

# 30 YEARS OF GU



# GUNDAM

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**T**he TV anime series Mobile Suit Gundam first appeared in 1979 with a completely different kind of storyline to other robot anime of the day, which were primarily aimed at a younger age group and tended to be simple stories of good versus evil.

Centered on the character Amuro Ray, who controls the Gundam weapons known as “Mobile Suits,” it depicts the trials and tribulations of a group of boys and girls caught up in the One Year War fought between the Principality of Zeon, which proclaimed independence for its space colony, and the Earth Federation, which refused to recognize this. With reference to such phenomena as the fictitious Minovsky particles, and attention to logistical matters concerning combat and the depiction of weightlessness, it has managed a high degree of authenticity as a work of science fiction, thereby extending the age of its fan base to include those in their late teens.

While viewer ratings were low when it was first broadcast, this changed dramatically when the

“Mobile Suits” plastic models were released, and with the production of a film version, it went on to become a major social phenomenon. While the creators of the Gundam stories have never lost sight of the fact that it is a robot anime aimed at young people, there have been many similar productions that also seek to depict human drama involving the various characters. It is said that some members of the generation that grew up on Gundam were even motivated by the series to pursue robotics research, with some striving to develop a real Mobile Suit.

The appearance of Gundam plastic models, nicknamed “*ganpura*,” has also spurred a move in the plastic model market away from scale models towards much larger character models. This market is said to boast sales of some 50 billion yen per year.

As Gundam celebrates the 30th anniversary of its birth with a special commemorative project, it is clear that Gundam will remain firmly fixed in the public eye for 2009.



**ABOVE:** Amuro Ray, the protagonist who controls the Mobile Suit weapons made famous by Gundam.

**FACING:** The Mobile Suit weapon featured in the *Mobile Suit Gundam* TV series.