cephiro might leave you wondering why they're worth the sacrifice?) but the story they deliver within its narrow conceit is really thoughtful. It may not be fair to ask it to be Lord of the Rings when it's more Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe, or Wizard of Oz. Or Alice in Wonderland. But compared to Sailor Moon, it really stands out as a unique take! The girls are interesting, Hikaru is in many ways the opposite of Usagi, though they both share their loving hearts. Magic-wielding warriors who battle in giant robots is REALLY different from the sentai-style 'turn on your move and win' style in Sailor Moon, where combat is so stylized.

I think it is a classic, with a story that combines the ethos of video games and philosophical literature into something unique and enduring.

Lucy's Thoughts

Although of course this series remains beloved to both CLAMP fans and older anime fans, I do think it's been largely left out of modern anime fandom, and that's a shame. Maybe with it being available streaming on Funimation, at least in the US, more fans will become aware of it. Honestly, I would love to see a modern adaptation that more fully walks that line between Sailor Moon, mechas, and the modern video game isekais that are so popular these days. I think

there's big potential there, especially for something that followed the manga a little closer (especially the second half).

But, Rayearth is definitely not forgotten. I still see people cosplaying these characters, and I still see fanart and merch for the show available at cons. It's a wonderful series with a strong standing in nerd history, even if newer fans haven't discovered it yet. I'll definitely be evangelizing for Rayearth whenever I hear someone talk about isekais or dark magic girl shows...

For myself, Rayearth holds a big part of my heart. Yes, there are some other CLAMP series that loom larger for me, but Rayearth is so unlike anything I'd read before--or really since. It's such a unique mix of things, with a beautiful heart at its core.

That said...I am pretty excited to get to their *next* series...

I'm excited to be reading it with you!

Outro

In our next episode, we're going to start discussing Wish! So, now is an excellent time to get your hands on the first volume--or the omnibus.

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

You can support us on Patreon, by making purchases through our Bookshop.org store, or just by writing a review or sharing this podcast with your friends.

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!