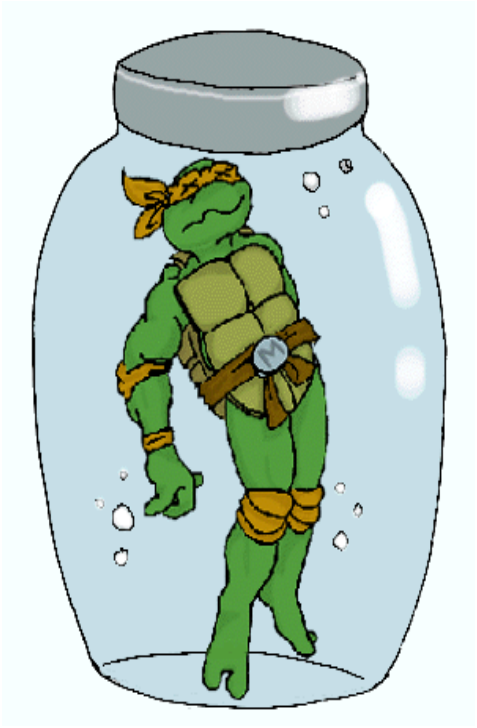


Welcome to Dissected

N.B. What you're about to read is the main text from the TMNT website which started around 2003 and ran up until Geocities closed its doors, although there were very few updates after 2006. It was a lo-fi, very basic looking website which focused on the 1987 TMNT cartoon and "analysed" the characters, themes and messages of that cartoon. It is probably worth saying again that the website was intended primarily to be a joke, so please don't be offended if I've trashed your favourite character.

A special thank you must go to Loolaa, who did all of the artwork for the original site and has kindly allowed me to re-use it here.

The text retrieved below has been come from Archive.org. Obviously, the links no longer work and the text is not particularly easy to navigate in this format (try using the "find" function if you're looking for a specific character, episode or theme), but as a few people seem to be quite nostalgic about the site, I thought I may as well make this information available. There will be some typos here and in some places I have added my 2012 notes below the articles in [red text in brackets]



Introduction - Read This First

Firstly, some explanation of what you're going to see on this site (unless you've already seen it and come here last, in which case I hope you feel suitably embarrassed now. I know I would in your position): This site is a careful study of the cartoon that became part of, arguably, the weirdest phenomenon of the late 80s and early 90s: the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles craze. With its status as Saturday morning kiddie fayre, the original cartoon was easily the most recognisable, widespread and influential representation of the TMNT. So it was inherently suitable for an in-depth psychological and thematic study. Obviously.

Okay, no, I'm not taking this seriously and neither should you. This is a tongue-in-cheek look at my favourite cartoon when I was growing up. Not done out of disrespect, you must understand. Hell, no. Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird are comic book visionaries, as far as I'm concerned. Their original comic book pre-empted a boom in independent books and introduced readers to a world outside the Marvel and DC mainstreams. I couldn't watch the cartoons over and over again, looking for stuff to talk nonsense about, if I didn't still get a kick out of them even now (and I'm 26 now, thanks for asking). But even the most ardent TMNT fan (me, for example), would admit that the original cartoon series was riotously funny, and not always intentionally.

This site isn't about merely slagging off the cartoon. Nothing so crass. It's supposed to be a serious look at various elements of the show and its characters (only not so serious, obviously). So I don't necessarily believe all, or even any, of the theories I put forward on these pages. I'm having a laugh.

The obvious question is: why? To which I have a fairly pathetic answer: I thought it would be fun. And possibly profitable (no, no, it's a joke, don't sue). Okay, honestly? I was bored. Over the summer of 2001, I worked for a bank in a processing centre. My job was basically data entry, only less well paid. A bunch of debts, as well as the demands of a 9 til 5 job, meant I only had the money and energy to go out a couple of nights a week without getting

fired for sleeping on the job. Since then I've been a lot busier, hence the slow development of this site recently.

The inspiration for this project was a site called All Things Philosophical on Buffy the Vampire Slayer, which takes an in-depth look at the metaphysics, themes and characters of Buffy and Angel. Undoubtedly my favourite fansite on the web. I was impressed that someone had created something which fully acknowledged and explored the depth of these shows and wondered what it would be like to do something similar for a show that had almost no depth. Which is how I came up for the idea for Dissected.

So what qualifies me to analyse the TMNT cartoon in this way? Well, nothing really, save for the fact that I wanted to. For what it's worth, I have a bachelors degree in Politics, so I'm not completely stupid. But no, I'm not qualified to theorise on these matters, which doesn't really matter because, as I've stressed, my tongue is very much in my cheek.

Some points regarding the content of the site. Firstly, some of the episodes reviewed here were watched on BBC television, which showed edited versions of the cartoon (renamed "Teenage Mutant HERO Turtles") in Britain. Mostly, the edits consisted of scenes where Mikey used his nunchuks (presumably because two pieces of wood joined by metal are thought to be inherently more violent than weapons designed to stab). Although some of the episodes I've seen may be slightly different to the ones you've seen, I think the basic essence of them is similar enough for me to attempt something like this. In any case, I have access to many of the episodes in without the cuts at this point.

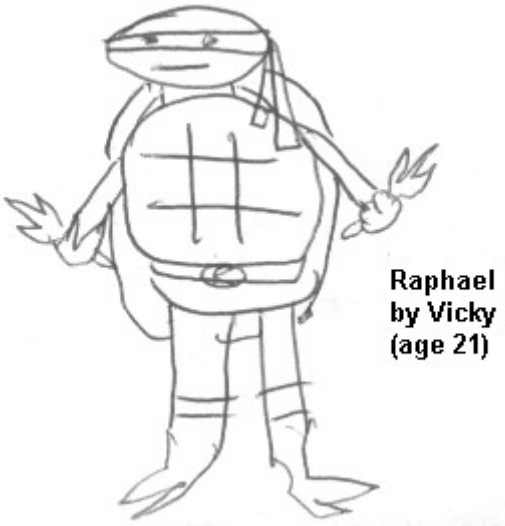
Secondly, all contributions/comments/whatever are welcomed. Hatemail? Sure, whatever. If I find it amusing or interesting or suspect that anyone else could, send it to me. Do not send me spam or I will not express feelings of love towards you. You're going to send me spam now, aren't you? Crap.

Thirdly, you'll notice most of the episode descriptions are littered with links. Follow these to more detailed explanations or ramblings within the "Characters" or "Themes" sections of the site.

Fourthly, and most importantly, a big shout goes out to Loolaa, who did all the lovely pictures for the site and was also incredibly helpful with ideas, information and advice without which this site would be some lowly, horribly designed piece of crap.

And in case you were wondering, I did this on Frontpage Editor, and no, I don't have any idea how to do any kind of proper webmastering, which explains the layout. Just be grateful I rejected the 1970s curtains style background at the last minute.

[2012 notes: The fact that I had the patience to make an entire website absolutely astounds me now. People have frequently asked me in the past to do a website similar to Dissected for the comics or the 2k3 toon. I've always answered that I think there was something inherently suitable about the 80s toon for this purpose – it was full of mistakes, the plot often made no sense and the characters were just weird. Much as I loved it, you probably wouldn't get away with something so shoddy on television today]



TMNT and Me: A Love Story

Before I start, there are two things you have to understand. Firstly, I was a very lonely child. Secondly, it was the Eighties, and everything was messed up bad back then.

People use the word "obsession" rather too often nowadays. "Oh my friend is obsessed with Kevin in my science class" they say, when in fact the friend is question will probably forget about Kevin within the week. Or a scientist may say "I am obsessed with the idea of fractures on the time/space continuum and how they could provide a way to discover immortality" when it's something that's been bugging him for only a month or two (okay, it's unlikely any scientist would ever say that, but you get my point). Most people will never experience true obsession. I think that I have.

My first glimpse of the turtles was when I was about nine years old, with an episode of the cartoon called "The Incredible Shrinking Turtle." The whole phenomenon was just beginning to build up in the UK. Within a few weeks, it was all the boys I knew ever talked about. The girls couldn't give a toss, for the most part, but I've always had gender issues (my issue: I don't get gender). Soon I was religiously making sure I never missed the cartoons, reading every magazine article I could get my hands on and writing my school book report on the various books I borrowed off guys from school. And I developed a crush on Michaelangelo (oh don't look at me like that, I wasn't the only one).

Pretty standard, for the time. At the height of the craze in Britain, kids were queuing for hours to see the movie, stealing trade stickers from each other, covering their walls in posters, spending their parents salaries on action figures, eating nothing but pizza and buying turtles, terrapins and tortoises in quantities which gave the animal welfare charities panic attacks when the craze died down and they were discarded. I didn't do all of that stuff. I couldn't afford to. My fascination with the TMNT was more quiet and internal.

But when everyone else forgot about it, I didn't. And in time, it became a Dirty Little Secret (remember, I'd never seen the comics, just an okay movie and the diabolical cartoons). I'm not saying it was at the forefront of my thoughts at all times, but it never went away. I incorporated it into my life. People in my life assumed the roles of the characters. I would listen to a friend talk and hear Raphael. And yeah, that probably does certify me as crazy. Shrug. What's your deal?

When I was sixteen, I secretly taped the re-runs of the cartoon and watched them only

when no one else was in the house. My Michaelangelo obsession had just gotten weird by that point. I couldn't watch a scene if I knew Mike was gonna do something spectacularly dumb. I had to ease myself into it. Fast forward the first couple of times I watched it, then once I knew the dumbness would pass and didn't last too long, I could watch bits of it and then eventually I could watch the whole thing. Mike became a teenage kind of equivalent of an imaginary friend. Not in a scary talking to myself way, but in an imagining what Mike would say if he were there kind of way. All the time. And the Mike in my head was nothing like the Mike on screen, hence partly my embarrassment in watching the cartoon. (One thing to point out here: the thing with Mike and me was never even vaguely sexual. He wasn't an imaginary boyfriend, just your standard imaginary friend who urged you to set fire to stuff or what have you).

That all pretty much came to an end when I started reading comic books. At first, it was a couple of Marvel books. The superhero stuff, another form of escapism. Of course, eventually, it occurred to me that there were books outside of that, books that did not suck and weren't just the equivalent of daytime soap operas. And when I was looking for them, I happened across the Image TMNT series. Not our finest hour, but nevertheless, it was at least more intelligent than the cartoon. And when I discovered the older stuff, the TMNT fascination stopped being a dirty little secret and started being a legitimate interest. I still watch the cartoons, but they amuse me more than anything else (hence this site) and I'm not ashamed of anyone knowing I watch them because they're kitsch and cute. And there's the comics, which I'm still collecting after getting off to a slow start. I don't read comics I'm ashamed of. Somehow the shame disappeared and the TMNT stuck around. Which probably isn't healthy, but what the hell? Who wants to be normal anyway?

[2012 notes – wow, 2002 me was pretty damn emo. I guess there was less meta around on the internet in those days – or else I was less aware of it – and I felt the need to justify having done all this for an elaborate joke. Also I didn't want haterz telling me I was trolling their fandom, even though I was]



Character Profiles



April O'Neil

The 1980s Woman

If the 1980s were the "Me Me Me" decade, they could have buried April in a time capsule and future generations would have learnt everything they needed to know from studying her actions. Anyone who's seen "Working Girl" knows what I'm talking about. In the 70s and 80s, women increasingly replaced the old shackles of oppressive housewife roles with the new shackles that go along with being capitalist worker bees. April in particular has always felt she has something to prove and that her career is the way to do it.

Since she works in the media, April's got a particularly high-pressure job. This creates the obsession with her career that leads to her constantly risking her life in pursuit of "hot stories." Most notably, in "The Catwoman From Channel 6", April's insistence on tracking down Rocksteady and Bebop all by herself results in her being transmogrified into a catlike creature. Similarly, in "April Foolish", April poses as a foreign princess in order to get an exclusive story and this leads to her being kidnapped by Shredder. She is unrepentant at the episode's end and, when asked what she's learnt, tells everyone that "a disguise is a great way to get a story." Whenever there's danger, April's there, the TMNT allowing her to come along (presumably because either they don't give a damn what happens to her or because she nags them until they let her accompany them) (e.g. "Leatherhead: Terror of the Swamp").

Like many career women, April prioritises her work over friends. For example, in "Case of the Killer Pizzas" April abandons her best friend Irma after she faints in the sewers. Why?

So she can pursue a story. In earlier episodes, she lies to Irma and pretends not to know the Turtles. And in "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King" she abandons her friends to the insane Rat King. The Turtles are occasionally on the receiving end of this treatment too. In "The Ninja Sword from Nowhere" April is more concerned about her camera and her story than Splinter's safety and in "The Gang's All Here" she decides getting her expose on inner city gangs is more important than helping Mike. When a young boy named Zack is in danger in "The Fifth Turtle", she callously switches on her camera and declares excitedly "I love this footage!" She turns down her biggest opportunity to help the Turtles in "Turtles on Trial", staying out of the matter when the TMNT are publicly proclaimed a "menace" by a colleague at Channel 6. When Donatello is abducted by aliens in "Invasion of the Turtle Snatchers", she's more concerned about the story than the possibility that her friend may be harmed.

Judging by the events of "Enter: The Fly", her social life isn't all that healthy either. When she receives some flowers with no card attached at work, she assumes they are from the Turtles, even though she is an attractive woman in the public eye. In "The Old Switcheroo" she boasts to Irma that "you'll never see me jump when a man calls." However, she's shown up a second later when Burne calls her into his office and she does exactly that.

These aren't the only unfortunate by-products of April's career. Like anyone in a high-pressure occupation, April always has to be watching the guy behind her. She's aware that if the competition catches up with her, she's in trouble. Hence her attitude towards Vernon, Channel 6's other top reporter. Although it has to be said that Vernon is blatantly hostile towards April, she does nothing to try and improve their working relationship and is openly jealous whenever Vernon gets credit for anything. When Vernon has the presence of mind to capture a battle between two villains on camera in "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King", April is adamant that he is stealing **her** story. Fortunately for her, Vernon's incompetence prevents him from claiming the glory for himself. In "The Big Break Out", April is seething when Vernon reports on the return of the Technodrome, even though the event is now so obvious that you'd have to be hiding in a cupboard under the stairs to miss it.

Unsurprisingly, since April's a TV personality and her appearance is an important part of her success, she's also got a vain streak. As a "decrepit 28 year old", she's dismayed when she can't use a Fountain of Youth to "shed a few wrinkles" in "Leatherhead: Terror of the Swamp" and at the end of "The Catwoman from Channel 6" she's whining about the state of her nails. It's not unusual for women in the public eye to become neurotic or insecure about the way they look.

April's work practises themselves are occasionally suspicious. This isn't unusual either, particularly since failing to cut corners could cost April her job, but as a reporter, there are ethical issues here. In particular, April's boss tells his reporter to go out and "make news" in "Return of the Technodrome" and April's relationship with the police authorities (she mentions having a contact in "New York's Shiniest" and appears to have access to a police radio in "Beneath the Sewers"*)* makes you wonder if there could be a slightly pro-police flavour to April's reports.

More worryingly, however, April seems to be an active participant in the whole NYC media conspiracy. Obviously, it's easier for any reporter who's worried about their job security to go with the flow than be out their on her own as a force for truth, and that's exactly what April does. Although there's gotta be plenty of news to report in NYC, at some points April finds herself covering irrelevant stories like a Fat Cabby contest and Library Week and, as previously mentioned, she misses her opportunity to speak out in favour of her friends in

"Turtles on Trial."

So is April a feminist character? Hardly. Like most 1980s cartoon women, she's a terrible role model for young girls. April's problem is that, in her rush to become a liberated and successful woman, she's let her career define her. Her behaviour, her personality, her principles and her actions are all determined by her job. April may not be oppressed as a housebound woman, but being oppressed because she's a working woman is just as bad.

[2012: I'm cringing a little now at my own early-20s understanding of feminism, but I still think that April is a terrible role model and a sexist character (never since Victorian times has a woman fainted so much) and that TMNT has never been very good at female characters. There. I said it.]

Baxter Stockman

"Daddy never loved me"

What do we know of Baxter before his transformation into the Fly? Basically, he was your typical blundering genius who worked for some evil guy. Boring. Let's get to the transformation.

So one day Shredder gets sick of Baxter messing up. This in itself is a little hypocritical, since Shredder messes up every episode. But, of course, Shredder isn't the type to take the blame. It's always someone else's' fault. Baxter's a moron, Bebop and Rocksteady are useless thugs and Krang's devices never work. Of course it couldn't be Shredder's fault.

Baxter's problem is he's been told it's all his fault so many times he believes it and all he can do when Shredder's telling him he's useless is agree and issue grovelling apologies. So when Shredder finally decides he's had enough of Baxter, Baxter doesn't defend himself. Anyone else would say "hey, you're not Mr Competent yourself, man. It wasn't me who left the Turtle Killing But Can Easily Be Used Against It's Master machine on yesterday. Again." Not Baxter though.

In fact, there's not much he can do to stop Shredder sending him back to the Technodrome and Krang throwing him into a disintegrator to die in "Enter: The Fly". In fact, if it wasn't for some random fly happening to become trapped in the disintegrator, Baxter would be some disintegrated pile of ashes floating around Dimension X. But no. Instead he mutates into a giant human-fly hybrid. Like the Jeff Goldblum character in that film made in the 1980s which was coincidentally also called "The Fly" (cough cough RIP OFF cough).

As "The Fly", Baxter seeks revenge on the Turtles AND Shredder, making him arguably the most morally ambiguous character in the show. But what really triggers Baxter's attitude change from mild mannered scientist to vengeful madman? Is it turning into the Fly or the fact that Shredder and Krang tried to kill him? Baxter's never appeared very tortured about the fact that he's a freak now. His treatment at the hands of Shredder and Krang, however, has always been a source of pain and anger.

Before the transformation, Baxter put up with at least as much mental abuse as Rocksteady and Bebop ever had to. In later episodes, his resentment at this becomes clear. He initially seeks revenge on Shredder in "Enter: the Fly" before Shredder successfully convinces Baxter that they were friends all along. In "Return of the Fly", Baxter openly reveals his bitterness about Shredder's lack of belief in him. Shredder

manages to talk him round to his point of view by telling Baxter he looks upon him as a son. This works because Baxter is desperate to believe it. Maybe because he's always wanted some sign of approval from Shredder, or maybe because he's had issues with his own father, but what is definite is that Baxter's been searching for a long time for some kind of companionship or feeling of belonging.

The Turtles could have helped there. In both "Enter: The Fly" and "Return of the Fly" there are numerous missed opportunities. Baxter clearly just wanted to feel like he was part of a team or family. If they could have been bothered, the Turtles certainly could have reached out to Baxter as fellow freaks. But the Turtles had no interest in this. It doesn't fit into their agenda, which is basically to keep playing "the game."

In "Bye Bye Fly", Baxter meets a comrade in the form of a sentient spaceship computer that's been left on its own for hundreds of years. The two of them team up out of loneliness, the computer instantly empathising with Baxter's pain because that way, they can become allies. Later that episode, Baxter successfully wreaks poetic justice by temporarily turning Shredder into a fly. At the end of the episode, Baxter tries to escape in the spaceship, but the Turtles' intervention causes the ship to fall apart and leaves Baxter trapped on the web of a monstrous space spider. That's the last we ever see of him.

Why is it that Baxter of all characters meets a sticky end? He wasn't as openly evil as any of the other villains. He had none of Shredder's ambition or the henchmutants' love of violence. He was simply a pissed off former employee trying to get back at his former boss. Why does Baxter, above all others, merit the death sentence for his crime?

A potential answer is that Baxter was trying to exit the perpetual cycle that the other characters are embroiled in. Baxter didn't die as he was trying to kill anybody or wreak his vengeance. He died as he was trying to run away. Away from Earth, aboard the spaceship, he was of no consequence to any of the other characters. The Turtles have always allowed their enemies to live before, but they have always been a little more vicious when it appeared the villains weren't playing by the rules. Maybe the Turtles decided that if Baxter wasn't playing anymore, he may as well just die.

So...a blundering genius who was rejected by his peers became a vengeful madman and met a sticky end. Maybe there are lessons to be learnt from Baxter's life or death. Or maybe it could happen to anyone.

[2012 notes: Baxter's snark is probably the best thing about the current IDW comic series]

Burne Thompson

The Ethical Dilemmas of a Modern TV News Editor

It's not easy, y'know. Being a TV news editor, walking the line between offending your media tycoon boss and blatantly lying to your viewers, trying to balance delicate ethical issues (like public interest and the truth) against the need to grab high ratings with sensationalism. Or you could just do what Burne does and jettison the whole journalistic ethics thing altogether.

Like April and Vernon, Burne's in a high pressure occupation and the strength of the competition forces him to put ratings before anything else. Whenever he's not canoodling

with his sickeningly youthful girlfriend Tiffany, Burne's shouting about ratings or the need to get "hot" stories every time we see him. This is hardly surprising. If Channel 6 falls behind its competitors, Burne is the first guy everyone looks to for explanations, and potentially the first one to lose his job.

What is worrying though, is the effect this has on Channel 6's output. Any number of Marxist theories and studies (click on “Mass Media” after following the link) have suggested that news coverage is influenced by capitalist concerns such as advertising, ownership and market share. For Verne, the ratings are key. On slow news days, he urges April and Vernon to "make news" ("Return of the Technodrome") and in "Ninja Sword From Nowhere" he tells Vernon "dog bites man is nothing, but man bites dog is news....so go bite a dog." The direct implication is that he wants his reporters to fabricate sensational news if necessary.

Verne's got a pretty straightforward view of what the public want too. "Violence! Crime! Brutality! All the elements of great family viewing!" he proclaims in "The Gang's All Here." In "Turtles on Trial" he's happy as a clam when Clayton Kellerman's persecution of the TMNT boosts Channel 6's ratings, even though the hysteria surrounding it leads to the formation of angry mobs. He’s quite happy to manipulate April and Vernon to get results – threatening April with dismissal on her first anniversary at Channel 6 in “Invasion of the Turtle Snatchers” is one example of this.

As news editor of Channel 6, Verne's responsible for handing out the assignments. Which means he's directly responsible for April covering stories like Library Week ("Splinter No More") and the Fat Cabby contest ("The Catwoman From Channel 6"). If Burne is sending his top reporters to work on this, then who's covering all the important stories that inevitably must be available in a city like New York? Like all TV channels, Channel 6 only tells you the news it wants you to know, and Burne's role is key in ensuring this.

So where does all of this leave Burne? In "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" we see him lying to girlfriend Tiffany about his age on his 50th birthday. What is a man Burne's age doing with a girl that young anyway? And why would he feel impelled to lie to her? They say you're as young as you feel, and if that's true then Burne clearly doesn't feel like he's lived as much as someone his age should have. Which is what happens when you devote your life to your career. No wonder he's having a mid-life crisis.

[2012 notes: if the Leveson Inquiry took place in 1987 in the TMNTverse, Burne's career would be over in a flash. Seriously, Fox News looks impartial next to Channel 6]



Donatello

Lonely genius?

In all the episodes of TMNT ever made, Donatello is the only one of the four central characters who never gets any kind of love interest. How come? Well, maybe he's just gay, but from the writer's point of view, there was never any need to introduce any love interest for Don. There were enough storylines and plots revolving around his inventions and his intelligence that the writers never needed to resort to the clichéd "Don gets a girlfriend" episode.

Donatello's lifestyle reflects this. His life is literally full with inventing and planning and other "intellectual" exercises. He doesn't need anything else. Hence, he's the most emotionally detached of the Turtles. We've seen Raphael get angry, Michaelangelo crying and Leonardo making passionate speeches about truth and good, but Donatello just gets on with it. He's a scientist.

And what a scientist. Physics, chemistry, genetics, mysticism...his knowledge apparently knows no bounds. In fact, on occasions Donatello seems to know things that he shouldn't. In "Beneath These Streets" he appears fully knowledgeable about a medical instrument called a medi-laser, even though it's only just been invented. On other occasions, he seems to instinctively know what will help the situation. It's this that stops him being just an intelligent guy and makes him a true genius.

Yet, for a gifted scientist, Don can be incredibly reckless sometimes. In "Return of the Technodrome" he stands around near an unexploded device, even though any children's fireworks safety video will tell you the wisdom of standing well back. In "New York's Shiniest" he plugs in and switches on a broken TV, risking severe shock, even though any idiot knows you should unplug electrical devices before you mess around with them. In "Leatherhead: Terror of the Swamp" he tests his theory about the Fountain of Youth by jumping in, breaking every rule in the book on empirical research and risking his own safety at the same time. The fact that Donatello's inventions generally tend to fail at the most inopportune times suggests that he doesn't test them properly before unleashing

them in battle.

So is Donatello a reckless genius or just a genius who has random fits of being a ditz? If the latter was true, you might expect Don to learn from his mistakes and become more careful as the series progresses, but if anything, the reverse is true. So why would someone as intelligent as Donatello be so incautious? Here's the theory...

Donatello's a genius. A very cynical genius, as seen in his love of capitalism and attitude to humanity (see below). His subdued manner and tendency to spend his leisure time working in a laboratory by himself indicates he's an introvert. Hence, we may expect him to be very self-aware. And when self-aware people see reasons to be unhappy with their life, depression inevitably follows. Don's got more reasons than anyone. He's a freak, one of four members of a minority species that will be persecuted throughout its existence. His life is committed to fighting evil, but the evil never stops coming. If he were human, Donatello would have a promising future. After all, if he's this enterprising and intelligent as a teenager, imagine his future potential. As it is, he lives in a sewer, with a family he's emotionally detached from. There's no one on his level of intelligence to converse with, his talents are undeniably going to waste, he'll never know the love of a woman and there are probably elements of his own personality that disappoint or even frighten him (again, see below). Why wouldn't he be depressed?

Now, it's a bit of a leap to go from identifying depression to saying Don's outright suicidal, but what depressed teenager doesn't at least flirt with the idea of ending it all at some point? Maybe Donatello didn't plug in that broken TV thinking "hopefully, I'll die", but isn't it possible that he plugged it in thinking "well, I don't care anyway"?

How else can you explain such an incautious attitude in an obviously talented scientist?

Absolution through Capitalism

One of the ways Donatello deals with depression is throwing himself into inventing things. But there's a sizeable amount of evidence to suggest that, increasingly, Donatello is beginning to see business and enterprise as a way he can connect with the world and give his life meaning.

These capitalist tendencies aren't as visible in the earlier episodes. In "Blast From the Past" we see the first appearance of the Turtleblimp. In later episodes, the Turtleblimp has a huge TMNT logo on it. Why? This is the equivalent of the CIA or the IRA putting a huge logo on the side of their vehicles. Not only are the Turtles often wanted by various authorities, but the logo on the blimp acts as a huge target for their enemies. Why mark themselves out for attacks like this? Well, as the inventor of the Turtleblimp, Donatello's the one responsible and the most likely explanation is that he thought the Turtles' image was more important than security concerns. This concern with presentation suggests that Donatello may have had branding the Turtles image in mind. Was he envisaging TMNT merchandise? Who knows. Whatever the reason for the logo, it isn't present during the first appearance of the Turtleblimp, suggesting that Donatello only decided later that it was a good idea to add the logo.

The Turtleblimp isn't the only conspicuous invention built by Donatello. Many others were designed specifically to relate to the Turtles' image. The Turtlevan is the most obvious example, with its turtle shell pattern design.

We see Donatello coming to terms with capitalist ideology in "The Case of the Killer Pizzas". The lesson he draws from the whole experience is "there's no such thing as a free lunch." This might sound like a standard proverb, but it's actually an inherently capitalist idea. In modern society, we occasionally recognise that people may occasionally get a "free lunch" (for example, in Britain, everyone is entitled to treatment by the National Health Service and a minimum level of finance which may be provided in the form of state benefits). The more capitalist friendly or pro-free market a country gets, the more these rights (sometimes called the welfare state) get stripped away. Don's clearly of the opinion that you create your own fortune and get nothing for free.

One clear instance of Donatello embarking on a business venture takes place in "Bye Bye Fly" where he has the other Turtles exercise and films this with a video camera in the hope of creating a "Turtle aerobics" video specifically to make money. This is the first instance we see of Donatello actively pursuing profit. His strategy is flawed, of course, because the market for Turtle aerobics is probably smaller than the market for last year's calendars, but the intent to make money is visible nonetheless.

In "The Old Switcheroo", Don attempts to develop a super-fast pizza maker. The fact that the Turtles get pizza delivered regularly and have plenty of time to cook when they want to anyway suggests that Donatello is developing the product for a commercial market, rather than just for personal use. Another invention with profit making potential is the rat catching machine Don invents in "Enter the Rat King." Don claims that the device is just to catch the Rat King, but even if the Rat King were stupid enough to be tricked by such a machine, it's unlikely that the commercial potential hasn't been envisaged by someone as clever as Don.

Donatello has also developed a taste for the trappings of capitalism. When he provides the Turtles' disguises in "Mister Ogg Goes to Town", he comes up with business suits. Even when he's playing dress-up, business is the first thing on his mind.

Is there anything wrong with this pro-capitalism attitude? Well it depends on your view on capitalism (quick summary of mine - it sucks). It's never been the Turtles' mission to change anything - their main aim is to maintain the status quo. They want to protect the Earth, not change it. From this point of view, Donatello's business tendencies aren't at odds with the Turtles' actions. A love of capitalism would only become problematic for the Turtles if it prompted Don to do something contrary to their ethos. Could that ever happen?

In "Leatherhead: Terror of the Swamp", the Turtles and the Punk Frogs discover a modern Fountain of Youth, which causes mutants to feel physically rejuvenated whilst reverting human adults to childhood. Donatello suggests at the end of the episode that the fountain's existence should remain a secret, ignoring both the fact that scientific study of the fountain may lead to medical or scientific advances and the safety threat posed by the its existence (after all, any lost tourist could fall in and be turned into a helpless child). This seems contrary to Don's scientific nature, but there's an obvious reason why he may have suggested this. The Fountain of Youth has unlimited potential for commercial dividends. As the only scientist able to study it, Donatello would have the key to unlimited wealth and knowledge. Did Donatello take a sample of the water for himself? At best, he was highly irresponsible in suggesting the fountain remain a secret. At worst, he let his business tendencies get the better of his conscience.

Some of my closest friends are human...

All the Turtles have a healthy dislike of humanity thing going on, but Donatello is easily the most prejudiced of the group. In "The Maltese Hamster" he declares his believe that humans can't be trusted and in "The Gang's All Here" he vetoes the idea of any of the Turtles eating cookies that will cause them to become human, declaring that humans are a "lower form of life" than slugs, amoebas or worms.

It's possible that Donatello acted on these racist believes in "Splinter No More". After observing that Splinter misses being human, the Turtles decide to find a way to revert him back to his former self and Don invents an antidote using leftover mutagen. Since Donatello has had this leftover mutagen for many years, it seems strange that this idea did not occur to him before. Despite Donatello's genius, the antidote fails and, after witnessing the downside of humanity, Splinter reverts back to being a freak in a very public place. At the end of the episode, Splinter's view of humanity more closely resembles Donatello's. So is it just a convenient coincidence that Donatello's antidote failed when it did?

Although Donatello's racist attitude and depression are both evident to lesser extents in the other Turtles' personalities, the combination of these factors and Donatello's love of capitalism lead to a disturbing possibility for the future....

Donatello: Evil Genius

Donatello is no stranger to moral ambiguity. We've already mentioned the incidents in "Splinter No More" and "Leatherhead: Terror of the Swamp" and we're aware that his reckless attitude poses a threat to the other Turtles as well as himself. Another example of his moral ambiguity is his contribution to keeping the game going (the "game" being the perpetual battle between the Turtles and Shredder, which seems to have rules which prevent it from ending). In "Beneath These Streets" Don comes up with a classic excuse for not pursuing Bebop and Rocksteady when they escape into a river: "Dive into that muck? Forget it." In "Corporate Raiders From Dimension X", Donatello appears to possess knowledge about how to break the hypnotic conditioning affecting businessmen, but only uses this knowledge when it becomes absolutely necessary for the Turtles' personal safety.

Another incidence of suspicious behaviour takes place in "The Gang's All Here" when Michaelangelo turns into a human and Donatello quickly and easily comes up with an antidote, prompting the viewer to wonder exactly why Don already had a chemical that turns humans into mutants lying around. If Donatello had been plotting something evil, it would have been one hell of a good plan.

There's also evidence that Donatello isn't above ignoring his principles when it suits his own ends. In "Return of the Technodrome", he ignores the Turtles' policy of respecting nature in order to halt Shredder's plan by "stopping" a river, a move which could cause endless damage to local wildlife.

In "The Missing Map", the other Turtles catch Don over-exaggerating about his past heroic achievements and getting so overexcited he knocks over a lamp. This could well be the beginning of a vain streak often found in megalomaniacs. His vanity is also witnessed in “Take Me to Your Leader,” where Donatello dismisses the possibility of the sun getting smaller as “scientifically impossible”, even though he can see with his own eyes that this is happening. Moreover, he’s very happy when, in the same episode, he temporarily becomes leader of the team. Power-tripping and vanity…remind you of anyone else in this cartoon?

It’s obvious that Donatello isn’t as much as an idealist as the other Turtles, and he proves this by teaming up with Rocksteady when they’re trapped on an alien spaceship together in “Invasion of the Turtle Snatchers.” Don’s a pragmatic guy and, for him, the ends justify the means. More worryingly, later in the episode, Don is seen cooking pizza for his alien friends even though he’s just learned that the fate of the world is at risk. Why would he waste time whilst the Earth is in danger? Perhaps because he’s safe in the spaceship with all the advanced technology he could ever want at his disposal…

The clearest evidence of Donatello's dark side is seen in "Bye Bye Fly", where Donatello tortures a sentient computer for information, causing clear distress and pain. Later in the episode, he removes a component from a spaceship just as Baxter "The Fly" Stockman is escaping in it, leading directly to Baxter's apparent death. Y'know what they say about murder. Killing changes you.

There are certainly indicators that Donatello could move further along a path of bad stuff in the future. Don and the Turtles already see his intelligence as a reason why his opinion should be listened to and respected and Don has already abused this trust at least once. Could a genius like Don see his intelligence as a license to make decisions on other people's behalf, even against their will? It's entirely plausible and in almost killing Baxter, Don proved that he was willing to cross into ethical grey areas in the pursuit of his ideals.

Knowledge equals power. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts completely. Don's a genius. Work it out for yourself.

[2012 notes: People have asked me what I “have against” Donatello. The answer of course is nothing. I enjoyed making up ridiculous theories then twisting the evidence to fit, though there may be a grain of truth in some of them. For the record, 80s Donnie is probably my second favourite Donnie after the 2k12 version]

Krang

A love/hate relationship?

What exactly is going on with Krang and the Turtles? Both sides would have you believe the relationship is very straightforward. Krang wants to take over the world and the Turtles want to stop him. Therefore, Krang wants the Turtles destroyed. Or so he'd have us believe.

Time and time again, we've seen Krang come up with ingenious plans (often involving complex inventions of his own creation) only to fail to kill the Turtles. Supposedly, it's because the Turtles are so amazing in battle, but if you've read many of the episode reviews, you'll know by now that the Turtles are about as amazing in battle as a third world country with twigs for weapons. Krang has the best resources: along with Shredder and his army of ninjas, he also commands rock soldiers and the henchmutants. He lives in a huge battledrome, with advanced alien technology and a huge array of weapons and inventions at his disposal. So why hasn't Krang succeeded in destroying the Turtles?

Sometimes, it is just a case of blatantly bad planning. In "2000 Leaks Under the City", for example, he plans to eliminate the Turtles by flooding the sewers with water. As any idiot knows, turtles are amphibious. They love water. On other occasions, his own sense of

vanity appears to hold him back. In "Attack of Big Macc" Krang wastes valuable time explaining his plan to the Turtles, despite knowing he only has a short time in which to execute this plan. Sometimes, it just seems that Krang is incompetent. In "The Turtle Terminator", Krang's robot is defeated because it disobeys his direct orders, signalling something wrong with the wiring, surely.

Krang's reaction to failure is usually to blame Shredder or someone else for his problems. And it's not like Shredder is the picture of a competent employee. But Krang himself isn't adverse to cutting corners or doing things in a sloppy manner either. In "Beneath These Streets", Krang calls Shredder a "bungling idiot" for failing to defeat the Turtles. However, when Krang is asked to provide the reinforcements that Shredder needs, he refuses to spare more than two foot soldiers, claiming that he needs the others to help with repairs in the Technodrome.

Krang consistently fails to make full use of the resources he has. Most of his amazing inventions are only tried out once, and then consigned to the scrap heap after they fail on the first outing. Krang never sends his entire army out to battle the Turtles and may have even more incredible resources he never makes use of. In "Leatherhead:Terror of the Swamp", Krang is able to watch events occurring in a Florida swamp on the Technodrome's video screen. How did Krang get these pictures and where else does he have cameras? Whatever the answer, the ability to watch events hidden from others could probably provide him with all kinds of useful information. If he wanted to make use of it.

The most obvious explanation for Krang's consistent failure is the nature of his relationship with the Turtles. One on hand, they're forever foiling his schemes to take over the world, which must be frustrating to say the least. On the other hand, the Turtles are Krang's only hobby. His raison d'etre, if you will. Since their first battle, they've been the central focus of Krang's life and scapegoats for everything wrong with his life. If Krang managed to finally defeat the Turtles, what would he have then? Assuming he could then successfully take over the world, what would he do with it in any case? It's possible things could work out for him, but nevertheless, the thought of abandoning his current way of life for an uncertain future is bound to be scary. And if, even with the Turtles gone, he still failed to achieve his goals, who would he have to blame?

This love/hate relationship with the Turtles is evidenced in Krang's ambivalence regarding the proper way to kill them. In "Return of the Technodrome", Krang prevents Shredder from battling the Turtles in order to kill them "personally" using the lasers on the Technodrome, substituting a more violent end for a relatively quick and painless method. In "Turtles on Trial", Krang has difficulty selecting from a range of weapons, dismissing an atomic destabiliser as "too messy" and a freeze ray as "too quick."

Moreover, later in the same episode, Krang directly saves the Turtles' lives, commanding Shredder to let them go, even though they are helpless. Krang's stated reason for this command is that he wants to kill the Turtles himself, but on occasions both previous and subsequently to this, he's perfectly happy to leave the dirty work to Shredder. Is it really that important he kill them himself or is there another reason for letting them go?

Why would Krang devote his life to battling the Turtles if he doesn't truly want to defeat them? To answer that, you have to understand just how empty Krang's life is...

Evil or just Diet Evil?

As an alien brain with no body (save the artificial robot body he created for himself), Krang doesn't exactly fit in with normal society. Being an outcast from a violent dimension with a gift for nifty inventions and commanding others, a life of crime is really the only natural progression for someone in Krang's situation.

Krang doesn't have the happiest history. According to the Turtles' version of history in "Blast From the Past", Krang came from an alternate dimension, where he committed unspecified "war crimes", had his body taken away from him and was banished. Remember that the Turtles' information is both second hand and filtered through Splinter, so it could be entirely untrue. Still, the fact remains that Krang had his body taken away from him. As punishments go, this is pretty much the textbook definition of "cruel and unusual." You have to wonder what kind of society would dream up something like that.

Moreover, on Krang's homeworld, it was apparently not just criminals that had their bodies confiscated. In a flashback in "The Four Musketurtles", we see some scientists labouring away. Like Krang, they appear to be alien brains without bodies. So Krang's punishment certainly wasn't a one-off due to extreme circumstances. A grim society indeed.

Banished from this nasty homeworld, Krang finds himself on Earth, without a body. Like the Turtles, he obviously is not able to live an ordinary, everyday life and there are some indications that he is bitter about this. In "Mister Ogg Goes to Town" he tries to turn an alien visitor against the Turtles by describing how they persecuted Krang and Shredder and drove them underground. Technically, this is entirely true. Although Krang may have warranted some of the "persecution", it is true that sometimes the Turtles harass him and his allies for no reason. In "Return of the Fly", they try to prevent Shredder getting essential water supplies from an underground reservoir, although they are not harming anyone by doing so. Being cut off from water supplies definitely qualifies as persecution.

In "Ninja Sword from Nowhere", we get the impression that Krang really doesn't get out much. His idea of entertainment is watching soppy TV movies based around couples who may or may not be siblings depending on whether or not an insane nurse at the hospital switched one of them with another baby. The saddest thing is not that Krang watches this crap, but that he believes it to be "true to life" (an indication of just how detached from reality he is). And in "April Foolish" Krang indicates he is bitter about his enforced hermit status. When Shredder asks if he's there, Krang snaps "where else would I be, out nightclubbing?"

But although Krang is not beyond sympathy, it has to be remembered that, in playing this perpetual game with the Turtles, he has caused casualties. Not the least of these is Baxter Stockman, who Krang rather harshly has thrown into a disintegrator chamber in "Enter: The Fly." A freak accident transforms Baxter into a mutant fly creature and enables him to escape, but that doesn't change the fact that Krang tried to kill someone ON HIS OWN SIDE just for making a few mistakes.

Need further proof that Krang's really evil? Look no further than "Splinter No More" where he sets an awful example for millions of young viewers by showering in his robot body. Water and electric doesn't mix, kids. Ignore what the alien brain is doing.

Krang and Shredder: a match made in heaven?

With his formidable robot body, Krang has proved he is more than capable of holding his own against the Turtles, so it's curious that, for the most part, he chooses to remain

housebound. Usually, he'll send Shredder and the mutant minions up to the surface to do his dirty work, even though they constantly fail. Krang is never shy about coming forth with criticism when they do. So why does he keep Shredder around and why does he stay at home all day?

One potential reason for Krang's self-imposed seclusion is his appearance. Whilst Shredder isn't exactly inconspicuous in that metal/purple combo, Krang makes him look like a Vogue model in comparison. We don't know what Krang's original body looked like, but even if he wasn't particularly dashing, it makes sense that Krang would be sensitive about his looks now he's without it.

It could just be that Krang is lazy, of course. And there's plenty of evidence from bungled schemes in the past that would support that.

Another likely cause for keeping Shredder and the mutants around is that Krang is simply lonely. Krang's clearly not happy with the idea of rattling around in that big Technodrome all by himself all day. The only other reason to have them around would be so that he has someone to blame when his badly planned schemes inevitably go wrong. "Dysfunctional" is probably the best word to describe Krang and Shredder's relationship.

Krang occasionally abuses his power over Shredder just for the sake of being nasty. In "Enter: The Fly", for example, Krang has Shredder contact him from a trash barge solely because he knows that having to be at that contact point will infuriate his colleague. Similarly, in "Leatherhead: Terror of the Swamp", Krang contacts Shredder solely to nag him. While it may be annoying, it's probably only because Krang cares.

There are instances, of course, of more severe problems between the two of them. In "The Four Musketurtles," both plan to betray the other after obtaining a crystal which will make them invincible. Shredder's plan for betrayal is inspired by Krang's tantrum and blaming Shredder for the henchmutants' failure, but what's Krang's excuse?

The bottom line is, of course, that as long as Krang keeps Shredder around, he always has someone to blame for his failures. And since he'll never allow himself to beat the Turtles, he has a lot of failures to assign blame for.

[2012 notes: The thought of Krang taking a shower in his robot body still cracks me up]



Leonardo

Mr Personality

So what is it about the leader types? You know what I'm talking about. Leonardo, Cyclops, Mr. Fantastic, Superman, Blossom, anyone else you can name...it's always the dullest member of the group. It's like their lives are so full with the responsibility of leading a team, safeguarding their comrades and saving the world from evil that there's no room for anything that might give them something to talk about at dinner parties.

Leo fits into this category fairly well. Let's look at the lyrics of the TMNT theme. Donatello "does machines" and Michaelangelo is "a party dude." What does the theme have to say about Leo? Two simple words: "Leonardo leads." Says it all, really. Leo's all about efficiency and victory. He doesn't care much about being liked.

So with nothing else to care about, it's not surprising that Leo gives it his all. And there's nothing wrong with that, right? After all, millions of people's lives depend on Leonardo's ability to do his job. So it's good that he's focused on leadership. But is it possible he could be a little **too** focused?

Leo is frequently the wet blanket of the group, whinging about the other Turtles wanting to sack off patrolling and go to the cinema in "Beneath These Streets" and objecting when Mike wants to eat calorific cookies in "The Gang's All Here." For a teenager, he's quite the killjoy. He's also fairly humourless, leaving the quips to his fellow Turtles. His rare attempts at making jokes usually end badly, as observed in "Enter: The Fly" and a hugely horrible

"cents"/"sense" pun.

Being dull, however, may be the least of Leonardo's crimes. His single-mindedness and devotion to leadership may have caused a far worse personality problem.

Number One Son

It's not unusual that some leaders come to think they're better than they're subordinates. In "The Four Musketurtles" Leonardo tries to assert himself as the Turtles' cultural leader as well as their battle leader, trying to persuade them to take interest in literature. Being adolescent boys, this is the last thing the Turtles are interested in.

Leo clearly sees himself as a successor or even a substitute for Splinter and, as such, has fully bought into Splinter's ideals and values. As the leader of the Turtles (and chief decision maker), he is, more than any of the others, responsible for the never-ending battles between Shredder and the Turtles. His decisions allow Shredder to escape to fight another day and command the Turtles to continually oppose him.

In "Case of the Killer Pizzas", Leonardo takes his desire to emulate Splinter a little too far, by inventing some bogus Splinter-style words of wisdom and claiming his sensei came up with him. "Sometimes one must make a pact with evil in order to accomplish good" Leonardo claims Splinter told him, before later admitting he just made it up. Not only is the message here (that the ends justify the means) slightly dubious, but it's clearly only advice given because it suits Leonardo to make a pact with Shredder at that time. If Leo adhered to this advice all the time, a lot more could be achieved alongside supposedly "evil" villains. Whatever the merits of the argument, Leonardo misrepresenting his own words as Splinter's indicates his belief that it's acceptable to lie to his brothers in the name of pushing his own point of view.

This simplistic morality is seen again in "The Turtle Terminator", where Leonardo advises Irma to tell the truth because "the truth never hurts." This argument doesn't stand up to examination, but Leo advocates it anyway merely to encourage honesty. Whether or not honesty is an admirable goal, it's still an example of Leonardo lying to or speaking down to others on the basis of false information.

Leonardo emulates Splinter again in "Return of the Technodrome" where he displays Splinter-stylee "psychic abilities" and claims he can sense trouble. Obviously, Splinter only saw fit to pass this skill onto one of the Turtles and number one son receives the honour.

Leadership represents to Leonardo what science represents to Donatello, pizza represents to Mike and quips represent to Raphael. It's a crutch in order to distract him from the sucky aspects of his life and give him something to focus on. Leo's sense of identity is so wrapped up in being the group's leader that a bad dream where he lets the others down causes him to leave the group in "Take Me to Your Leader." Because of his utter dedication to leadership, Leo ignores inconsistencies in Splinter's teachings and holds onto the ideas he's been indoctrinated with.

But of course, Leo's no idiot and on some level, he knows exactly what he's doing. All of that submerged angst has to come out somehow...

Young, mutated and reckless

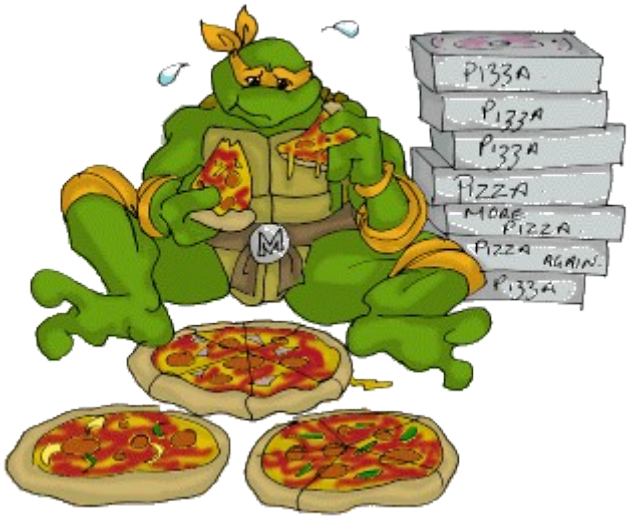
For someone as dedicated to leadership (and therefore, you'd think, self-preservation) as Leonardo is, he certainly has reckless tendencies. In "Case of the Killer Pizzas" he takes an almost suicidal risk by cutting some nearby power-lines with his sword and letting the wet floor conduct the electricity and electrocute the monsters the Turtles are fighting. Only pure luck prevents anyone else from being hurt.

Leo again sets a bad example for the young audience by throwing a metal sword at a powerline in "New York's Shiniest." And later in the episode, he's typically defiant even when cornered, replying to the command "drop your weapons" with "we'd rather drop our bodies."

This reckless streak reflects Leonardo's sub-conscious realisation that it's all crap. The battles, the fighting, the good vs. evil thing...and the depression brought on by this manifests in self-destructive behaviour. The best example of Leo's depression, though, is in "The Four Musketurtles." After receiving a blow to the head, Leo believes he is a French 18th century soldier from a famous novel. It's a hard delusion to maintain, given that he's four foot tall and green all over, but remarkably, Leonardo manages it. Embracing the delusion a little too warmly, he refuses to face facts even when his memory starts to return and he recognises April. This comprises more evidence of just how desperate he is to escape reality.

In the meantime, Leonardo continues to deal with his situation by throwing himself into his leadership role, prioritising the effectiveness of the whole group over issues such as Raph's persecution of Mike, the inconsistencies of Splinter's history and the not-so-evil nature of some of the group's adversaries. All in all, just your typical army leader.

[2012 notes – Leo fans might say this is a little harsh, but there's a scene in the IDW comic series when Human!Splinter shows up with food for the kids and Human!Leo says “we're not worthy master, we haven't finished our training yet.” Seriously Leo, lighten up you little creep]



Michaelangelo

The Illusion of Stupidity

Quickly: who's the most stupid ninja turtle? It's Michaelangelo, right? I mean, remember that really stupid thing he did where…? And um….that other time when….? Hey, waitaminute…

Seriously, there's not actually much evidence of Mike doing outright dumb stuff. Okay, so you can accuse him of being a loudmouth, an attention seeker, a glutton or even a doormat, but if there's one thing he isn't, it's a fool.

In fact, Mike's fairly quick on the uptake when he wants to be. In "Attack of Big Macc" he quickly identifies the time travelling robot Macc as a pseudo-pacifist and saves the TMNT by expressing his comradeship (using the universally recognised peace gesture). And when the Turtles are trying to figure out who brainwashed a group of businessmen, it's Mike who figures out the location of the culprit in "Corporate Raiders from Dimension X." After eating some cookies that temporarily cause him to become human in "The Gang's All Here," Mike keeps transforming into his normal self for short periods of time and on the very first time that this happens, Mike instantly concludes that the adrenaline in his bloodstream must be responsible (something you might normally expect to hear from Donatello).

Michaelangelo is blatantly no idiot, so where does the idea that he is "the dumb one" come from? It's not so much that we **see** him acting the fool as the fact that we're constantly **told** that he is. The other characters, particularly Raphael, seem to take it for granted. Raph rarely passes up an opportunity to make nasty quips at Mike's expense (see here for some of the many examples).

It's also an idea that Mike himself reinforces. Aware of his position within the group, he never stands up for himself when accused of being a dumbass and he very rarely displays his true abilities (see below). It's almost like he's accepted the idea of being the stupid turtle and is willing to play it out. Why?

Mike in the Middle

What if Mike wasn't the loveable goof-off of the group? Who would he be? Leo is number one son, leader of the group and blatantly Splinter's favourite. Donatello is the clever one and Raph is the closest thing the group has to a rebel. Where does that leave Mike? As the overlooked middle-child, that's where.

Hardly a surprise then, that Mike should be an attention seeker. His loudness, his funky manner of speaking (he's never been anywhere near California, so what's with the surfer speak?) and his adoption of the role assigned to him as "the dumb one" all scream "look at me!" And, to an extent, it works. But not very well. After all, it's Don and Leo everybody looks to when they want to know what to do. Like Raph, Mike is mostly in the background, just doing what he's told.

So Mike's attention seeking behaviour has become more and more extreme. There is a classic example of this in "The Great Boldini," an episode which begins with Michaelangelo giving an ill-advised magic performance, much to the consternation of the other Turtles. Their mean jibes are pretty much par for the course and it's clear that Mike has no real interest in magic from the fact that he's never shown an interest before and clearly hasn't even rehearsed much, so why would he bother? The fact that he begs his pals to stay and continue watching even after humiliating himself is telling. It doesn't really matter to Mike what kind of attention he receives, so long as someone's looking at him.

Further evidence is seen at the end of the episode. You'd think that Mike would have been satisfied by his crucial role in defeating the criminals, but this apparently isn't enough for him as he insists on doing some stupid Irish jig on the table. Definitely a performer.

The consequences of Mike not receiving attention are seen in "Michaelangelo's Birthday" when the other Turtles pretend not to realise it's Mike's birthday so that they can throw a surprise party for him later. Mike's pretty crushed by the fact their apparent neglect, so much so that after dropping several obvious hints, he runs away from home. It's a pretty cruel trick for the other Turtles to play on him but consider this: why would they play the joke on Mike in the first place? It's obvious that they recognise Mike's lust for attention too. The most obvious attention seeking activity Mike engages in, however, is his near incredible pizza habit.

Pizza as Painkiller

All the Turtles consume ridiculous amounts of pizza (and seemingly little else) and the reasons why are touched on elsewhere, but Michaelangelo really takes it to the limit.

If you believe his own claims, Mike's definitely got a problem. In "Beneath the Sewers" he loudly claims to have consumed twelve pizzas the day before. If that was true, why would he want to draw attention to something like that? In "Case of the Killer Pizzas" he notches up 9 mentions of his favourite foodstuff and in "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King", the destruction of his pizza snack during a training session prompts him to go berserk and single-handedly knock Leo onto his ass and destroy one of Don's inventions with one well-placed hit. In "Ninja Sword from Nowhere" he's eating oatmeal pizza for breakfast and "Turtles on Trial" he uses the opportunity of being on TV to tell the nation that the Turtles fight for "truth, justice and a bigger slice of the pizza pie!" In "Invasion of the Punk Frogs", he confides in Raph that he only gets through the Turtles' training obstacle course by imagining there's a pizza waiting for him at the end.

All of this presents two options: either Mike's really got a pizza problem and isn't ashamed to admit it, or Mike is fabricating an eating disorder to get attention. Either way, he's not shy about the subject. It's likely that in drawing attention to it, he secretly hopes that someone is either going to intervene or at least notice that something is wrong in his life. This strategy clearly isn't working since, with the exception of Splinter's intervention in "Cowabunga Shredhead", nobody seems to care very much how much pizza Mike scoffs (see the episode review on "The Missing Map" for more on how Splinter may have affected Mike's pizza habit).

Despite his apparent pizza-love, Mike can resist the stuff when he chooses to. In "April Foolish", for example, he discovers a small portion of pizza at an Embassy party, of all places, but turns it down. Apparently it isn't large enough. If Mike truly couldn't help himself, the portion wouldn't matter. He turns down this chance to munch some pizza because there's no way to make a pig of himself and draw attention to himself with such a minimal amount at his disposal.

Mikey's pizza consumption isn't solely an attention getting tactic, however. It's also an anti-depressant in itself. What's Michaelangelo got to be so depressed about? A lot of stuff, actually. Like the other Turtles, he's an outcast, a freak, a hero who saves the world but is feared and hated by it, etc. Life isn't rosey for any of the Turtles, but there's evidence that Mike may be affected by his lifestyle differently to the others. In "The Gang's All Here," the Turtles get the opportunity to become human by eating some chemically altered cookies. The other three Turtles don't think it's a good idea, but Mike practically lunges for the cookies and retrieves them later after they've been thrown into the trash.

As it turns out, being human doesn't seem to solve any of Mike's problems. Whilst it's likely that his joy at being reverted to normal at the end of the episode is partially a result of the anti-human prejudice instilled in all of the Turtles, the entire incident indicates that, more than any of the other Turtles, Mike simply isn't happy with who he is.

Further evidence of Mike's self esteem issues is seen in "Cowabunga Shredhead". When Shredder shows up at the Turtles lair, deluded and thinking that he is Michaelangelo, Mike doesn't react very well to this mirror image of himself, stomping out of the lair in irritation. And in "Turtles on Trial," when Mike gets nervous about being on TV, he reacts to Splinter's advice ("a wise man has nothing to fear from laughter") with "well, yeah a wise man, but what about a wacky turtle?"

Mike's self image isn't improved by Raphael using him as a verbal punchbag (as well as a physical punchbag in "Return of the Technodrome"). It's also likely that Mike is frustrated with the perpetual game that the Turtles seem to be trapped in. In "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King" Mike can't see any good reason to take training sessions seriously and you can see his point since the Turtles have never lost a battle yet. The perpetual game involves the Turtles holding back in order to guarantee the villains' ability to fight another day, as well as the villains holding back in order to ensure they never actually succeed. This means that Mike never really gets to make the most of his true abilities, although we do get some idea of what they might be in "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King" (as described above), when his pizza gets trashed and again in "Michaelangelo's Birthday" when he throws Bebop and Rocksteady around like so much crap (note: this only happens because he believes his fellow Turtles have "bought the farm"). In both “The Big Break Out” and “The Big Break In” Michaelangelo smashes up the henchmutants and in the latter he also floors Krang. Note that he rises to the occasion in these episodes because this is the

closest Shredder and Krang ever come to actually taking over the world. In other words, the situation is serious so Mike gets a chance to show what he can really do.

Mike's got plenty to be depressed about, and pizza is his main way of coping. At the beginning of "Cowabunga Shredhead" Mike eats all of the pizza in the lair and hides in the cupboard afterwards, clearly feeling guilty about it. In both this episode and in "Michaelangelo's Birthday" Mike deals with his problems by going to "drown [his] sorrows" at Vinnie's Pizzeria.

Is there a way out of this for Mike? Well Splinter successfully manages to hypnotise Mike in "Cowabunga Shredhead" so that he "craves pizza no more." However, Splinter inexplicably reverses this at the end of the episode. Why? Maybe Splinter recognises that Mike's pizza habit serves a purpose. Mike does too (witness his freak-out when pizza supplies are threatened in "Corporate Raiders from Dimension X").

At any rate, it's got to be better than a heroin habit. Right?

[2012 notes – some people have argued that I was wrong to say Mikey is “not dumb” in this cartoon. Granted, I've only seen three seasons but I still think a lot of people confuse concepts like “loud,” “naïve,” “ditzy,” “over-enthusiastic” and “lacking in knowledge” for “dumb” too easily. It's been funny to see people getting offended by the 2k12 depiction of Mikey, as if they're unaware that the exact same comments were made about the 80s version. However, Mikey is not dumb. His brothers THINK he is dumb. They are wrong. Also, for your information, Mikey is the best Turtle. Just so you're aware.]



Raphael

Chandler Bing syndrome

So did the creators of Friends just steal the idea for Chandler off Raphael or something? Okay, so Raph isn't married to some scary chef lady and his father isn't a woman (as far as we know), but still the character premise is essentially the same. Scared little boy tries to deflect attention away from his own weaknesses (or perceived weaknesses) by making quips at other peoples' expense. Humour as a self-defence mechanism.

What weakness is Raphael trying to cover up? Well, basically, his own sense of fear. Fear is a healthy thing, we know. It saves your life by telling you when to get out of the damn house before the serial killer gets you. But that doesn't mean that people (males in particular) want everyone to know when they're scared or what their fears are. Raph's own sensitivity about his fears becomes apparent in "Splinter No More", when a mind controlling device turns the Turtles against each other. When they start calling each other names, it's being called a "wimp" which aggravates Raphael more than anything else. He's also loathe to admit he has a sensitive side, as revealed in "Leatherhead: Terror of the Swamp", where he fiercely rejects being sentimental after being found looking through a photo album. His wish to be out of the spotlight is displayed in “Take Me to Your Leader” where Raphael is forced to temporarily lead the Turtles. He abdicates to Donatello at the first opportunity for the rather flimsy reason that Donatello is making suggestions about what to do next.

Of course, Raph risks death almost every day. But he doesn't like admitting he's scared of it. So what does he do? He goes about proving he is a macho, fearless Turtle by deflecting the attention onto someone else. Namely: Michaelangelo.

More frequently than any other character, Mike is a target of Raph's nastier quips. In "The Great Boldini" Raphael makes snide comments all the way through Mike's disastrous

magic show performance and then responds to Caitlin's comment that April is her "favourite Turtle" by telling her that April is about to be "promoted...ahead of Michaelangelo." Mike is clearly annoyed by this remark.

In "Attack of Big Macc", Raphael provides the final quip of the episode, joking "who needs Macc [the destructive robot who featured in the episode] to cause damage...we've got Michaelangelo" after Mike burns a pizza in the oven. It might not seem like a huge deal, but imagine if Raph makes comments like that every time Mike makes the smallest mistake. How would you feel if you did all the cooking in your household and someone felt compelled to harp on about it every time you burned something? No doubt Raph's constant quips contribute to Mike's self esteem problem.

The classic Raphael quip at Mike's expense occurs at the end of "20,000 Leaks Under the City." During the episode, the Turtles are terrorised by a giant squid and all the Turtles briefly recoil in terror when Splinter brings out a squid-based meal he has prepared. However, rather than laugh at his own reaction, Raphael chooses to draw attention away from himself, quipping "in Michaelangelo's case, sensei, you should have prepared chicken."

Raphael's mistreatment of Mike isn't confined to "humorous" quips either. In "Return of the Fly" Raphael goes a little overboard whilst sparring with Mike and actually really hurts him, presumably because this makes him feel like a macho man. In "Michaelangelo's Birthday", the Turtles decide to play a joke on Mike by pretending they've forgotten it's his birthday.

When Mike is clearly upset, Leonardo proposes abandoning the prank, but it's Raphael who insists on continuing the charade and clearly enjoys it the most. In “Usagi Yojimbo” Raph admonishes Mike for a plan which goes wrong, but the original idea was Leonardo’s, not Mike’s. And in “Case of the Hot Kimono”, Raph warns Michaelangelo that if he thinks too hard he’ll “strip the gears in [his] brainbox.”

Why is it Mike that's so often on the receiving end of Raph's quips? Well, for one thing, he's a soft target, because he has low self-esteem and often comes across as goofy or incompetent. And it's helpful to Raph to have just one target for his snide remarks, otherwise the other Turtles would start to feel persecuted and the group as a whole might start to ignore or reject his comments.

It's also true to say that Michaelangelo and Raphael are both less committed to the whole hero gig than the other Turtles. Whilst Leo is practising katas and Don is inventing things, Mike and Raph are usually passing time by doing other things, such as making soda can mountains. In "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King", both Mike and Raph announce their objection to having to train excessively, especially against cardboard foes. And in "Invasion of the Punk Frogs", both Mike and Raph find it difficult to stay motivated when tackling the obstacle course Don set up for them. If Raphael is questioning his own commitment to the cause of fighting evil, it may be easier to deflect attention onto Mike rather than face that issue himself.

Quips about Mike aren't the only expression of Raphael's attempts to assert his own masculinity and fearlessness. Whenever Raph's scared, he resorts to sarcasm and it nearly gets him killed in "Case of the Killer Pizzas" where it prevents him from noticing a huge monster creeping up behind him. In "The Catwoman from Channel 6" he resorts to good old fashioned sexism. After enjoying women's screams during a horror movie earlier in the episode, Raphael responds to April's whining about the state of her nails with "yep,

she's back to being a woman alright." The words "tarring", "same" and "brush" come to mind. In “Green With Jealousy” he justifies his decision to eat pizza bought for April with the excuse “you know women, they’re always on a diet” and in “Invasion of the Turtle Snatchers” he responds to the query “what’s April doing?” with the helpful answer “ah, with women you never know.”

Similarly, in "April Foolish", Raphael appears uncomfortable and overwhelmed when asked to dance by a young woman and when Princess Mallory insists she is not April, despite looking like her, Raphael tactlessly says "Maybe that new hairdo is pulling her brain too tight." If Raph's views are generally so...controversial, it's not surprising he chooses to hide them behind jokes.

[2012 notes: As the theme denoted, Raphael was indeed cool, but crude. As you can see, I couldn't think of much to say about him because his main purpose in the 80s toon was to make wisecracks, but in retrospect that's probably a good thing because Raphael fans tend to go ABSOLUTELY POSTAL at any criticism of their favourite. Seriously: it's not real]

The Rat King

Power to the (Rat)People

The Rat King is by far the most complex villain we've seen the Turtles face, differing from the likes of Shredder and Krang in two main ways. The first thing that sets him apart is the motivation for his "evil" deeds. The Rat King doesn't want to take over the world out of pure greed or megalomania. He has a genuine set of political beliefs behind his acts of violence. Which makes him a terrorist.

Like many terrorists, the Rat King is driven by the injustice of oppression. Why he cares so much about rats is unknown (maybe he used to work with animals or something), but his central ideology is this: humans treat rats like so much shit and rats shouldn't put up with it anymore. In a way he has a point. Humans are responsible for the mass slaughter of millions of rats each day across the globe. We poison them in order to ensure our own survival and comfort, because they spread disease and cause all kinds of other problems for us. From our point of view, it may seem that we have no choice, but it's not like the rats are deliberately or maliciously doing anything to harm us. All they want to do is go about their everyday business like any other wild creature. They probably have as much right to be here as we do.

So along comes the Rat King, who empathises with rats more than he does with humans. We don't know why but we do know that the rats empathise with him too, as evidenced by the way they obey his commands. From his introduction in "Enter the Rat King", we see that the city's rats serve him faithfully and even Splinter is unable to resist his commands. In "The Great Boldini" we see that the Rat King doesn't lord it over his subjects either. Despite claiming leadership of the rats, the Rat King converses with them on his own level, as we see when he discusses modern art whilst wandering around a museum with his followers.

And they are followers, rather than slaves. Notice that the Rat King isn't using his "army of rats" to take over the world for himself, rather he's leading the rats so that they can rule the world. Because he honestly believes that they deserve to more than humans do. Because humans as a race are kinda lame, after all. In "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King," we see

the Rat King planning to turn a stolen tanker of rat poison into zombie gas that will enslave humanity. For him, it's poetic justice to use humanity's weapon against ratkind as the method of ensuring rat supremacy.

Come the Revolution....

The second thing that sets the Rat King apart from the other villains we've seen is the fact that he's willing to do whatever it takes to achieve his goals. This means that, unlike Shredder or Krang, he's willing to work with the Turtles when it suits him. His enemies and allies change at various times.

In "Enter the Rat King", the Rat King kidnaps April in response to her Channel 6 editorial demanding that something be done about the city's rat problem. His main aim is to stop her from spreading "lies" about his followers. April subsequently escapes, but the Turtles' battle with the Rat King is a stalemate.

Despite the fact that he clearly has issues with April's work, he helps the Turtles to find her In "Return of the Fly", after she is been kidnapped (again) by Baxter. His motives are unclear. At first he appears to get nothing out of this. So why does he do it? Well, it's possible that he was working with Baxter and Shredder all along, since the Turtles are gassed as soon as they arrive at April's location. But then, we'd expect to be explicitly told as much if that was the case, and we aren't. Perhaps the Rat King recognises that the Turtles may be useful allies in certain circumstances in the future and makes this offer in the spirit of partnership. Or perhaps he just wants them to find April and get out of his way. After all, they are trespassing on what he sees as his territory.

The Rat King gets territorial again in "The Great Boldini" when he bursts in on some jewel thieves demanding to know why they have dug a tunnel through his lair. When he finds out there is a precious gem to be had, he agrees to work with them to recover it. Why is the Rat King interested in the gem? Even revolutions have to be financed somehow.

Despite his resourcefulness, there's evidence that the Rat King's downfall isn't likely to be the Turtles, but his own personality flaws. For one thing, he's given to luxury, as we see in "The Great Boldini" when he steals art from a museum to liven up his lair. Brings to mind the imperial palaces that some dictators live in whilst their citizens live in poverty.

His main obstacle, however, could be his own racism. The clearest example we see of this is in "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King." Having captured Leatherhead, who he deems an "inferior non-rodent", he tells the mutant alligator his plan to turn humans into zombies using gas manufactured from rat poison. Once Leatherhead escapes, he blabs to April about the plan, who eventually passes on this information to the Turtles, allowing them to defeat both the Rat King and Leatherhead. The Rat King's convictions about rat superiority constantly cause him to underestimate his foes.

The Rat King has one other thing going against him: he's not playing the same game that the Turtles and Shredder are involved in. Therefore he's genuinely dangerous and could theoretically bring the whole city to a grinding halt if he wanted to. Whilst the game provides the Turtles with various reasons for not killing Shredder or Krang, the Rat King is afforded no such protection. In "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King" the Turtles don't allow the Rat King to simply escape, as Shredder is frequently allowed to. Instead, they cause an explosion which could easily kill their foes. It's only through remarkable luck that the Rat King isn't killed. Clearly, the Turtles recognise that, as their most complex foe, he's

also their most dangerous. And that means the gloves are off.

[2012 notes – I still don't get why the Rat King helped save April. Maybe the explanatory scene got cut in Britain because it had nunchuks in it or something]

Rocksteady and Bebop

More alike than different?

This title refers to two things (see, it's a clever double meaning type thing). Firstly, to the fact that these two characters get to share the same profile, because they're largely shown as having identical backgrounds, personalities and all the rest of it.

Secondly, it refers to the similarity of the position of the henchmutants and the Turtles. They say the people who get to you the most are those most like you (I don't know who 'they' are, but I know I've heard them say it). It would certainly explain the tension between the two groups. Like the Turtles, the henchmutants are outcasts despite their essentially human personalities. Like the Turtles, the henchmutants are guilty of mindlessly obeying their masters rather than deciding for themselves what is wrong or right. And like the Turtles (particularly Michaelangelo), there's a whole heap of wasted potential despite their appearance of being dumb and useless.

Rocksteady and Bebop may be dumb as pigcrap on the surface, but in fact, they're not as incompetent or stupid as they usually seem to be. In "Blast From the Past" we see that, during their first confrontation with the Turtles, they were much more competent and posed a genuine threat. But then, back in those days, the Turtles were much more threatening adversaries too. It's almost like there's been a mutual understanding to stop trying so hard...

The cause of Rocksteady and Bebop's repeated failures is obvious: Shredder's treatment of them is pretty counterproductive. In "Usagi Come Home", Shredder temporarily adopts a different approach to dealing with them than his usual bullying and it seems to work. After encouraging them to be proactive, the henchmutants successfully manage to steal a fuel tanker and a formula which supercharges fuel all by themselves (and come up with the idea all by themselves too). Particularly impressive is the way that Rocksteady manages to identify the formula amongst other tubes of chemicals by adopting the scientific approach and testing them on a toy robot. Shredder's decision to treat them like human beings for once shows just what they're really capable of and makes his usual treatment of the henchmutants even more bemusing.

Another instance of the henchmutants benefiting from a different leadership approach is seen in "Corporate Raiders from Dimension X." After being given jobs as executives and left to their own devices for a while, they manage to show some initiative and raise themselves some cash. Clearly, the self esteem boost is good for them.

Bebop and Rocksteady's greatest achievement is probably kidnapping Michaelangelo, by themselves and without supervision in "Cowabunga Shredhead." However, they manage this only because they've been left to their own devices, without Shredder bossing them around, for a few hours previously. At the end of the episode, they ensure their own defeat by making more dumb mistakes in Shredder's presence.

As well as unrecognised potential, Bebop and Rocksteady also possess the desire to

better themselves. In "Return of the Fly", we see them attempting to follow an anger-management video course and initially it seems to help them. The recommended mantra "I am in control" seems to help them, but this all goes out of the window when Shredder starts bossing them around and they realise they are not in control - he is.

It seems clear that the henchmutants, like the Turtles, are held back by their leader (although Splinter's agenda is obviously better hidden and less blatant than Shredder's). Whilst Splinter may be good at pretending he's acting in the Turtles' best interest, it doesn't take a genius to realise that Shredder only uses the henchmutants for his own ends. So why do they stick around?

Bebop and Rocksteady have a history of being the whipping boys of the group. In "The Gang's All Here" we meet the street gang they belonged to before Shredder recruited them. Despite his mutation into a rhino, Rocksteady proves his identity by head-butting a wall and the gang believes they are who they say they are because they are "stupid" and ugly. Even their gang has a low opinion of them. It's likely that the henchmutants were looking to escape this kind of beratement when they accepted Shredder's offer to work for them.

Instead, they get turned into mutants and bullied by their new boss. Shredder was clever to turn them into outcasts, because it ensures their loyalty at the very least. After all, it's not like they can leave the Technodrome and get jobs in Starbucks, is it? McDonalds, maybe...

Of course, it may be that Bebop and Rocksteady really have no problem being bossed around and prefer a job that tells them what to do rather than taxes their braincells. We see that this really isn't the case in "Bye Bye Fly", when Shredder is temporarily turned into an insect. Instead of standing by their boss and helping him out, the duo disobey orders, mock him and generally give him a taste of his own medicine. It's clear that their usual obedience of Shredder is based on fear (both fear of Shredder and fear of having no alternatives to working for him) rather than loyalty.

Aside from this key difference, Bebop and Rocksteady's situation is essentially more similar to the Turtles' situation than it is different. So why do the two groups never attempt to reach out to each other? Well, purely because it suits their bosses for them to be enemies. They're hardly evil. More than anything else, they're just victims of the system.

[2012 notes – as sorry as I feel for Bebop and Rocksteady, I recently saw an extremely well-made drawing of Bebop shooting Mikey dead on Tumblr and it made me want to kick his stupid piggy head in, which seems like a reasonable reaction]



Shredder

World domination as a gap year project

Of course, most of us at some time or other dream about world domination. Not many of us, if we thought about it, would really want to pursue it as a serious career choice. Aside from the danger, slim chance of success, loneliness and risk therein, there are just too many practical obstacles (funding, manpower, the likelihood of being thrown in a mental hospital, etc).

Whilst most of the characters in the show (the Turtles, Krang, Splinter, the henchmutants) wouldn't fit in with the rest of humanity, Shredder theoretically has no obstacles should he wish to pursue a normal life. So, given his repeated failure at taking over the world, why does he persist with this career avenue? Is he persisting, or is he just passing time by playing a game with the Turtles?

Shredder is reminiscent of a rich kid who uses his father's money to embark on endless educational ventures and gap year projects, simply to avoid having to get a proper job. Only instead of being bankrolled by his family, Shredder is funded by Krang, who's willing to keep him around because of his own loneliness. As such, neither Krang nor Shredder are particularly bothered about actually defeating the Turtles. Because Shredder is just a normal human being, unlike the other participants, he can abandon the world domination gig anytime. It's all just a big game to him.

And because he doesn't take it so seriously, Shredder's decisions quite frequently contain flaws a five year old could spot. In "Bye Bye Fly" Shredder leaves the Turtles for dead after they are plunged underwater, seemingly unaware that turtles are amphibious creatures. In "Corporate Raiders from Dimension X", Shredder leaves the Turtles tied up in a broom closet, conveniently placed with a saw nearby they use to free themselves, even though he has the opportunity to easily and swiftly kill them. And in "Attack of Big Macc", Shredhead chooses to disobey Krang's orders, steals his Alien Express card and uses it to pay for a hotel suite to lounge in, when he's supposed to be following through with a plan to wreak havoc in the city. Conveniently, this gives the Turtles time to catch up to him. Either Shredder is the laziest world domination hopeful in history, or he really doesn't care about taking over the world.

There are too many other examples of Shredders' laziness and crappy decisions to go into here, but for more see the summaries of "Cowabunga Shredhead", "Enter:The Fly", "Invasion of the Punk Frogs", "Leatherhead: Terror of the Swamp", "Michaelangelo's Birthday", "Ninja Sword From Nowhere", "New York's Shiniest" and "Turtles, Turtles Everywhere." One of the best examples of bad planning by Shredder, however, is in "The Gang's All Here", where Shredder's plan involves making the Turtles eat cookies which will turn them into humans. If Shredder was so sure the Turtles would eat his cookies, then why not just put poison in them?

Worse yet: in "Turtles on Trial" Shredder has the Turtles at his mercy and can do anything he likes with them after capturing April, yet he lets them go. The reason? Krang calls and tells Shredder he would prefer to kill them himself. Apparently, keeping Krang happy is more important to Shredder than achieving his ultimate goal for the past few years.

How do we know that Shredder is lazy rather than just an idiot? Well, we've seen his intellectual capacities in "Blast From the Past" where (in a flashback), Shredder cleverly seizes control of the Foot Clan. Shredder's own ninja abilities are demonstrated in "Case of the Killer Pizzas" where he manages some fairly cool tricks, like shredding some pizza dough into a net in all of two seconds and grabbing a bunch of scattered fliers before they hit the floor. In "April Foolish" he uses what looks like a vulcan death grip to knock April out, but we never see him use this move in any other episode. It's clear that he's holding back in battle with the Turtles, rather than being incapable.

Shredder: Boss from Hell

An additional benefit of the job for Shredder is the powertrip. So long as Shredder has someone beneath him to boss around, he isn't particularly bothered whether he is victorious or defeated. Really Shredder is less cut out for world domination than he is for a normal job with just a slight whiff of authority to make him feel like a big man. Traffic cop or floor manager at McDonalds, for example.

This is best demonstrated in his attitude towards Rocksteady and Bebop. Counter-productively, Shredder deals with them by shouting, insulting them and ordering them around. This approach inspires no loyalty at all, as demonstrated in "Bye Bye Fly", where Shredder is turned into a fly and the henchmutants decide to ignore his commands thereon. Moreover, on the few occasions on which the henchmutants are left to their own devices or treated better by Shredder, they are far more effective at their job. The overall long-term effect of Shredder's treatment of them is seen in "Blast From the Past", where, in flashback scenes, we see that the henchmutants' fighting skills have degenerated considerably since their mutation.

A further example of Shredder's bad employment practises is seen in "Bye Bye Fly", where he gives the henchmutants the day off only to change his mind and demand they return to work a short while later. In "Usagi Come Home" Shredder chastises Bebop for letting others do the work for him, motivating the henchmutants be proactive. After they leave, Shredder muses on the wonders of being able to have others do your work for you, which he believes it the great thing about being the boss.

Shredder's love of bossing people around is best seen in "The Old Switcheroo" where Shredder swaps bodies with Splinter and has the opportunity to kill the Turtles whilst posing as their sensei. However, Shredder is so excited at the chance to boss them

around that he wastes time ordering them to train extra hard and clean the lair, being so authoritarian that the Turtles suspect something is wrong and slip out to discover the truth.
Shredder's defining flaw, and the motivation behind his evil schemes and treatment of his allies, is vanity. It's vanity that leads him to spend more time thinking up titles (like "emperor" or "president") than actually planning how to take over the world. It's vanity that secures his defeat in "The Four Musketurtles" where his insistence on rehearsing his victory speech gives Krang time to arrive and prevent his betrayal. It's vanity, of course, which leads Shredder to betray Krang in the first place.

In "Turtles on Trial" Shredder is directly responsible for ruining Krang's chances of destroying the Turtles. He disrupts Krang's plan by turning up at exactly the wrong place and time, merely so he can laugh at Krang's inevitable failure. Clearly, glory and vanity are more important to Shredder than overall success.

He's less an evil mastermind than a spoilt little boy.

[2012 notes: Although Shredder is unmistakably a douche, the 80s version of him was my favourite. In all other incarnations of TMNT, I've found him to be pretty dull and one-dimensional. Yes, even in the Mirage comics. Incidentally, I didn't know that Shredder was voiced by Uncle Phil from the Fresh Prince of Bel Air until, like, 2005. This fact still makes me insanely happy]



Splinter

Something Not Quite Right…

Splinter is nothing if not a brilliant actor. On the surface, he seems to be your typical Mr. Miyagi-type, martial arts teaching, father figure mentor (albeit a giant mutant rat). The truth is much more sinister.

There are a vast number of inconsistencies in Splinter's behaviour. Take his health for example. At times he appears weak as a kitten, helpless and in desperate need of the Turtles' protection. For the most part, Splinter is content to remain in the lair and send his "sons" out to do most of the dirty work.

Although Splinter is careful to cultivate this helpless old man image, the reality is quite different. On numerous occasions, we've seen him kick a helluva lot of ass. For example, in "Camera Bugged" he takes on all of the Turtles and defeats them without breaking a sweat during a practice session. He demonstrates his prowess against Rocksteady and Bebop in "Michaelangelo's Birthday" and on several occasions is able to hold his own against Shredder. Clearly he's only weak as a kitten when it suits him to be.

Splinter's use of his other abilities is also suspicious. On several occasions, he demonstrates himself to have psychic abilities. In "20,000 Leaks Under the City" Splinter claims he can "sense" his Shredder's involvement when the sewers are flooded. Splinter demonstrates this sixth sense again in "Return of the Fly" when the unseen presence of Baxter Stockman causes him to detect an "alien presence." In "Return of the Technodrome" Splinter returns early from a spiritual pilgrimage after sensing danger and later is able to detect Shredder's presence when he nears his old foe.

In "Cowabunga Shredhead" Splinter demonstrates his ability to use a form of hypnotism named Kung Pow. Splinter uses Kung Pow to end Michaelangelo's cravings for pizza and to subdue Shredder by causing him to believe he is Michaelangelo. Splinter is clearly gifted, so why, for the most part, does he choose to refrain from using these abilities? Surely the Turtles would be much more effectively able to battle the forces of evil if Splinter

were to rely on his sixth sense and Kung Pow more often.

Splinter shows himself to be a dark horse once again in "Enter:The Fly" when, contrary to what the Turtles believed, he shows that he is able to drive and quite handy with a laser gun.

The inconsistencies in Splinter's behaviour aren't confined to his varying abilities. What he tells the Turtles is also suspect. A classic example of this is his version of history, as evidenced in "Blast from the Past." During flashbacks, the Turtles explain to us their origins as told to them by Splinter and some of it doesn't add up. If Splinter (then named Yoshi) was the rightful leader of the clan, how could he have been expelled? Why would Shredder (then named Saki) plot against him and why would the exiled Yoshi then move from Japan to New York and live in the sewers rather than fighting to clear his name? Splinter's story offers no answers to these questions.

Splinter's philosophy, as taught to the Turtles, is also inconsistent. For example, in "Beneath These Streets" Splinter comes down very hard on the TMNT for slacking off and demands constant vigilance from them. Yet in "Camera Bugged" he jettisons his previous policy and grants permission for the Turtles to go on vacation. In contrast, when April is deliberating a vacation in "Turtles at the Earth's Core", Splinter tells her that "to journey without a point, is pointless."

His policy on violence varies too. In "Enter: The Fly" one of the Turtles remarks that Splinter "doesn't believe in violence" (presumably because he has told them that this is the case). If this true, why did Splinter train four innocents in the art of ninjitsu and prepare them to fight (and potentially die) in the name of battling evil? The Turtles may engage in violence for a good cause, but it's still violence.

In "The Old Switcheroo" Splinter is trapped in Shredder's body and appeals to the Turtles to look beyond the surface and see the "inner truth" that he is in fact their sensei. This policy of looking beyond the surface doesn't seem to apply to the villains however, since Splinter continually encourages the Turtles to take their actions at face value and never consider their motivations (for example: aren't Rocksteady and Bebop victims as much as the Turtles are?).

The most blatant case of Splinter changing his philosophy takes place in "Corporate Raiders from Dimension X." After advising the Turtles not to investigate a wave of business-related kidnappings because "the wise bird does not nest in another's tree," Splinter observes as the Turtles learn that pizza shortages will be caused by the kidnappings. The Turtles rush off to investigate and Splinter muses "I knew that would stir their patriotic spirit." His policy on whether or not they should be involved literally changes within the space of a minute.

Another inconsistency in Splinter's behaviour relates to his unequal treatment of his sons. Leonardo is the number one son, being appointed leader of the group by Splinter, who appears to have shared the secrets of his psychic abilities with him in "Return of the Technodrome." In contrast, Splinter allows the other Turtles to frequently abuse and mistreat Michaelangelo, endorsing their "forgot your birthday" prank in "Michaelangelo's Birthday" and reversing the anti-pizza hypnotism at the end of "Cowabunga Shredhead", thereby allowing the continuation of Mike's pizza problem.

Most worryingly, Splinter may not be as different from Shredder as he seems. In "The Old

Switcheroo" Splinter finds it worryingly easy to impersonate Shredder when trapped inside his enemy's body and is even able to alter his brainwaves so that they appear so similar to Shredder's that they fool Krang's machinery.

What is the cause of all these inconsistencies? They can all be explained by one theory….

Father of the Year my Ass

Splinter is all about the vengeance. Really. He doesn't care about defeating evil, the safety of New York's citizens or anything else he harps on about to the Turtles. His whole "good versus evil" project is really only about one thing: pissing off Shredder.

Obviously, Splint and Shred-man aren't the best of friends. One potential reason why is the fact that Shredder is responsible for Yoshi's transformation into the mutant rat Splinter. A sewer-bound freak (and we know from "Splinter No More" that he's not too happy about it. But this isn't the excuse he presents to the Turtles for hating Shredder. Possibly because there are limits to what the Turtles might do in the name of vengeance. But the battle between good and evil is something they're obliged to make the big sacrifices for.

Instead, Splinter makes up the sob story about his past that the Turtles repeat to him in "Blast From the Past." In this story, Splinter is the victim, the rightful leader of the Foot Clan betrayed by Oruko Saki/Shredder, banished to America and forced to live in the sewers through poverty. The Turtles don't question why Shredder would betray Splinter in this manner or any of the other inconsistencies already mentioned. Why not? Well, we have to remember that, since their mutation, Splinter has been all that they have. They trust him absolutely and where inconsistencies do occur, they ignore them. Would you want to find out that your parents had lied to you your entire life? Neither do they.

With the Turtles' trust, Splinter has moulded them into agents of vengeance. Whilst professing to be too old or feeble to battle Shredder himself, Splinter has trained the Turtles to put their own lives on the line in order to fulfil his revenge wish. This explains why, at times, Splinter acts more like an army general than the Turtles' father. For example, he prioritises the whole over his individual sons, allowing Mike to be abused by the other Turtles because he recognises that the inequality of the Turtles contributes to the team dynamic (see the summary of "The Missing Map" for more on Splinter and Mike's pizza habit).

In order to protect his own ass, Splinter usually maintains a comfortable distance from the battlefield, sending the Turtles out to fight for him. This explains the discrepancies between his actual abilities and the "feeble old rat" image. Whilst Splinter wants the Turtles to believe he's a helpless old man, he has no qualms about using his abilities (both physical and psychic) when it's his life on the line (or, in the case of Mike's hypnotism in "Michaelangelo's Birthday", when it's a matter of convenience).

Why does Splinter's philosophy incorporate so many contradictions? Because Splinter has no real philosophy, he simply makes it up as he goes along, as it suits him to in various situations.

Why is Splinter so easily able to replicate Shredder's brainwaves in "The Old Switcheroo?" Because he's more similar to Shredder than anyone realises. They're both assholes, after all.

All of this seems more forgiveable when you consider that Splinter, as the architect of the conflict between the Turtles and Shredder, is the creator of the perpetual game which keeps all interested parties out of trouble and away from suicidal depression. However, if the Turtles' happiness is a by-product of Splinter's scheming, it's not an intended one. Splinter frequently puts the thwarting of Shredder over the Turtle's own welfare.

In "The Gang's All Here", Splinter dissuades the Turtles from taking the opportunity to become human (which he himself seized in "Splinter No More"). His reason? Because there would be no one to fight Shredder. This simply isn't true. The Turtles would theoretically still be ninjas capable of thwarting Shredder as humans. It's likely that Splinter simply fears that the Turtles would pursue other life paths as humans, with the present obstacles to normal lives removed. In other words, they would abandon his vengeance plan.

His most obvious betrayal of the Turtles, however, is seen in "The Old Switcheroo." After switching bodies with Shredder, Splinter decides that going to the Technodrome and investigating Shredder's plans is more important than letting the Turtles know that Shredder is amongst them, posing as their mentor. In other words, he leaves his "sons" to potentially die at Shredder's hands rather than passing up an opportunity to hurt his old foe.

The bottom line is this: like Shredder, Splinter manipulates those around him in order to fulfil his own dark goals (namely vengeance for being turned into a mutant rat). The key difference between them? Splinter's good at it. And at least Shredder doesn't pretend that he cares about his henchmutants.

[2012 notes – I still maintain that 80s toon Splinter is a douche. Same goes for 2k3 Splinter, Mirage Splinter, movie Splinter. You just don't raise your kids to be agents of your ninja vengeance. You. Just. Don't. Having said that, 2k12 Splinter is stone cold awesome. But he still shouldn't be hitting his kids.]

Vernon

The Feminised Male?

If you believe male critics of feminism, the advancement of women's rights and changing position of women in society has had a negative impact on at least some men. Males may feel unsure what's expected of them and what values they should adhere to as conventional conceptions of masculinity and femininity break down (personally, I think it's a bit cheeky for men to be bitching that women's freedom not to be kept as glorified slaves is giving them identity crises, but then that's just me).

Is Vernon such a male? He's certainly not your typical man of action - cowering under the news van or running away whenever trouble breaks out. He faints in the face of fear in "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King" and wears a pink shirt to work every day - signalling that he's probably not trying to build up an image as a macho man amongst his fanbase.
So does Vernon have some kind of gender identity problem or is he merely a victim of competition in the workplace, as April is? Vernon's boss Burne certainly benefits from playing his two star reporters off against each other and no doubt the pressure is high on both of them. Is it possible that, given that April is Vernon's main competition, he is merely trying to emulate her in some way to advance his own career? In "New York's Shiniest", Vernon describes himself as a "sensitive artist", a title perhaps more commonly aspired to

by women.

In "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King", Vernon infuriates April by intending to claim credit for the story, after both of them witness a battle between the two villains mentioned in the episode title. As far as April's concerned, the Turtles are her friends, so the story should be hers, but Vernon was the one who had the presence of mind to try to film the event (although it's eventually revealed that he accidentally left the lens cap on). This instance demonstrates that, cowardly though Vernon may be, he does have the instincts required of a news reporter, as well as the ruthlessness that is required to put his own desire for the credit above any loyalty to April.

Vernon's "cowardly" behaviour may be less due to feminisation of males or a gender identity crisis and more a signal of his own shrewdness. After all, the cowardly reporter lives to report another day, and April's own recklessness has gotten her into danger many times. And if April is indeed the best reporter Channel 6 news has to offer, it makes sense to try and beat her at her own game.

Or maybe he's gay. Y'know, there's always that.

[2012: I feel like such a prick for typing “Or maybe he's gay.” What a stupid thing to write]



Themes

The Authorities: To Serve and Protect?

Above the Law

The Turtles are frequently involved in battles with an array of colourful foes, and reporters such as April and Vernon often act as witnesses. In all of these world-threatening events, however, there are some notable absentees. Where are the police when Shredder's cronies are running riot? Where are the armed forces when the Technodrome threatens the safety of the world?

Occasionally, of course, we see attempts by the authorities to intervene, but inevitably they fail and the fate of the world is decided by the Turtles. Despite the billions of dollars plunged into police and military budgets, it would seem the authorities cannot even compete with four mutant freaks with martial arts training from an elderly rat. For example, in "The Big Break Out", the army throws everything they have at the Technodrome, but don't even make a dent. This seems all the more lamentable when you witness the villains' apparent apathy towards their evil schemes on many occasions.

The main thematic role of the police and army would seem to be justifying the Turtles' vigilante behaviour. The Turtles may have no official mandate or legal jurisdiction, but the staggering incompetence of the authorities in their world means that they are necessary for defeating the likes of Shredder and Krang.

The Turtles show that they believe themselves to be above the law in "The Great Boldini." When accused of stealing a valuable diamond, they run from the police rather than attempting to prove their innocence in the usual manner.

But when you consider the level of corruption and cynical behaviour in the authorities, the

Turtles' attitude towards them appears to make sense…

In Whose Pocket Exactly?

Like many public institutions, the New York Police Department seems to have a rather cynical relationship with the media, co-operating in a rather unorthodox way.

In "New York's Shiniest", Channel 6 reporter April appears to have a police radio in her news van, which notifies her of criminal activities going on in the city. Since we can assume that Channel 6 had no part in illegally installing a police radio, the only likely explanation is that April obtained the radio via the police contact she mentions in that episode.

Why would the police grant April access to sensitive information in such a way? Perhaps they're seeking a trusting relationship with the media in order to secure positive coverage. In any case, letting April have that radio not only jeopardises her safety (by inviting her to potentially dangerous crime scenes), but also compromises sensitive information.

Another example of April's suspicious relationship with the police department occurs in "The Great Boldini", where she successfully persuades the Chief of Police to let the Turtles go, even though they are the chief suspects in a diamond robbery. No doubt he's aware of the value of keeping a popular reporter sweet.

The armed forces also appear to be utilising the media for their own purposes. In "Attack of Big Macc", the army stages a demonstration of their latest hi-tech laser weapon for the television cameras. This is most likely an attempt to strike fear into the hearts of the country's enemies and the media are only too happy to play their part. Similarly, in "Green With Jealousy", the navy ignore the risk of attracting protesters or terrorists in inviting Channel 6 to report on the arrival of the country's largest nuclear submarine in the city docks. Despite the disastrous consequences of publicising these events in both the aforementioned episodes, the same thing occurs again in "The Big Rip Off", when a news report highlighting the new security system and energy research at Fort Charles precedes an attack there. Not only do the military utilise the media for their own uses, they apparently fail to learn from their mistakes too.

The media aren't the only party with whom the authorities have a suspicious relationship. The authorities generally seem to turn a blind eye to the Turtle's vigilante actions, but this changes when the Turtles are accused of bank robbery in "Invasion of the Punk Frogs." As soon as big business is threatened, the authorities leap into action, setting up an anti-Turtle task squad. Although the Turtles' usual behaviour is dangerous both to citizens and property, it takes the threat to capital to provoke this action.

So we've established the corruption in both the police and armed forces, but just because they're corrupt doesn't necessarily make them smart…

Corrupt AND Stupid

In "April Foolish", we get some idea of just how competent the army is in the Turtles' world. During the episode, army representatives are repeatedly humiliated, as they are unable to answer April's questions and contradicted. When April asks about the army's new weaponry, she is told "we're certain that citizens will sleep better just knowing that it costs millions of dollars." It seems the army can't even manage public relations, let alone

protecting the nation.

Later in the episode, there are two breaches of security whilst the army are busy reassuring the public that the place is absolutely safe and that they are in control of the situation. They then proceed to just sit back and watch the ensuing battle between the Turtles and Shredder.

To see just how seriously the armed forces take guarding their most powerful weaponry, look no further than "Turtles on Trial." When Krang goes to steal a powerful, heavily armed robot from the army, he finds only two guards, both of whom are slacking off to play cards and appear to have no weapons. Only the Turtles' intervention prevents Krang from using the robot to blow the city to bits. In "The Big Rip Off" the army prove incapable of breaking into their own fort when their computer security system takes control. The Turtles manage to get in via an unguarded route through the sewers.

The navy isn't much better. In "Green With Jealousy", the crew of a nuclear submarine docked in the city harbour abandon ship because a power drainage has turned out the lights. Who ever heard of super-hard marines who are scared of the dark?

The procedures of the police appear to be just as naïve. In "The Fifth Turtle", Shredder tracks down the address of Zack, a child hanging out with the Turtles by calling the police and giving them the license number of Zack's bike. He claims he has found the bicycle and wants to return it to the owner. Scandalously, the police give the caller Zack's full address, although they have no idea who he is.

Mind you, such stupidity doesn't seem so unusual when we meet the Chief of Police in "The Great Boldini." As mentioned above, the Chief allows his main suspects, the Turtles, to escape. Mainly because April is a "pretty lass" and asks him nicely. He generally seems to be a stereotypical Irishman, believing in leprechauns and seeming quite backwards generally.

A policeman watching Shredder chase two children in "The Missing Map" proves extremely unhelpful and limits himself to shouting "hey you, stop chasing that kid." And that's all. Similarly, in "Take Me to Your Leader", the cops turn up after receiving word of a disturbance involving a robot outside the Mile High Tower, but only three of them arrive to deal with the matter. After the robot quickly despatches them, they retreat without calling reinforcements. The robot asks what they have learnt. "Never mess with a robot," the demoralised cops answer.

Private security is another source of professional incompetence. In "The Making of Metalhead", a security guard at a company called Megatech attempts to stop the henchmutants from attacking by shouting at them. When this fails, he runs off shouting "they don't pay me take this abuse." So what *do* they pay him for, exactly? Using his gun on such intruders, perhaps?

It's not just the American authorities that are shown up as fools, either. In "April Foolish", guards at the Embassy of Malacuria show themselves to be just as inept as their American counterparts. Not only do they allow April into a Princess' bedroom because she looks like her, but they also assume that Shredder is a guest at a costume party when they find him sneaking around the grounds. They let him into the Embassy, allowing him to kidnap April, without even asking to see an invitation. Later, those same guards get in the way when the Turtles try to help.

Even in other dimensions, the same phenomenon of useless authority figures exists. In "Usagi Yojimbo", we see an alternate world ruled by animals which otherwise resembles feudal Japan. The shogun's guards running the show pick on Usagi, our rabbit hero, for no reason whatsoever. In a stroke of symbolic brilliance, the shogun's guards are pigs. Similarly, Krang's army in Dimension X is so eager to destroy Earth that they attack the Technodrome instead in "The Big Break Out."

Given the incompetence of the authorities in the Turtleverse, it's no surprise that some feel the need to take the law into their own hands.

[2012 notes – I was heavily into NWA at the time of writing this]

The Iron Hand of Capitalism

The Power of Big Business

The influence of business is seen all over the TMNT universe, as a motivating force for the good guys and rather than the villains primarily. This doesn't necessarily mean, however, that capitalism is seen favourably. In some episodes, for example, the pursuit of profit leads to developments which inexorably lead to trouble.

In "New York's Shiniest", we meet Rex 1, a prototype robot designed to replace a human policeman. Cost-cutting is obviously a factor in this scheme (robots don't need wages or demand benefits), but presumably even a profitable contract with the police force wasn't enough for the developers of the robots. Rex 1 was clearly designed with the role of bodyguard, rather than policeman, in mind, as evidenced in his protective (and law breaking) behaviour towards April throughout the episode. Clearly Rex 1 would be disastrous if ever commissioned as an officer and the developers' desire for profit is the source of this scandal.

Similarly, a device called the Medi-Laser, introduced in "Beneath these Streets" was clearly designed with multiple uses in mind. Although the Medi-Laser is supposed to heal hospital patients, Shredder finds that it has a reverse setting, which allows him to attack Splinter. Since a doctor would have little use for this reverse setting, we have to assume that the designers considered military applications for the device, which would no doubt provide a more lucrative market than the medical services.

The pursuit of profit is, of course, the overall aim of Channel 6, a media organisation which is presumably answerable to shareholders and a board of directors. As such, news editor Burne is constantly worrying about ratings and reporters like April and Vernon are forced to compete over the most attention grabbing news stories. With all their jobs depending on their ability to keep ratings up, sometimes journalistic integrity has to be sacrificed to meet this need for profit (for more on how the media operate under capitalism, click here and then select "Mass Media" from the menu).

In "Turtles on Trial", Burne and Clayton Kellerman (a Channel 6 chat show host) relentlessly pursue a media campaign against the Turtles in the name of ratings. This leads to the formation of violent mobs, who chase the Turtles and drive them back into the sewers (where they cannot effectively defend the city). Burne gives no thought to the consequences of his actions and Kellerman refuses to drop his vendetta even when the Turtles save his life and defeat Krang before his eye, explaining that it doesn't pay to be a

nice guy.

The character on whom capitalism has apparently had the most ambiguous effect, however, is Donatello. Don's attachment to capitalism is a way for him to connect to the rest of the world and drives his innovative nature. However, his pursuit of profit is seen to have sinister implications in "Leatherhead: Terror of the Swamp" and could be a factor in his turning to the dark side.

Don's thirst for profit may be a disaster in the making, but we've already seen one occasion on which a capitalist venture led to catastrophe…

When Capitalism Goes Wrong(er)

The episode with the most outspoken stance on capitalism is "Corporate Raiders from Dimension X", in which Shredder legitimately becomes a partner in Octopus Inc. and then begins to brainwash the employees into committing crimes for him. The corporate slaves then begin to kidnap other businessmen and brainwash them too. Once he's built up a vast army, Shredder attempts to raise the Technodrome. He is defeated, as ever, by the Turtles, who free the slaves by dousing them in water.

There are several ways in which this plot can be seen as a metaphor for real-life capitalism. As sometimes happens in real life, a corrupt man reaches a prominent position in a powerful company through legitimate means. The brainwashed employees can be compared to the junior executives and sales reps who work sixty hours a week and show unwavering loyalty to an entity that regards them as mere tools to be used as appropriate (as the term "human resources" implies). The business kidnappings can be seen as a more literal metaphor for the ruthless headhunting of employees from rival companies which sometimes takes place.

The overall plot isn't the only anti-capitalist message in the episode. The company Shredder takes over is called "Octopus Inc." (which, when pronounced, sounds like "octopus ink"). The octopus metaphor is apt, since the company is a many-armed beast which uses hypnotic equipment to manipulate its staff, in much the same way that octopuses use ink to blind their prey and make them vulnerable.

The episode parodies the capitalist desire for expansion at all costs. Other companies mentioned are given cynical names like "Titani Corp", "Giganti Corp" and "Behemoth" and the Octopus Inc. employees stop at nothing to swell their ranks with new recruits. They're even willing to recruit Casey Jones, who makes an impression by smashing up the office with a baseball bat.

At the end of the episode, Octavius Ogilvy (the other partner in Octopus Inc.) admits that he ignored his conscience in order to agree to Shredder becoming a partner in the company. Obviously, his primary concern was the perceived potential for profit.

The episode seems to advocate a return to a simpler, 19th century style of capitalism. The Turtles make use of a memorial built on the founding of the company in 1890 in order to defeat Shredder. This harks back to a time when capitalism was more community orientated and less ruthless. The episode ends by highlighting the potential for capitalist companies to do good. Ogilvy states that "there will be a new Octopus Inc. No longer will greed be our single motivating factor. We will clean up the environment. We will help the underprivileged. We will make this a better world for everyone, regardless of race, creed or

colour."

However, Raphael points out that although this is a happy ending, it's not a realistic one.

Capitalism and the TMNT Phenomenon

Of course, despite these critical viewpoints on capitalism, the whole TMNT phenomenon is partially a capitalist one (as well as an artistic and creative project, obviously). It has to be acknowledged that money has played a role, therefore, in many decisions related to the franchise.

One example of this is "Blast from the Past." This episode is a clip show, that is, it recycles footage from previous episodes (in the form of flashbacks) in order to save money. By splicing in scenes already filmed, the makers of the show save on animation costs.

Of course, the most obvious example of capitalism on the TMNT phenomenon can be summed up in one word: merchandising. At the time, few children's franchises (if any) rivalled the TMNT for the sheer amount of crap available (with the occasional interesting product thrown in, obviously). Possibly, the more recent Pokemon craze comes close for sheer nerve when it comes to finding the most shameless excuses to come up with a new product, but it's hard to think of another franchise that has so ambitiously pursued the whole merchandise thing.

For an idea of just how wide the range of merchandise available was at the height of the phenomenon (and ever since, now you mention it), take a wander through the archives of X-Entertainment, which has many reviews on the various actions figures, toys, foodstuffs, games, video games and spin-offs based around the franchise. In addition to these, more usual products, such as video tapes, stickers and books were all available and no character (whether it be from one of the three movies, three comic book incarnations, ten seasons of the cartoon or the live action show) was considered too obscure to be marketed as an action figure. Perhaps the most shameless spin-off was the "Coming out of our Shells" tour, initially devised as a marketing campaign for Pizza Hut. During the tour, four men in Turtle suits sang to pre-adolescents. Songs such as "Pizza Power" advocated the joys of a pizza-heavy diet. (By the way, the most general X-E article on TMNT merchandise is here).

Of course, the TMNT franchise, like most things, is making a modern comeback now. In addition to a new comic from Mirage Press, a new cartoon from Fox Entertainment and another comic accompanying the new cartoon, there are now a whole new range of action figures, toys and other products. And you can bet there will be more. I'm aware that I have to be careful of what I'm saying here, but lovely as the new cartoon is, a cynic might say that this resurgence of an idea previously thought to be exhausted is a fine example of capitalism's shamelessness in the pursuit of profit.

It would seem that, if there have been any anti-capitalist messages in the original TMNT cartoon, they need to be accompanied by the additional advice: "Do what we say, not what we do."

[2012 notes – I really miss X-Entertainment, it was an amazing website. Of course, we've got a third cartoon now and as much as I hate the cynicism of continually repackaging the Turtles for each generation, I still love the 2k12 cartoon to bits. As for capitalism, it sucks but what can you do? It's just another phase in history. Nothing lasts forever]

It's Only a Cartoon

Y'know those moments when the characters step out of the cartoon for a second? Whether it's a wink to the viewer or a reference to the fact that's it's only a cartoon, the tradition goes waaaayyy back. So far back, I can't be bothered to research it. Let's just assume it's a device as old as the hills, used when the writers run out of other jokes to fill the cartoon with.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles was particularly guilty of this. So much so, you begin to wonder if the writers are trying to make a point....particularly when these gags appear in five episodes in a row (episodes 26 to 30).

In "The Fifth Turtle", Michaelangelo tells Shredder, who's overly optimistic of his chances of success, "get serious dude, they don't call this the Shredder show." In "Enter the Rat King", Donatello says to the other Turtles "I wish we had those anti-gravity boots from episode 6." The references to cartoondom continue in "Turtles at the Earth's Core." Mike asks why the Turtles have to follow a dinosaur around the city. "Cause if we didn't, it wouldn't be much of an episode," Raphael answers. Then in "April Foolish", Raph says ""Remember kids, we're professionals, don't try this at home" whilst the Turtles cling onto a helicopter.

These first four references to the non-real nature of the show are all made by the Turtles but Krang shows he also knows what's going on in "Attack of Big Macc." When Shredder asks why he happens to have a robot-controlling device around, Krang dismisses the question with "We've got to keep the story moving."

The last two of these references appear to be the writers' way of writing themselves out of a hole. Perhaps some unfortunate child attempted to hang onto the bottom of a helicopter the same week that "April Foolish" was written and the writers wanted to include a warning to children. Since the situation turned out well for the Turtles, the only option would have been to make the warning explicit. And Krang's comment in "Attack of Big Macc" prevents the writer having to explain where this robot-controller came from.

Why the other references are there, though, is less clear. They're not demanded by the story and could easily be replaced by less confusing lines.

The next such reference doesn't occur until episode 33, in "Take Me to Your Leader," when Raphael worries that events are moving too slowly and therefore "this could turn into a two part episode." Two episodes later ("Turtles, Turtles Everywhere"), there are three of 'em. Don tries to rally the other Turtles by saying "We're turtles in a halfshell, remember the theme song?" and Mike comments on the accompanying music when the Turtlevan is racing along later in the episode. When the Turtles get into trouble, Raph notes that it's a "great cliff-hanger."

In episode 45 ("Super Bebop and Mighty Rocksteady"), both the villains and the heroes comment on the non-reality of the situation. First, Shredder explains to Krang that he is explaining how an invention works for the audience's benefit, not his. Then when asked how to get into Channel 6, Donatello replies "How should I know, I'm a turtle, not a cartoon writer." Later, Michaelangelo turns to the camera and says "is this ever suspenseful or what?"

In episode 49 ("Michaelangelo's Birthday"), Rocksteady (of all people) responds to Donatello knowing what he's going to say with "he must have seen this episode before." Finally, the last three episodes of season three all contain references to the situation being a cartoon rather than reality. In "The Big Rip Off", Michaelangelo observes that the villains are after power for the Technodrome "in every episode" and Donatello warns viewers not to try this at home before breaking into a lift shaft. In "The Big Break In", Raphael asks the audience "still think you'd like to be a teenage mutant ninja turtle" when the Turtles face a sticky situation. And in "The Big Break Out", when an army general asks Don and Raph who they are, Raphael asks him "Don't you watch TV?"

Notice that these references to events not being real only start to occur later on, in the third season of the show. Is there any reason why there would be references in five episodes in a row, followed by three in a row at the season's end? Perhaps the writers decided to hammer home the point on these occasions. But what is the point being made exactly?

If you've noticed the various trends in the episodes of the show, you'll have noticed that the apathy affecting players on both sides only starts to set in later on and gets increasingly more obvious as the show goes on. Is it possible that, around the time of episode 25, the writers took a decision to see both sides becoming more apathetic in the battle of good vs. evil and decided that, in order to prevent children becoming disillusioned with the whole thing, they had to emphasise that the whole thing is only a cartoon?

If you think about it, the third season of TMNT is pretty depressing. The Turtles are still fighting off the same villains but never permanently defeat them. And the villains never achieve anything either. Everyone ends up going round and round in circles. Even at the end of the season, when the fate of the world is threatened by the rise of the Technodrome, the villains continue to make stupid mistakes and the heroes continue to be blasé about the whole thing. Any child watching may get the message that nothing ever changes, so why bother trying? By emphasising that the show is just a cartoon, the writers can contain this negativity somewhat. And because the characters know that it's just a show, this excuses their apathy to some extent.

And it's also handy to remember when April or Vernon is annoying the hell out of you.

[2012 notes – Turtles Forever did a really excellent job of sending up this particular ridiculous trait from the 80s cartoon, although for the sake of accuracy they should have had the 80s turtles throwing more rotten fruit around]

History: Fact or Fiction?

What we know and what we don't know

This much is certain: every so often, Shredder (or some other bad guy) gets up to no good and the Turtles always stop him.

What's less certain is the motivation of the characters, but another question mark hovers over what happened before this routine was set up. Events before the first episode, as told to the Turtles by Splinter, supposedly went as follows...

In Japan, Splinter (then called Yoshi) was leader of the Foot Clan, until Shredder (then

called Saki) plotted to change this. Splinter was expelled from the Foot Clan and went to live in America, where he was penniless and forced to live in the sewers. There, Yoshi came into contact with some mutagen and a rat, which caused him to mutate into a giant rat. He took the name Splinter. Meanwhile, four discarded pet turtles he had taken care of also came into contact with the mutagen, causing them to mutate into giant turtles. Splinter looked after them, raised them and named them after Renaissance artists. These events are recounted by the Turtles, who are trying to help an amnesiac Splinter get his memory back, in "Blast From the Past."

Bright readers may have noticed a couple of flaws in this story. Why, for example, would Yoshi live in the sewers after moving to America, unless he wanted to avoid mainstream society for some reason? If he had lived on the surface, he may have been able to receive charity or welfare. The decision to live in the shadows suggest that Yoshi was hiding from society, in other words, that he himself had done something wrong, rather than been a victim.

Whilst we're picking holes in Splinter's story, how could he be expelled from the Foot Clan if he was the legitimate leader? In the flashback scene, we see Saki (Shredder) attach a knife to Yoshi's robe that prevents him from bowing to an important visitor. When Yoshi pulls out the knife, he is accused of plotting to murder the visitor. This seems a little far-fetched. Surely Yoshi would be asked to explain the knife, especially if he was as important to the Foot Clan as he claims. And who was this visitor who was supposedly higher up than the leader of the Foot Clan? In any case, the story doesn't explain why Saki would plot against Yoshi in the first place.

Of course, if Splinter/Yoshi genuinely did do something to merit being expelled from the Foot Clan, it would explain his relocation to America, his decision to live in the sewers and Saki/Shredder's enmity towards him. But such a story would not be a good one to tell Splinter's "sons", the Turtles. We know that Splinter has moulded the Turtles to be agents of vengeance and that he has his own agenda. To make it easier to manipulate them, he's cooked up the story described above to guarantee their righteous loyalty.

The idea that Splinter uses this story to brainwash his students is backed up in "Blast From the Past", where he is apparently given amnesia from knock-out gas. To save Raphael from an angry ghost, Splinter must prove he is the rightful leader of the Foot Clan by performing the Kur-Li manoeuvre. Of course, the amnesia prevents him from doing this, so the Turtles try to help him regain his memory by telling him his life story.

However, it's likely that Splinter was actually faking the amnesia (or at least exaggerating it) all along. The Turtles are all exposed to the knock-out gas but only Splinter is affected by it. And it seems strange that Splinter needs to hear the entire story of his past before he remembers the Kur-Li manoeuvre. The fact that Splinter eventually remembers the manoeuvre doesn't prove much in itself, as he could have learnt it from watching someone else. Ninja are good at spying, and the manoeuvre must have been performed at some point, if only to pass it on.

At several points in "Blast From the Past", Splinter appears to be stalling or prompting the Turtles, suggesting that he remembers the story but wants to hear it again anyway. Why? Perhaps because earlier in the episode, the ghost raised by Shredder had doubts about Splinter's true identity. It may be that Splinter wants to reinforce the story by having his sons repeat it to him, in order to smooth over any doubts they might have about their "father."

We see more inconsistencies in Splinter's version of history in "The Missing Map." In this episode, it's revealed that the Turtles keep a scrapbook that contains "evidence" that Shredder conspired against Splinter in their Foot Clan days. But if Splinter really has evidence, why has he never attempted to clear his name? It's likely that this "evidence" would only be convincing to those who already trust Splinter (i.e. the Turtles) and that it only exists for the purposes of convincing them that Splinter is telling the truth.

The scrapbook also contains a picture of the four turtles before they mutated. How could Splinter have this photo if things happened the way he claims they did?

Moreover, in "Invasion of the Punk Frogs", we see just how easy it is to manipulate mutants when you distort history. After picking up four mutated frogs in the Florida swamps, Shredder is able to convince them that he is a good guy and has them commit crimes for him, even though the frogs believe stealing is wrong. It just goes to show what four impressionable mutants will do if they're told the right inspirational story...

So if Splinter's version of history can't be trusted, what really happened? Well, we know for sure that Splinter and the Turtles came into contact with mutagen at some point. And we know that Splinter has a big hate-on for Shredder. Is it possible that whatever Splinter did to merit being thrown out of the Foot Clan provoked Shredder to expose Splinter to mutagen on purpose? If so, it could be that the Turtles were just innocent bystanders who got involved by accident....

Whatever happened, there's something up with Splinter's story, at any rate.

[2012 notes - “Blast from the Past” was the most incompetent clip show ever]

Humanity: A Complete Waste of Time?

The Case Before the Court

In case you hadn't noticed the entire concept of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles goes as follows: defenceless humanity is threatened by evil-doers (sometimes human, sometimes not). Humanity is then saved by non-humans. In the course of these events, interventions by human authorities (police, army, security, etc) usually prove fruitless and sometimes make things worse.

So from the outset, the show establishes humans as a weaker race, that needs to be protecting and can't do much for itself. But it goes further than that. From comments made by the Turtles to entire episodes themed around humanity's aptitude for intolerance, there are repeated messages that might lead one to conclude that humanity probably doesn't deserve to be saved. Which makes the Turtles' apathy towards doing so on some occasions all the more understandable.

Donatello is the most overtly anti-human Turtle. In "The Maltese Hamster" he comments that humans can't be trusted and in "The Gang's All Here" he views humans as inferior to slugs, amoebas or worms. And he's not the only Turtle who's not impressed with humanity. In "Return of the Technodrome", April comments that she's the only human present and Michaelangelo remarks that nobody's perfect. Everyone laughs. Would they have found it so funny had April commented she was the only white person or the only woman present?

You can't really blame the Turtles for their anti-human racism though. Some of the evidence for humanity's general lameness really is overwhelming. Aside from all the standard stuff (war, poverty, etc), there are plenty of events in the show to convince you that humanity isn't all it's cracked up to be. And the recurring human characters in the show, it must be noted, are generally assholes. Look at them....April is a career-obsessed selfish cow, Irma is a clumsy woman who apparently cares about nothing except getting a man, Vernon is a cowardly underhanded toad, Burne sacrifices ethics for ratings, the Rat King is essentially a terrorist and Shredder wants to take over the world. Where are the human role models on this show?

Aside from all this, there are two main points the show makes about humanity, the first being that humans are an intolerant bunch and the second being that the brains that they have make them dangerous.

My best friend is a mutant freak...

You might think that, as freaks, our heroes would jump at the chance to become human and live normal lives. Well, you'd be wrong. In not one but two episodes, transformations into human beings convince all concerned that it's much better to be a freak and outcast than it is to be a smelly human.

In "Splinter No More", Splinter misses being human and Donatello finds a way to turn him back to his old pre-mutated self again. The transformation isn't permanent, but it doesn't matter because Splinter decides he doesn't like being human anyway. In fairness to humanity, some of the things that rankle Splinter about being human again seem like nit-picks. You can't really blame onlookers for staring when Splinters walks through Central Park in his pyjamas or the cab driver who won't give Splinter a lift because he has no money.

What really annoys Splinter though, is the public's reaction when he starts to turn back into a mutant rat again. After being chased through the sewers by an angry mob, Splinter is thoroughly disillusioned with humanity. He tells the Turtles that humans hate "everything that's different to themselves." This seems a little unfair to me. It's not like Splinter stuck around to explain himself or give people a chance to know him. But still, it's probably not a good thing that people instantly assumed the worst.

In "The Gang's All Here", it's Michaelangelo's turn to become human, although he does it against the express wishes of Splinter and the other Turtles. Unlike Splinter, however, nothing bad really happens to Mike because he's a human. Except for one embarrassing incident in a skate park. And that's it. Still, the whole thing's enough to convince Mike that being a human is "totally bogus" and he's relieved when he becomes human again at the end of the episode. But there's no real evidence of human intolerance in the episode, just turtle intolerance of humans.

The other episode that makes claims of human intolerance is "Turtles on Trial", in which a TV show labels the Turtles "freaks" and "menaces" and angry mobs pursue them through the city. The charge levelled against humanity in this episode is that humans don't give the Turtles a chance to prove themselves, they just automatically assume the worst.

The sad truth, however, is that the city's population can't HELP getting the wrong impression when the Turtles get involved in mass property damage and public battles. How is an ordinary New Yorker supposed to keep track of what's going on in their battles

against Shredder? What reason have the Turtles given the public to believe that they're good guys? Although TV show host Clayton Kellerman is shown to care more about ratings than ethics in this episode, humanity as a whole comes to pretty much the only conclusion it could.

The verdict on humanity's intolerance? Although the show tries to paint humans as intolerant, humanity actually probably isn't any more prejudiced towards the Turtles than the Turtles are towards humanity.

Lethally Stupid

Of course, prejudice can be damaging to others, but humanity's also a danger to itself. Aside from producing freaks like Shredder who want to take over the world, they also produce guys like the Rat King. Inspired by humanity's mistreatment of ratkind, his royal highness seeks to redress the balance by turning us all into zombies in "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King." Although the Rat King is, of course, responsible for his own actions, if mankind had been nicer to his servants (i.e. the rats), they may not have had to deal with him in the first place.

In "Ninja Sword From Nowhere" we see what other civilisations make of our violent tendencies. When some alien antique collectors find a sword used on Earth as a weapon, they consider it a nostalgic piece, suggesting that they find humanity's violent nature primitive. Similarly, in "Attack of Big Macc", a robot transported to the present from the future notes that, because people are shooting at each other, "This can only be Earth." The technologically advanced aliens in "Invasion of the Turtle Snatchers" also hate violence. All of these episodes suggest that humanity is pretty much unique in it's thirst for violence.

The harm that humanity does to itself also includes damage done to the environment. The visiting aliens in "Ninja Sword From Nowhere" note that "these Earthlings sure know how to foul up their environment." And Leo comments in "New York's Shiniest" that New York's population is "destroying their own water supply." In "Usagi Yojimbo," Donatello is appalled to learn that the local "ecological waste centre" is actually just a catapult launching trash into a nearby river.

So, as we can see, humans are good at harming themselves as well as everyone else. This message is so clear from the messages in various episodes that you have to wonder what species the writers were...

[2012 notes – you know what bugs me about this lazy "humanity is rubbish" trope that you see in cartoons and sci-fi? The fact that the writers are obviously all human and it wouldn't kill them to look a bit deeper and say "actually, we're damaging the environment because that's the nature of capitalism" or "some of us are prejudiced because we're scared and ignorant" rather than "oh humanity is so terrible" (Doctor Who is particularly guilty of this). We've done a lot of good stuff too, y'know. The fact is you can't compare humanity to any other race or animal because there is no other comparable race or animal, but for the most part we are AMAZING. We don't know how lions or chimps or lizards would behave if they were the dominant species, so bashing humanity for all the ways it has messed up is pointless. Writing things off as "that's just human nature" is a convenient way of washing our hands of blame or, god forbid, actually thinking about the reason why things are the way they are /endrant]

The Media: Force for Truth or Brainwashing NYC?

Channel 6: No News is Good News

Channel 6 is a bizarre TV channel, or at least it appears so to non-American viewers (remember we don't get the kind of partisan Fox-stylee news coverage they have in the US). Despite the fact that New York must be one of the most interesting cities on Earth, Channel 6 reporters frequently have to resort to piddling human interest stories to fill the schedules and ratings clearly come before ethics for Burne Thompson, the editor for Channel 6.

In "New York's Shiniest", we see April watching herself on TV at home (reading the news, not reporting it). So Channel 6 news isn't even *live*. This means that the news being reported may already be a few hours out of date. And Channel 6's news ethics make some tabloid newspapers look respectable. On more than one occasion, Burne advises his reporters to fabricate news stories. In "Return of the Technodrome", he tells his reporters to go out and "make news" and in "Ninja Sword of Nowhere" tells Vernon that "dogs bites man is nothing...but man bites dog is news." He then advises Vernon to "go bite a dog."

Despite the fact that April is supposedly Channel 6's top reporter, she's frequently found doing ridiculous stories such as Library Week ("Splinter No More") and the Fat Cabby Contest ("The Catwoman From Channel 6"). If Channel 6's star reporter is covering nonsense like this, who is covering all the important stories which inevitably go on in a city like New York? It's safe to assume that if April is having to do those stupid human interest stories, that more important stories are going uncovered. In "Super Bebop and Mighty Rocksteady," the lead story on the news is a shortage of rutebegers in Ruritania, despite the fact that a raging storm is taking place just outside the Channel 6 office. Later in the same episode, the anchorman announces a break in the news so that viewers can admire his hair.

To some extent, this is usual of TV news. If you open a broadsheet newspaper on any day of the week, you will find dozens of stories about political decisions which affect people's lives profoundly. Yet the last story on any TV news will most likely relate to a kitten who's learnt to use the telephone or some other irrelevant crap. This is a cynical move on the part of the news editors, who know that if the news is *too* depressing, then viewers may switch off permanently. However, Channel 6 takes this further than other stations, because they put their top reporter on these stories, suggesting that they do a lot more of them. Which means that many important stories are being deliberately neglected. Why?

Like any other capitalist company, Channel 6 has to make a profit to keep running. So ratings are inherently important. Burne is always shouting about ratings and in "Turtles on Trial" he can barely contain his glee about the high ratings caused by the Clayton Kellerman's persecution of the Turtles, even though the public are forming violent mobs because of it. Ratings aren't the only concern, though.

As a commercial channel, Channel 6 has to attract advertisers, and it can't do that if it shows too many stories which are critical of the business community. In a modern capitalist society, many of the most outrageous news stories relate to the follies of capitalism and big business. If it ignores such stories, Channel 6 is left to focus only on human interest stories and other issues which do not anger the business community when raised.

Hence, in "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King", Burne demands that both of his top reporters devote their time to uncovering what happened to a stolen tanker of rat poison. In most cities, a stolen vehicle wouldn't even make the news, but Burne demands that his two top reporters (along with his secretary) waste their time trying to find out where it went. Why would he do this, unless he wanted them to direct their focus away from other news events happening that day?

The absence of stories caused by trying to keep on the right side of big business means that Channel 6 needs to take stories wherever it can find them. So when the authorities offer them news opportunities, Channel 6 take whatever information they can get on the terms of those offering it. This goes against the entire spirit of journalism, which should aim to get to the truth, not just accept what we're told. In "Attack of Big Macc", Channel 6 screens a live demonstration of the army testing out their new laser weaponry, acting as a pawn in some mind games going on between international leaders. In "Green With Jealousy", Channel 6 does a story on the navy's largest nuclear submarine, which is docked in the city harbour. And in "New York's Shiniest", we see that April enjoys a somewhat unhealthy relationship with her police contact, who offers her exclusive information and perks such as access to police radio waves. How do we know such privileged information doesn't lead to biased news coverage?

Overall, Channel 6 has clearly chosen the path of good business relations over the path of good journalism.

The Power of Television

Another media-related theme covered in the show is the power of television in the modern world. In "The Old Switcheroo", Cybertech Laboratories inform the media when their security is breached, suggesting that they feel the police may be more useful under the media spotlight. They may be right. Notice how police cases which have gone on for months often get resolved within days of being featured on TV.

Clearly the army representative who decided the new weaponry should be demonstrated on TV in "Attack of Big Macc" felt the same way about the media's power to get the message across.

The episode which does the most to demonstrate the power of TV is "Turtles on Trial." When prime-time TV show "On Trial" starts to persecute the Turtles and labels them a "menace", so much hysteria is whipped up that the Turtles are chased by an unruly mob. Recognising that TV is probably the best way to clear their name, the Turtles appear on "On Trial" to respond to accusations made against them, but it goes badly. Despite the fact that they save the life of the host of "On Trial", the Turtles are unable to stop him from badmouthing them and cannot repair the damage done to their reputation.

The power of television is demonstrated more literally in "Super Bebop and Mighty Rocksteady." When Shredder wants to use a device called the Mezmeriser to turn people into mindless zombies, he uses the Channel 6 transmitter to do it. TV turning people into mindless zombies. If that's not social commentary, then I don't know what is.

In "Catwoman From Channel 6", Splinter disapproves of the Turtles watching TV, because he thinks it encourages violence. Leaving aside the irony for the moment (Splinter encourages the Turtles to do violence far more than TV does), he's shown to have a point later in the episode, when the Turtles' absorption in television leads April to get into trouble

by going off by herself. Violence ensues.

Splinter's comment is all the more ironic considering the TMNT craze was blamed for inciting violence in kids in the 80s and 90s. It was also blamed for the purchasing (and later, discarding) of pet turtles, tortoises and terrapins, as well as severe damage to the English language (thanks to Michaelangelo's colourful slang).

All in all, the message of the cartoon was perhaps borne out in its effect on youngsters.

What the Turtles Watch

So what do the TV programmes you watch say about you? All kinds of things. If you like soap operas, you want to escape reality. If you like the news, you want to embrace it. And if you like "Will and Grace" you have no concept of it.

Seriously (because that was a joke), the Turtles' TV habits are somewhat disconcerting. Frequently they are seen watching horror movies or fantasy movies (in the middle of the day, suggesting they're seriously dedicated) in which freaks wreak havoc and pretty young girls scream a lot. In "The Four Musketurtles", for instance, the Turtles watch "Revenge of the Polkadot Monster V" and in "Michaelangelo's Birthday" they enjoy "Attack of the Killer Anchovies." The movie they watch in "Usagi Yojimbo" is named "The Radioactive Salamander that Nibbled New York." In "Catwoman From Channel 6", the Turtles are watching a horror movie and wondering who'll get hurt next. "Who cares," Raphael asks, "as long as she's a good screamer?" If viewers live out their dreams through television, what does it say about the Turtles that they like movies where freakish creatures hurt humans? It doesn't take a genius…

More evidence of a vindictive streak in the Turtles' viewing is seen in "Turtles on Trial." The Turtles are watching a wrestler named "The Terrible Turtle" (who they obviously admire) beat up some other guy, until Michaelangelo rushes in and switches over to "On Trial", in which viewers pass judgement on society's marginalised groups.

The Turtles' TV habits also illustrate their devotion to April. Whatever nonsense she's going on about, they tune in to watch. Considering her output includes reports on Library Week and the Fat Cabby Contest, they must be the most widely educated teenagers in town.

[2012 notes – I don't know what my problem with "Will and Grace" was. Also, what kind of TV channel allows the anchor to wear a skintight yellow jumpsuit to read the news?]

What's my Motivation?

Do the Turtles even WANT to catch Shredder?

Leonardo can't be all that upset that the Turtles' arch enemy always gets away, because catching him would lead to one hell of a dilemma. What would they do with him? Yes, they could always hand him over to the proper authorities, but what would be the point? Even if the Turtleverse cops weren't useless, would they be able to hold Shredder, even if Krang was unable to rescue him? And even if they could come up with a way of physically detaining him, what would they charge him with?

The principal witnesses to all of his crimes have been four humanoid turtles. Would they

be prepared to give evidence? Would Splinter allow them to? A competent defence might mention the fact that the Turtles aren't exactly law abiding citizens themselves. They are vigilantes, whose crimes include mass property destruction and the theft of military property, not to mention reckless driving.

So handing Shredder over to the authorities isn't a viable option? What's the alternative? Killing him? Not gonna happen. If there's one line the Turtles won't cross (maybe with the exception of Donatello), it's killing. And how could the Turtles justify killing Shredder anyway. He isn't a murderer and he isn't likely to become one, as his attempts to take over the world become increasingly laughable over time.

As for Bebop and Rocksteady, they're certainly not evil. If anything, they need psychiatric help (or maybe kindergarten education), not imprisonment or death.

Remember, there's no supervillain asylum in the Turtles' reality. They won't kill Shredder and there's no point handing him over to the police. So it's no surprise that sometimes, the Turtles' attempts to prevent Shredder's escape are downright shambolic...as if they're not really trying. Do they really want to catch him at all?

Even removing the problem of how to deal with Shredder, finally capturing him isn't in the Turtles' best interests. After all, the Turtles' raison d'etre is to fight evil and most of the time this means fighting Shredder. With him gone, what would they do all day? You can only pass so much time making smartass quips and eating pizza (trust me: I know). Defeating Shredder would lead to a complete identity crisis for the Turtles. Would their lives still have meaning? Would they be able to handle the alienation in their lives if their battles against "evil" didn't connect them to the world and take their minds off their problems?

Leonardo would probably be more severely affected by this than the others. After all, his identity within the group is to lead them against evil and without evil, this role becomes obsolete. The other Turtles would have more of a chance of finding other activities to fill their time, but Leo is much more single-minded. So can it really be a coincidence that Shredder's escapes, which must be a frequent source of relief for him, occur so often despite plenty of opportunities to catch him? Here are some examples to help you make up your mind....

1. In "2000 Leaks Under the City", Michaelangelo allows the villains to escape by snatching a remote off Donatello and taking control of the brainwashed shark which is chasing the bad guys.
2. The Turtles have a spectacularly lame reason for not pursuing Bebop and Rocksteady when they dive into a lake in "Beneath these Streets." "Dive into that muck?" Don asks. "Forget it." Pretty rich coming from someone who lives in a sewer.
3. The villains are particularly vulnerable at the end of "Cowabunga Shredhead" but, despite Shredder being unconscious, there is no attempt to catch him.
4. In "Enter:The Fly" the Turtles find Shredder mucking about on top of the World Trade Center, but don't pursue him when he runs inside the building, although it would be easy to trap him inside by sealing the exits.
5. The Turtles make no attempt to capture Shredder in "Return of the Technodrome", even though he's trapped under a tree.
6. In “The Making of Metalhead”, the villains are covered in concrete, but the Turtles do not attempt a capture.

For more evidence of the Turtles' attitude on this matter, see the "Blast From the Past" summary for evidence of how the Turtles' efforts have diminished over time. You might also want to see the summary of "Ninja Sword from Nowhere" for a description of the Turtles' lamest battle performance ever.

And the Turtles don't seem to be the only ones not taking this seriously...

Do Shredder and Krang even WANT to take over the world?

There are countless examples of Shredder and Krang failing in their plans because of laziness, stupidity, carelessness or simply failing to utilise the vast resources they command. And on occasions where they do find themselves in a position to win, they mess up bad.

There are too many examples to go into here, but you can read Krang and Shredder's character profiles to see what I'm talking about. Here are the highlights...

1. In "Corporate Raiders from Dimension X", Shredder has the Turtles defeated and tied up, but rather than killing them, he leaves them in a broom closet, which contains a saw the Turtles use to escape. With his plan not yet completed, would it really have been too much trouble for Shred to finish them off?
2. In "Leatherhead: Terror of the Swamp", Shredder doesn't even bother to stay and watch the Turtles die, leaving them in quicksand and assuming they won't escape. Unsurprisingly, they do.
3. When the Turtles dive into water in "New York's Shiniest", Shredder immediately assumes they've died and moves onto other matters. The Turtles are his greatest enemies and he hasn't even taken the time to find out what "amphibious" means?
4. Shredder's plan in "The Gang's All Here" hinges on being able to get the Turtles to eat his special cookies, which contain a chemical that will turn them into humans. If the Turtles have to eat the cookies for the plan to succeed, why not just put poison in them?
5. In "Turtles on Trial", the villains waste not one but TWO chances to destroy the Turtles. First, Krang calls Shredder and has him return to the Technodrome, even though Shredder has captured April and forced the Turtles to drop their weapons. Later in the episode, Shredder ruins Krang's chances of destroying his green nemeses by turning up at exactly the wrong time in order to gloat at Krang's inevitable failure.

Some of the most impressive performances from the villains occur take place in the last three episodes of season 3… by which point the Technodrome has been completely drained of power and their lives are in danger. In other words… they're perfectly competent when their lives depend on it. It's only when they're trying to "take over the world" that they appear completely unable to achieve anything significant.

So if the Turtles don't really want to put an end to Krang and Shredder's scheming for good and the villains don't want to destroy the boys in green and take over the world, what are they all playing at? There's only one possible answer.

Game of Life

If there's one thing that Splinter, the Turtles and Krang and the henchmutants all have in common it's that none of them have the option of getting a job in the Gap and living normal

lives. They're all outcasts, alienated and misunderstood. Of course, the only way they can deal with this is to focus on anything other than the bad things in their lives.

The battle of "good vs. evil" gives them all something to live for. It occupies them and shapes their belief systems. As heroes and saviours, the Turtles are given a much needed ego boost which compensates somewhat for the rest of the world viewing them as freaks.

As villains, Krang and the henchmutants are given purpose, challenged and kept occupied. As for Shredder, he may not be an outcast like the other participants in this "battle", but it does occupy his time and appeal to his megalomaniac need to boss people around.

When you understand the importance of this "battle" for both sides, you can begin to see why either side would be reluctant to end the battle for good, even if this meant claiming the final victory. Success would transform their lives into empty, worthless existences.

As such, both sides have entered into an unspoken agreement not to attempt to defeat the other side permanently. This explains why the Turtles never seriously attempt to capture Shredder and why the villains never try too hard to destroy the Turtles. Of course, since both sides have decided not to pursue overall victory, the "battle" between them has degenerated into little more than a game.

Further proof that killing time has more to do with the Turtles' actions than morality is seen in the way the Turtles pursue Shredder even when he isn't doing anything wrong or when it is futile to do so. In "Camera Bugged", for example, the Turtles and Shredder are both trapped inside a special alien camera which contains people, monuments and scenery photographed by an alien visitor to New York. Although they are all trapped, the Turtles choose to chase Shredder through the various locations in the camera rather than work together to find a way out.

In "Return of the Fly", the Turtles go to do battle with Shredder after he commits the heinous crime of trying to take water from a reservoir. Isn't that what reservoirs are for? They can't possibly object to Shredder procuring essential resources like water, so why do the Turtles pursue him and start a fight? Purely out of boredom, most likely.

The importance of the game to Krang is reflected in his deeply ambivalent attitude towards the Turtles. Although he has reason to hate them, their participation in the game is all that keeps him going. This attitude is displayed in "Turtles on Trial", where Krang cannot decide what device to use to destroy the Turtles. He dismisses an atomic destabiliser as "too messy" and a freeze ray as "too quick."

Of course, it may be argued that the fact that both sides are merely playing a game is more reassuring than distressing. After all, if neither side is playing for keeps, then nobody gets hurt, right? Wrong. This game is anything but harmless.

Victims of the Game

Of course, for the Turtles, the point of playing the game is to give their lives meaning. That doesn't necessarily mean that the game has no negative effects on them. Raphael, for example, exhibits bullying behaviour which is most likely a result of fear arising from the risks he faces daily. Michaelangelo is a victim of this bullying and his general depression is not alleviated by the fact that the game places constraints on him, preventing him from

performing to the best of his abilities. This contributes to his self-esteem problem and resulting attention seeking behaviour.

Both Mike and Raph demonstrate their frustration with the game in "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King", when both of them register their opposition to practising on a sunny day. Raphael thinks the whole thing is pointless, whilst Michaelangelo believes they should be making the most of the great weather. However grateful they may be to the game for occupying them sometimes, it's clear that there are occasions on which the Turtles would rather it didn't demand so much of their time.

The game has a different effect on Donatello and Leonardo, but it's a similarly unhealthy one. Both of them seem willing to cross lines in pursuit of victory, as demonstrated by Leo's recklessness and Don's willingness to kill Baxter in "Bye Bye Fly."

Baxter Stockman, of course, is the only person who has died because of the game. And he had his fair share of suffering before his death too. After being bossed around and bullied by Shredder, he was thrown into a disintegrator and almost killed by Krang. The accident that saved Baxter's life almost transformed him into a giant fly, just as much an outcast as any of the Turtles. Baxter then died whilst he was attempting to flee into space and trying to leave the game for good. Undoubtedly, Baxter has suffered more than anyone else as a victim of the game.

He's not the only "villain", however, who has paid a price for his participation. Rocksteady and Bebop are also victims of the game. When they agreed to work for Shredder, they had no idea that they would be transformed into mutants, let alone the rest of what they were getting themselves into. Constantly bullied by Shredder, the henchmutants are fellow outcasts and the Turtles could easily convert them to allies if they ever reached out to them. Of course, this goes contrary to the rules of the game, so it never happens.

The other victims of the game are the people of New York, the battleground of the game. Although we've never seen any civilians die, massive property damages occur in every episode and, given the things that they've seen, New Yorkers must live in constant fear. Moreover, whilst the local media is focused on the pointless battles between the their enemies, more important news is neglected

[2012 notes – of course I don't really believe that the good guys and bad guys were really involved in a cynical manipulative game-playing kind of thing. This bit was simply my attempt to explain all of Shredder's convenient escapes and the softening of the Turtles ninja skills over time. However, there were PLENTY of examples to help back up this weird little theory]

Pizza: Backbone of the Nation

Turtle Cocaine

If you possess any memory of the original late 80s/early 90s TMNT craze, you'll remember that every pizza supplier in the world was looking to get in on the action. Supermarkets would sticker green turtle footprints all over the floor to lead kids to the frozen pizza section, take out places would print up copyright infringing leaflets to invite you to partake in THE food fad of the time and Pizza Hut whipped up the embarrassing "Coming Out of their Shells" tour to cash in (concept: take four unemployed musicians, put them in turtle suits and send them around America to sing songs telling you that "Pizza power makes

you feel alright." And so on).

Whether or not this had any effect on the global pizza economy, I'm not sure. But one thing was clear…if you liked the Turtles, you ate pizza. Or tried to. Whether you liked the goddamn stuff or not.

It's particularly ironic that TMNT sparked a pizza craze amongst kids when you examine some of the messages given in the episodes regarding pizza. Pizza, you see, is a drug. Witness Michaelangelo's addiction. It's primarily an attention grabbing device, but it's an addiction, nonetheless. In "Cowabunga Shredhead", we see Mike cowering in a cupboard after a pizza binge (not the first, either), clearly ashamed of his actions. After some hypnotherapy from Splinter, Mike is cured, but the absence of pizza still leaves a big hole in his life. He's bored, he has nothing to do, he has nowhere to go and sulk except the pizzeria he usually hangs out in…pizza is his life. It's probably because he knows this that Splinter decides to reverse the hypnotherapy at the end of the episode, leaving Mike as pizza-whipped as ever.

It's not just Michaelangelo that consumes vast quantities of the stuff, either. None of the Turtles ever seem to eat anything else. It's not just food, for them, it's a social and cultural activity. In "Case of the Killer Pizzas", Shredder uses this fondness against them, tempting them out to a pizza tasting (which they see as a major social event) and then trying to hand them pizzas with monster eggs in them.

In "Corporate Raiders from Dimension X", the Turtles decide not to interfere in a wave of business kidnappings. Until worldwide pizza supplies are threatened. Someone comments "they're hitting us where we live." The pizza issue clinches it and the Turtles save the day. But the message given is that an attack on pizza is an attack on the Turtles. It's a non-negotiable aspect of their life that they're not willing to compromise. Why?

Perhaps, for the Turtles, pizza is not just a foodstuff. For one thing, we don't know the effect that it has on the physiology of mutant turtles. It's entirely possible that the Turtles are getting high off pizza. The fact that they generally tend to combine savoury and sweet toppings on the same pizza (e.g. marshmallow and pepperoni) may indicate that the crucial issue for them isn't taste. Mike's addicted to it, they eat it when they're not hungry, they use it as a means to cheer themselves up, it's seen as a reward, a social activity and a means of self-expression…if pizza isn't a drug to them, it's clearly a metaphor for substance abuse….

Why would the Turtles engage in substance abuse? Why wouldn't they? They're teenage alienated freaks, who risk their lives daily for a world that couldn't give a crap. But, of course, you can't show heroes shooting up in a kiddie cartoon…so instead we have pizza. Mostly, it seems fairly harmless, but on occasion their indulgence leads to addiction or puts them in difficult situations. Just like real drugs.

I knew I never liked the stuff.

Sausage and syrup special

What does your favourite pizza topping say about you? Not much, you may think. But consider this: when you're in an unadventurous mood, do you go for the sausage and syrup special or the margherita? Pizza toppings can tell you a lot about a person's personality.

The Turtles' taste in pizza seems a little contradictory in nature. In "Super Bebop and Mighty Rocksteady", the Turtles partake of pickled herring and caramel fudge pizza, followed by marshmallow and asparagus pizza later in the episode. In "Green With Jealousy", they're eating peanut butter and clams pizza, followed by chocolate chilli pizza later on. In "Case of the Hot Kimono", we learn about their tastes for butterscotch, onion and anchovies pizza, as well as chocolate fudge, peanuts and bean sprouts. In "The Big Blow Out" Mike heads towards a pizzeria for pepperoni and hot fudge pizza.

Notice a theme? The Turtles always combine sweet toppings with savoury toppings. Never one or the other, always both. You know why? Well, I'll tell you.

The Turtles are neither one thing nor the other. They aren't human and they're aren't turtles. They're a freakish hybrid. Like their pizza toppings. So the Turtles are using their choice of pizzas to express this duality. The sweet toppings reflect their human side, since the Turtles view humanity as more indulgent and privileged. The savoury toppings reflect their more practical side and nutritional needs – which are associated with survival, a primal animal instinct.

In combining sweet and savoury toppings on the same pizza, the Turtles express their confusion about their own identities. Then again, they are teenagers, so maybe they just eat those disgusting things for a dare.

[2012 notes – I have now changed my stance on pizza. It is awesome]

Women in the TMNT's world

The Career Bitch and the Man Eater

So…women in the Turtle's world…not many of them, are there? Even female guest characters are a rarity. The main two female characters are Channel 6 employees, April and Irma.

The character of Irma, generally, is not the kind of role model you'd really want in a children's cartoon. The point of the character is unclear. Since she doesn't engage in heroism and usually isn't integral to the plot, we have to assume that she's primarily there for comic relief. But there's nothing funny about this character at all. Irma's entire life appears to revolve around the search for the perfect man. She doesn't appear to get any job satisfaction from her clerical job at Channel 6 or to have any friends other than work colleague April. She rarely talks about anything except men, marriage or weddings. Like a Jane Austen character, Irma believes that, once she has a man, her life will be complete. Other than this, her character is principally defined by clumsiness and dizziness. You couldn't come up with a worse role model for young girls watching and her desperation to find a husband seems anything but funny.

April, at least, seems like a more modern character. She's a high flying career woman, dedicated to grabbing "hot" news stories and letting the truth be known. But does that necessarily make her a liberated woman? Not really. Although April doesn't have the traditional shackles of marriage or family to contend with, her career has replaced this with new shackles. April is a slave to her career as much as any housewife is to her husband. It seems to take up all of her time and her only friends, Irma and the Turtles, are acquaintances she meets via work. April is defined by her job and, like any woman, has to

be looking her best at all times in order to have a realistic aim of holding onto it.

So in April and Irma we have women in modern and more traditional roles. But that doesn't change the fact that both of them have to answer to men. In "The Old Switcheroo", for example, April bemoans Irma's dedication to the opposite sex, claiming that she'd never jump whenever a man calls. A second later, her boss yells for her and she does just that. And, whilst Irma tarts herself up to attract a mate, April has to keep herself pretty to advance her career, even though big nosed men like Vernon have no such concerns. Although April and Irma want different things, they both have to play by men's rules.

And both of them spend much of their time either getting in the Turtles' way or requiring rescue.

On the whole, women are depicted as being rather pointless. And nothing said by any of the characters counteracts this view. In "The Turtle Terminator", a robot version of Irma replies to the battle cry of "Turtles fight with honour!" with "And women fight with handbags!" This reinforces the idea of women being a little useless when it comes to violence. In "Catwoman From Channel 6", April temporarily becomes a catlike creature. Whether this is some attempt to underline "catty" behaviour in women is unclear, but at the end of the episode, when April is whining about her nails, Raphael comments "Yep, she's back to being a woman alright." Earlier in the same episode, Raph is enjoying a horror movie, principally because he is looking forward to the next screaming female victim. All of this underlines the view of women as vain, weak victims.

However, when you consider the treatment of some male characters in the show, it becomes unclear whether the writers are critical of women, or just humanity in general. It may be that the principal female characters are useless, not because they are women, but because all humans are in this world…

[2012 notes – this is probably the only bit of Dissected that I actually really agree with. The depiction of April and Irma was actually quite offensive, cartoon or not]

Technology: Friend or Foe?

The Good, the Bad and the Pointless

The fact that I'm typing this on a computer for the purposes of display over the Internet should tell you something: I don't have a problem with technology. But after watching some episodes of TMNT, you have to wonder if some of the writers do.

But before we get into that…in the interests of balance, we should examine some of the things that are made possible by technology… on countless occasions, Donatello's inventions or devices save the day. The Turtlevan and the Turtleblimp are seemingly the most useful things he's done, and sometimes (though not often) devices he makes for one specific purpose actually do what they're supposed to.

Yay for him. On far more occasions, we've seen the potential for technological wonders to help the bad guys grind us all to dust. Take the Technodrome for example. It's so technologically advanced, it even has the prefix "Techno" in the title (unless the giant fortress doubles as a Eurodance venue on weekends). It's the exemplification of what technology can do and it's also a big ball of destruction, protecting evil doers like Krang and Shredder whilst posing a threat to the entire world. In "Return of the Technodrome", it

succeeds in reaching Earth and manages to drain energy from all over America.

Thankfully, like most impressive machines, the Technodrome eats up so much electricity even sitting around doing nothing that Shredder seems to spend most of season 3 looking for various ways to power the thing. In a way, the Technodrome is a mixed blessing because at least whilst Shredder wastes time trying to find a power source, he can't apply himself to other evil schemes.

So it would seem that the value of technology is determined by those who wield it. But there are some exceptions to this rule…technology developed for "good" purposes can often be easily usurped for evil. Look at the police robots in "New York's Shiniest", for example. Despite the good intentions of the police force, Shredder and Krang are easily able to adapt the design to create an army of secret robots who bring destruction to the entire city. And in "Beneath the Sewers", a medi-laser designed to heal is stolen by the bad guys and used to harm Splinter, who is left in a coma after Shredder's attack.

Another example of "good" technology being used for evil purposes occurs in "Turtles, Turtles Everywhere." When the city's garbage disposal system is replaced by an entirely computer-controlled system (co-ordinated by super computer Dump 1000), Shredder is easily able to take control and utilise the system to attempt to kidnap the Turtles.

The factor that unites these three shining examples of good technology gone bad is that they were all developed with capitalist concerns in mind. The new garbage disposal system introduced in "Turtles, Turtles Everywhere" was clearly developed to cut overheads such as staff wages. By cutting humans out of the process, the developers left the system wide open to abuse. The robots in "New York's Shiniest" can't have been programmed too well given the ease with which Shredder takes control and it seems as though the developers must have taken shortcuts to reduce costs. It's even possible that they were designed with a different market in mind as the prototype, Rex 1, acts more like a bodyguard than a police officer. And why would the Medi-Laser in "Beneath the Sewers" even have a reverse setting if it wasn't designed with military applications in mind? The thing about technological innovation is that it often goes where the money is.

Also worrying is the question of where devotion to technology can lead someone. Look at poor old Baxter Stockman. He was let down by everyone and everything in his life – except technology. So when a sentient computer on a spaceship offers to become friends in "Bye Bye Fly", he has no hesitation in placing his complete trust in it. The spaceship then breaks up in space, with him on board, leaving Baxter to certain doom. You could say he lived by the sword and died by the sword (or laser. Whatever).

Donatello is similarly committed to technology. In "Leatherhead Meets the Rat King", he urges Leonardo that technology, not strategy, will save the day, when the two Turtles take on Raph and Mike in a training exercise. Don has egg on his face when his "incredibly clever" garbage launcher is destroyed by one neat hit from Michaelangelo. So Don's over-reliance on technology could potentially lead him into some dangerous situations.

If there's a message about technology given by these episodes, it's this: technology has no loyalty. Whoever designs it, whatever they design it for, there's always a way it can be used for evil. Thankfully, as anyone with a computer knows, there's also always a way for it to go wrong.

The Terrible Teens

Why Teenagers?

Think about it. You've got your neat little "Mutant Ninja Turtles" concept all wrapped up and someone wonders what age the heroes should be. Why teenagers?

Could it have been insurance against charges of irresponsibility? Kids engaging in the kind of vigilante action the Turtles partake in is risky ground for a cartoon and adult involvement in their schemes would act as a sanction and say "this is a legitimate way to behave." As it is, pretty much any criticisms of the Turtles' behaviour can be countered with "but they're teenagers."

The fact that the Turtles are teenagers is probably a massive selling point for the cartoon. Pre-teens and adults alike often wish they were teenagers, although teenagers themselves may wish they were anything but. This is a nice metaphor for the Turtles' existence. Whilst fans may THINK they'd like to be Ninja Turtles themselves and parents may wish to wield similar influence over their kids as the TMNT craze did, the ironic thing is that the Turtles actually hate being freaks and outcasts.

So the whole mutant turtle thing is actually a metaphor for adolescence. Like normal teenagers, the Turtles have reason to feel betrayed and marginalised by their bodies. The feeling that you are the only person in the world who feels a certain way is all a part of growing up.

One episode in particular relating to this metaphor is "The Gang's All Here", in which Michaelangelo decides it might be cool to be a human and eats some cookies designed to trigger such a transformation. The metaphor is made explicit when Mike says "I'm changing again. I wish my body would make up its mind." As in adolescence, Mike goes through an identity crisis and feels like his body is changing beyond his control, before coming to accept what he is.

Like normal teenagers, the Turtles experience depression and use various ways to cope (see things on pizza and Donatello's techno-fetish, for example). And like normal teenagers, the Turtles sometimes resent the responsibility placed upon them. In "Beneath the Sewers", the Turtles slack off when things are quiet and go see a movie instead of patrolling the streets, resulting in disaster.

But the worst part of adolescence is often coming to terms with the fact that you are not as special or unique as you think. The human teenagers in this show suffer from this problem. In "The Fifth Turtle", Zack is a fourteen year old struggling with his own identity who seeks to escape his own life by dressing up as a Turtle and fighting crime. When Raphael is incredulous that anyone would want to emulate the Turtles, Zack replies "You wouldn't wanna be me either."

Zack's brother Walt and his friend Caitlin have similar problems. In "The Missing Map", Walt is jealous of his brother, who the Turtles clearly hold in a high regard, and steals a document pouch from the Turtles, seemingly for no other purpose than to make him feel better and gain a cool souvenir of his visit to the lair. In "The Great Boldini", Caitlin shows herself to be as reckless as Zack when the two of them follow a suspicious man reasoning that if he really is up to no good then "they'll be heroes." Despite warnings in the past regarding their safety, the kids can't resist the appeal of being seen to be extraordinary.

All in all, it seems adolescence is all about accepting that things really are as crappy as they seem.

[2012 notes – I wrote this bit because I felt the “teenager” angle should be covered. As you can see, it is quite weak]

What are the TMNT exactly?

Sounds like a stupid question no? C'mon, everybody sing: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, heroes in a halfshell, turtlepower!

Wow, that was fun. But what exactly does it tell us? Well, the TMNT use the term "mutant turtles" rather than "human mutants" or "turtle-human hybrids." The emphasis is clearly on their being turtles; they don't feel any kinship with humanity. This is indicated by the fact that the Turtles generally walk around naked (except when in disguise) and display anti-human prejudice on many occasions. For them, humans definitely fall into the category of "the other."

But, of course, they aren't turtles in the conventional sense. They talk like humans. They walk like humans. They partake in human culture (e.g. watching *TV*) and every episode, they risk their asses to save humanity. Moreover, the TMNT don't even share some basic things with other turtles. In both "April Foolish" and "Splinter No More", the Turtles refuse to try Splinter's sushi because they find the idea of eating raw fish revolting. Yet raw fish is part of a turtle's natural diet in the wild.

The Turtles don't even enjoy splashing about in water very much. In "Attack of Big Macc", Michaelangelo doesn't want to go out in the rain and when Raphael reminds him "you're a turtle, you love water," Mike refutes this notion. And when Mike is about to go out in the rain in "Enter the Rat King", the other Turtles practically beg him not to go outside in the bad weather.

As creatures capable of speech, martial arts and all that business, the TMNT are clearly biologically closer to humans than turtles. So why "mutant turtles" then?

Well, it probably has something to do with the whole anti-human racism thing they've got going on. The TMNT are forced to live in the sewers, scraping by however they can and outcast from the world around them, because human prejudice would prevent them ever being able to live normal lives. The TMNT have never had any such grief from the other species they originate from: turtles. Turtles, of course, are not capable of forming a mob and torching the castle or any other standard witch-hunt style ostracising activity. In fact, they don't do much at all except swim about and hibernate occasionally. It's very hard to be offended by them.

The TMNT have no memory of being normal turtles; they were only babies when this was the case. So, of course, it's easy for them to be nostalgic about it. Whereas humanity is all around them. Its drawbacks surround them and are contained within them. And deep down, the Turtles recognise that, like it or not, they are a part of it.

Why the hell else would they risk their lives every episode in order to protect it?

[2012 notes – I retrospectively approve of my decision to start this section with a singalong

of the theme tune]

Episode guide

Season 1

Turtle Tracks

Synopsis

This is part one of the “Heroes in a Half Shell” arc that opens the series.

We begin with an overview of the state of play in New York City. The area is in the midst of a crime wave and investigative reporter **April O’Neil** has been assigned to look into it for Channel 6 news. Hi tech equipment has been stolen from science labs across town and April suspects the thieves may be ninjas. Whilst April and her camera crew are staking out a laboratory that may be the thieves’ next target, a group of local hoodlums approach. April’s camera crew runs and she is left alone to face the thugs. Running into the sewers, she finds herself cornered, only to be saved by four shadowy figures emerging from the shadows. They fight off April’s attackers.

If you don’t know who the “four shadowy figures” are, you need brain medicine.

Upon seeing that her saviours are giant turtles, April faints. The Turtles take her back to their sewer lair, where she meets **Splinter**, a giant rat who tells her the origin of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Once upon a time in Japan, a man called Hamoto Yoshi was part of a ninja clan known as the Foot. Yoshi was banished from the clan after Oruko Saki, one of his students, made it appear that Yoshi had plotted to kill the clan’s leaders. Yoshi fled to the USA and was forced to live in the sewers, where he befriended rats. One day, a young boy managed to drop four pet turtles into the sewers and Yoshi befriended them too.

In Japan, the Foot Clan became an “army of crime” under Oruko Saki’s leadership. Meanwhile, Yoshi was wandering around the sewers when he found his turtle friends covered in green slime. This slime turned out to a powerful mutagen. This mutagen causes anyone who touches it to take on the form of whatever animal they have most recently come into contact with. So the Turtles became humanised due to their contact with Yoshi, whilst Yoshi took on the form of a rat, since he’d most recently been in contact with his rat friends.

The Turtles were brought up by Yoshi, who trained them in martial arts. He named them after Renaissance artists: **Leonardo**, **Donatello**, **Raphael** and **Michaelangelo**. Yoshi took on the nickname “Splinter” due to his proficiency at chopping wood with his martial arts expertise. The Turtles are determined to find out who left the mutagen in the sewers, so they can force them to turn Splinter back into a normal human.

April is suspicious that the Turtles, who are trained ninjas, may be the thieves she has been investigating. The Turtles decide they can’t let her leave, since they don’t want her making their existence public. They are not too thrilled with the prospect of being carved up by curious vivisectionists. The Turtles agree to help April find the real villains and she agrees to help them find the source of the mutagen. At the crime scene, they find a book of

matchsticks from the Ninja Pizzeria. Disguised with trench coats and fedoras, the Turtles head over to the pizzeria and start stuffing their faces.

Meanwhile, April scouts around and finds Manhattan Security Services, where she hears a receptionist sending some ninjas to a laboratory which is “just waiting to be cleaned out.” April calls Channel 6 from a local phone booth, but is soon abducted by three ninjas.

The Turtles start to wonder where April is and go looking for her. They soon find her wallet and press pass. Following the trail, they find her bag on the roof of an abandoned building and find April there, tied to a chair. Along with an army of ninjas, who have led the Turtles into a trap. Going into battle, the Turtles soon learn that their foes are in fact robots.

The man commanding the robots is watching from afar, and recognises the Turtles’ fighting style. He realises that Hamoto Yoshi may still be alive (10 brownie points go to the first person to guess who he is. And minus ten thousand for those who don’t). The Turtles defeat the ninja robots, rescue April and pursue the robots as they flee. The robots escape, but the Turtles are still being watched by their master. He orders his soldiers to flood the building and the Turtles escape just before it explodes due to water pressure.

At the Turtles’ lair, Splinter looks at the uniform of the ninjas and realises they are members of the Foot. He is convinced that his old enemy, Oruko Saki, is behind the nights’ events.

Themes

If you’ve never seen the first season of “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles”, do yourself a favour and track it down. These five episodes are completely different in tone to any of the other series, reflecting perhaps the need to soften the edges of the TMNT mythos to make it suitable for kiddie viewing. This may be a prime example of capitalist concerns taking priority over creative ones.

The most noticeable change between this season and the ones that followed is the level of ninjitsu expertise that the Turtles display in these early episodes. To put it succinctly: they kick ass. In subsequent seasons, the Turtles appear to be merely treading water in their battles with Shredder. Nobody ever gets caught and nothing ever really changes. It’s more of a game than a genuine battle between good and evil. In the first season, things are different. Perhaps because it’s so new to them and they have no way of knowing how dangerous the situation really is, the Turtles are at their most fearsome here.

Not only do the Turtles make short work of the ninja robots, they do it with style. And they actually pursue the Foot Soldiers as they retreat, something they usually make excuses not to bother doing. Only when the building they’re standing on is about to explode do they actually give in and head home.

One thing that hasn’t changed from the first episode is the Turtles’ bizarre taste in pizza toppings. When April awakes in the Turtles’ lair, Michaelangelo is offering around the following combinations: pepperoni and ice cream, jellybeans and mushrooms and anchovies with peanut butter. Already the pattern of combining sweet and savoury toppings is established, reflecting perhaps the dual nature of the Turtles’ themselves. Stuck between human and animal lifestyles, they can prioritise luxury and practicality at the same time.

Another thing established early on is the fact that the Turtles are more human than they initially appear. When Splinter begins tucking in to his sushi, Donatello responds with “How can you eat raw fish? Yuch!” Clearly they’ve come a long way since the days when raw fish were their ideal dish.

This is, of course, the first time we hear the Turtles’ origin story, and inconsistencies are immediately apparent. For example, why did the Foot Clan so readily expel Yoshi/Splinter if he were in fact the rightful leader? They could have asked him for an explanation, at the very least. If they genuinely believed he had plotted murder, why did they let him live? Why did Yoshi have no other option but to live in the sewers? All of these questions could lead one to suspect that Splinter isn’t being entirely truthful towards the Turtles.

It’s interesting to note that the Ninja Pizzeria is in the same area as the Ninja Dentist and Ninja Shoe Repair. And when the Turtles are first spotted by a bag lady on the streets of New York, she pulls out a machine guns and starts shooting at them. Clearly, this version of New York is very different to the one in the tourist brochures.

Characters

This episode sees the debut of a host of memorable characters, but one of them stands out more than most. Yes, you guessed it. I’m talking about **Vernon**. Poor old Vernon only appears for a couple of seconds, as one of April’s camera crew, but he immediately grabs your attention for one main reason. Namely: what’s up with the butch manly voice? In subsequent seasons, Vernon speaks with a faux-posh accent and sounds distinctly camp, but in this first episode, he’s speaking like a tough guy. Perhaps Vernon only acquired the posh accent later in his career, when he gave up on being behind the camera and decided he wanted to be a news anchor. Could his voice be part of his onscreen persona and constant attempts to further his career?

From the very first episode, **April**’s priorities are firmly established. Her reaction to being attacked by thugs is summed up by the line “This is great, I must really be onto something hot if they’re trying to kill me!” Within minutes of meeting the Turtles, she is ready to sell them out by going live on TV and accusing them of the robberies even though she has no evidence. Remember, this is just after they have saved her from the thugs who attacked her. She can’t even wait for them whilst they eat their dinner, opting instead to go and snoop around on her own, leading to the very first time that the Turtles find themselves in danger thanks to April’s glory-hunting. Start as you mean to go on, April.

Raphael displays the group’s attitude towards humanity in this first episode. “She’s gonna help us?” he asks when April volunteers her help in locating the source of the mutagen. “So?” April retorts. “So no offence lady, but you’re a human,” is Raphael’s answer. Clearly, the Turtles had this attitude towards humanity before they even met their arch-nemesis **Shredder**.

Enter the Shredder

Synopsis

This episode is part two of the “Heroes in a Half Shell” arc.

The Turtles are sleeping when **April** wakes them up. After practising their skills and eating breakfast, they go along with her to look for the Foot compound, which should be located

under the Manhattan Security Services building destroyed in "Turtle Tracks." The compound is not there, which leads April to believe it is mobile.

In the compound itself, otherwise known as the Technodrome, **Shredder** is ranting over the defeat of the Foot Soldiers by the Turtles when he is summoned by **Krang**. Krang is a pink alien brain who wants to know why Shredder hasn't yet provided him with a robotic body in return for all the advanced technology Krang has given Shredder. Shredder tells Krang that defeating Yoshi/Splinter and the Turtles is his priority. Krang offers Shredder a solution: why doesn't he use the mutagen to mutate his own people?

At the Turtles lair, Splinter is told that the Foot compound has vanished and he goes along with the Turtles to look for it. Meanwhile, April checks in with the Channel 6 newsroom. Over at the city zoo, two of Shredders' robots kidnap a rhino and a warthog. I'm sure you know where this is going.

As Splinter and the Turtles draw closer to the Technodrome, Shredder looks for two volunteers from the gang of punks who tangled with the Turtles in "Turtle Tracks." Two ugly brutes named **Rocksteady** and **Bebop** step forward.

At Channel 6, April's boss reassigns her to the story on the zoo robbery. The Turtles go to meet her on the surface, whilst Splinter stays underground. He soons find the Technodrome and is captured by one of Shredder's robots. Meanwhile, the Turtles go to the zoo and followed the trail to the Technodrome. They enter and face a series of obstacles, including the walls closing in on them and a battle against robots, before they find Splinter tied up in.

Enter the Shredder (ho ho ho). He congratulates the Turtles on passing his "tests" and invites them to join the Foot Clan. He tells them that they owe him because he was responsible for their mutation – he put the mutagen in the sewer to kill Yoshi. The Turtles refuse his offer, so Shredder unleases Bebop and Rocksteady on them. The Turtles defeat the henchmutants, rescue Splinter and make their escape.

They are followed by Bebop and Rocksteady, who start shooting laser guns at them. They are eventually defeated when the Turtles manage to trap them in one of the cages at the zoo. April shows up just on time to get the henchmutants on tape. Just after April and the Turtles leave, a robot burrows up to the surface and frees Bebop and Rocksteady from their cage.

Themes

There isn't much in the way of themes or character insights in this episode, since it's mainly preoccupied with set-up for future stories.

However, we do get our first glimpse into the Turtles' daily morning routine. They practice their ninja skills before breakfast, where they eat either cereal or pizza. Michaelangelo has choco pops on pizza. Is it fair of Splinter to have them practice on an empty stomach? This is an early indication of the level of discipline he demands of the Turtles.

Characters

From **Krang**'s very first appearance in this episode, it's clear that there's no great trust between him and **Shredder**. Although Shredder is happy to use the advanced technology

that Krang provides, he won't provide Krang with his robot body until the Turtles are defeated. Or maybe that's just an excuse. If Shredder had been capable of handling the Turtles alone, it's possible Krang would never have got his robot body at all. Krang points out that when he has his body, nobody will be able to stop him. "Including me," Shredder points out. It's understandable that giving Krang the means to crush him is not at the top of his priorities.

Incidentally, Shredder's delusions of grandeur are also in evidence here. When Krang calls him "Saki", he objects and demands to be called "The Shredder." Yeah, THE Shredder. Whether he later dropped the "the" for expediency or just realised how ridiculous he sounds is unclear.

Finally, we also meet **Bebop** and **Rocksteady** this episode. They volunteer for the mutation gig (with no idea what they're actually volunteering for) when Shredder tempts them with the prospect of revenge against the Turtles. Whom they have met precisely once prior to this. When you weigh up the long term commitment to being outcasts that they've now acquired against the fact that they might have soon forgotten about the Turtles otherwise, you have to conclude that pride definitely came before a fall for these two.

A Thing About Rats

Synopsis

This episode is part three of the "Heroes in a Half Shell" arc.

In the Turtles' lair, **Splinter** is still recovering from the events of "Enter the Shredder." The Turtles vow to force Shredder to change Splinter back into a human once more, and leave to find the Technodrome whilst **April** stays with Splinter.

Shredder has relocated to a deserted mansion in the city, and has sent out a horde of mechanical bugs to seek out a new weapon he can use against the Turtles. One of these bugs finds **Baxter Stockman**, a scientist who is demonstrating his new invention at Ajax Pest Control company. The invention is called a "Mouser" and is a small robotic creature designed to attack rats. Baxter is ejected from the building because his invention would put the company out of business, but Shredder decides to seek him out and make him an offer.

The Turtles continue to search for the Technodrome whilst Bebop and Rocksteady get the supplies that Baxter needs to build a central control for the Mousers. At the Technodrome, Shredder uses a computer to analyse and reproduce the prototype Mouser. He is interrupted by **Krang**, who wants to know why Shredder still hasn't built him a robotic body. Shredder makes excuses once again – saying that the Turtles are his priority and he wants the "honour" of destroying them personally.

At the Turtles lair, April decides to go home and leave Splinter to meditate in peace. He is soon attacked by the first batch of Mousers. The Turtles return just in time to help him defeat them. **Donatello** finds Baxter Stockman's name on one of the components of the trashed robots and Splinter suggests that April may be able to help track down the inventor. Meanwhile, Shredder is unhappy that his first twelve Mousers were defeated, but confident that the next twelve thousand will have better luck.

At April's apartment, April finds Baxter's address using her computer files, and sends the

Turtles on their way. Meanwhile, Baxter has finished his work for Shredder and heads home. Shredder thinks that Baxter knows too much, so he sends some Foot Soldiers after him. Then he despatches the completed twelve thousand mousers to destroy Splinter and the Turtles.

The Turtles arrive at Baxter's apartment just in time to save him from the Foot Soldiers. They tie Baxter to a lamp post and persuade him to tell them everything about the Mousers and Shredder's involvement. The Turtles take Baxter's' van and head to Shredder's deserted mansion, before changing their minds and realising that they had better stop the twelve thousand Mousers on their way to Splinter first. April and Splinter manage to hold off the Mousers until the Turtles arrive, but soon the lair becomes structurally unsafe due to all the robotic chomping going on. It collapses just after Splinter, April and the Turtles escape.

Donatello concocts a plan – he can make a new control for the Mousers, but somebody needs to shut down the central control before it will work. **Michaelangelo** is chosen to sneak into the mansion and do this job, but is soon captured by Shredder. Shredder recalls all the Mousers to attack the Turtles waiting outside. Whilst Shredder is busy, Mike is rescued by none other than Krang! Krang not only lets him go, but also tells him where the master control is. Mike then finds Shredder and taunts him into firing a laser gun blast at the central control, allowing Donatello to reprogramme the remaining Mousers.

The Mousers attack the mansion and Shredder is forced to retreat to the Technodrome. Meanwhile, Michaelangelo tells the other Turtles how he was rescued by a "talking brain."

Themes

This is one of the first episodes where the spectre of capitalism rears its ugly head. Baxter would have gone on to become a perfectly legitimate business person if only Ajax Pest Control hadn't rejected his invention for reasons of self-interest. Although the Mousers could successfully wipe out the city's vermin problem, Ajax are more concerned with long term sales targets, which leaves Baxter to look for an alternative market for his invention.

Defenders of capitalism like to point out that capitalism is valuable for generating innovation – but capitalist concerns mean that Baxter has to seek a more unorthodox method of funding. Hence, he becomes entangled with Shredder, leading to the destruction of his own life and the end of his attempts to be a legitimate businessman.

This is also the first time we've seen "good" technology usurped for "evil" purposes. Baxter designs the Mousers for an admirable reason – to wipe out the city's vermin problem, but they are put to a more sinister purpose by Shredder. Having said that, maybe Baxter was only concerned about money all along – after all chomping up rats in metallic teeth is a fairly inhumane way to kill them.

When the Turtles make their way to April's apartment, it becomes clear that they haven't been houseguests much in the past. Their behaviour is unusual, to say the least. Leonardo starts using her belongings for target practice, Raphael floods the bathroom and Michaelangelo burns pizza in her stove. Clearly, good manners are not amongst the many things that Splinter has taught them.

Characters

This is the first time we meet **Baxter Stockman**, who is supposedly an intelligent and gifted man. So why would he try to market a product like the Mousers to a pest control company? Clearly, it's not in their interests to wipe out the rat population entirely. And even if they did kill all the rats, someone would still have to go and pick up all the remains, which would represent an even bigger threat to public health. Didn't Baxter do any research before he started making the prototype? This is typical of Baxter. In his rush to become successful and impress everybody, he forgets important details, such as whether anybody will want the damn machines he's spending all his time on.

Once again, **Shredder** makes feeble excuse not to build a robot body for Krang this episode. He tells Krang he wants the "honour" of destroying the Turtles himself, but what is so honourable about using twelve thousand robots designed by someone else? Clearly, Shredder has no intention of building Krang's robot body for him at this stage.

We also get a glimpse into Shredder's motivation when he sends out the Mousers with the words "It feels so good to be so bad!" Shredder has never really believed that he's in the right or that his reasons are noble – for him it's all about the rush that comes from power and bad behaviour.

Frustrating by Shredder's refusal to give him his robot body, **Krang** resorts to actually helping the Turtles this episode. By setting Mike free and telling him where the central control is, he ensures Shredder's failure. Clearly, Krang realises that Shredder needs an incentive to build his robot body. Clever Krang. He's always been more of a pragmatist than Shredder. At this stage, his opposition to the Turtles is practical, not personal.

If you saw the third season of the cartoon before you saw this episode, you might be surprised to see **Michaelangelo** take on Shredder single handed this episode. And win. He taunts Shredder into destroying the central control of the Mousers and then makes his escape. This is an early indication of Mike's true abilities – we see less and less of this as the battles between the Turtles and Shredder become more of a routine game.

Hot Rodding Teenagers from Dimension X

Synopsis

This episode is part four of the "Heroes in a Half Shell" arc.

At **Baxter Stockman**'s workshop, the Turtles work on his van and turn it into a mobile tracking station than can track the Technodrome. Inside the Technodrome itself, Krang is ranting at **Shredder**, who still hasn't built him the robot body he promised to deliver. Krang's soldiers are waiting in Dimension X, but Krang doesn't want them to see him without his body. At the mention of Dimension X, Shredder has an idea. He decides to use the Dimensional Portal to find weaponry he can use to defeat the Turtles. Krang warns him that anything could come through the portal, but Shredder ignores his advice.

Having converted Baxter's van into the Turtlevan (available in all good toy stores), the Turtles start searching for the Technodrome. Meanwhile, Shredder opens the Dimensional Portal and accidentally lets three teenagers from Dimension X through in their flying low-rider cars. **Rocksteady** and **Bebop** attack the teenagers, known as "**Neutrinos**", but they escape. The Neutrinos are pursued through the portal and beyond by a flying jeep occupied by Krang's Stone Warriors.

The Turtles locate the Technodrome under the Global Trade Center. When they reach the fortress, they are narrowly missed by the Neutrino cars. The Turtles decide to go after them.

Back inside the Technodrome, the Stone Warriors are searching for the Neutrinos and they find Krang, embarrassed to be without his body. He explains that he lost his body when he was banished to a far off planet in Dimension X. Krang informs Shredder that the Neutrinos are juvenile delinquents from Dimension X. They hate war, refuse to join the army and live for fun. Shredder gives the Stone Warriors a Techno Rover in order to help them catch the Neutrinos.

The Turtles catch up with the Neutrinos and manage to ground them. After realising they're on the same side, they hang out at the arcade and talk about life in Dimension X. The girl Neutrino, **Kala**, is obviously upset at the state of affairs on her home world. The Stone Warriors find them and attack, but come off worse after a laser fight between the Techno Rover and the Turtlevan. With the Techno Rover finished, the Stone Warriors retreat back to the Technodrome. Before they go, they unleash a weapon called the "Weather Satellite" which will cause a storm big enough to level the city in a couple of hours.

In the sewers, the Neutrinos tell the Turtles about Krang – he was banished from his home world in Dimension X and is now just a brain without a body. **Splinter** realises that this is where Shredder has been getting his advanced technology from. The Neutrinos and the Turtles agree to team up.

Up on the surface, it's snowing, despite the fact that it's June. Chunks of ice begin to fall from the sky. The Neutrinos realise that Krang is using a device to alter the weather. Along with the Turtles, they race back to the Technodrome. They quickly find the Transdimensional Portal but before they can use it, the henchmutants and a group of Foot Soldiers arrive. Donatello takes care of Bebop and Rocksteady whilst Leonardo fights the Foot Soldiers. Meanwhile, **Michaelangelo**, Raphael and the Neutrinos take on Shredder, Krang and the Stone Warriors.

The Turtles manage to defeat the Foot Soldiers and send the Rock Soldiers and the Neutrinos back to Dimension X. Before they can take on Shredder, they realise that they have to stop the Weather Satellite before it destroys the city. The Turtles take the remaining Neutrino car and fly into the centre of the storm, where Leonardo slices the device in two with his katana.

Back at the Technodrome, Shredder agrees to build Krang a robot body in return for Krang's promise to destroy the Turtles.

Themes

This episode gives us another glimpse into the Turtles' perspective on humanity. When told that the Turtles will have to deal with Shredder, Donatello wants to know "why do we have to do it? It's the human's problem." He demands to know why it should be "us, turtles, outcasts of society. Why do we have to stand alone against the forces of evil?" Donatello has always had the most extreme views on humanity amongst the Turtles, but none of the others make a case in the defence of humanity.

In fact, the true reason why the Turtles stand alone against "the forces of evil" is offered by Michaelangelo, who points out "it's the only job we're qualified for." That sums up the

Turtles' reason for what they do quite well. Basically, they have nothing better to do.
Let us consider Dimension X. We've seen all kinds of advanced technology come from there, including weather satellites, laser guns, flying cars and a portal between dimensions. Aren't these all the kinds of inventions that are supposed to make societies better, safer and happier places? And yet Dimension X is in a state of total warfare and kids who reject war and the army, such as the Neutrinos, are branded juvenile delinquents. What does all this say about the effects of advanced technology on society? Nothing good, that's for sure.

When the Turtles locate the Technodrome early in the episode, they find it under the Global Trade Center, which is an international symbol of capitalism. Is this symbolic? Are the writers trying to send out a message by having the Technodrome, a source of immense evil, located under a symbol of capitalism? You decide.

Characters

Only four episodes in and the insults have already started, with **Krang** calling **Shredder** a "brain addled idiot" whilst Shredder calls Bebop and Rocksteady "losers." Since Shredder picked them for this gig, you'd think he'd take some of the blame, but no. That's not in his nature.

Krang is very keen that the Stone Warriors not see him without his body. Presumably, they hold him in such high esteem that it would damage their morale to see their beloved leader humiliated and dependent on another for his safety. "Don't look at me!" Krang screams, when he is found by the Stone Warriors pursuing the Neutrinos. It would seem Krang isn't so inhuman after all, he just doesn't want to appear weak in front of his followers. No wonder he agrees to team up with Shredder in return for a robot body.

April asks a telling question when the Turtles track down the Neutrinos. "Why is it I never understand what's going on?" she asks. I'll leave you to speculate on the answer to that one yourselves.

Finally, this episode starts the ongoing romance subplot between **Michaelangelo** and Neutrino gal **Kala.** They probably don't hang out at the arcade for more than half an hour, yet when she leaves, Mike murmurs something about how he'll miss her. When we see her next, he is nervous about seeing her again. Why is Mike interested in a girl he barely knows? Several answers spring to mind. First of all, she's the only girl he's ever met in his age group. Secondly, she shows herself to be vulnerable when she starts crying about the state of affairs in Dimension X. And thirdly, he's a teenager. There are dark hormonal forces at work.

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Synopsis

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At **Baxter Stockman**'s workshop, the Turtles work on his van and turn it into a mobile tracking station than can track the Technodrome. Inside the Technodrome itself, Krang is ranting at **Shredder**, who still hasn't built him the robot body he promised to deliver. Krang's soldiers are waiting in Dimension X, but Krang doesn't want them to see him without his body. At the mention of Dimension X, Shredder has an idea. He decides to use

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Shredder and Splintered

Synopsis

This episode is part five of the "Heroes in a Half Shell" arc.

The city has learnt of the Turtles' existence and Channel 6 is reporting on "the green menace." Splinter and the Turtles agree that it's time to take action against **Shredder**, whilst April heads back to Channel 6 to fetch her news crew so she can get the real story.
Shredder contacts the Turtles via their television set. He is holding a Retro-Mutagen Ray Generator and he explains that this device can return Splinter to his former human state. He invites the Turtles to "come and get it", but Splinter insists he goes alone to prevent the Turtles being reverted to ordinary pet-shop turtles.

Splinter and the Turtles get into the flying Neutrino car left behind in "Hot Rodding Teenagers from Dimension X" but it soon runs out of fuel. Donatello heads over to **Baxter Stockman**'s workshop, hoping he can rig something up to replace the weaponry on the Neutrino car. Meanwhile, the remaining Turtles are attacked by Bebop and **Rocksteady**, who were despatched after Shredder's TV broadcast. A fight ensues, which culminates in the Turtles dumping concrete onto the henchmutants.

At the Technodrome, Shredder finally finishes building a new robotic body for **Krang**. Krang insists that Shredder adds a "Molecular Amplification Chip" that will enable Krang to defeat the Turtles. After installing this, Shredder places Krang into his new body and brings the body to life. The Turtles arrive soon after and find themselves fighting off Foot Soldiers whilst Splinter makes his way inside the Technodrome. The Turtles defeat the Foot Soldiers by opening a pipe containing raw sewage that flushes the robots away.
Over at Channel 6, April's boss **Burne** wants to fire her for teaming up with the Turtles. April waves around her Turtle Communicator, claiming it is a death ray, and forces Burne to give her a news crew.

Inside the Technodrome, Krang wakes up in his new body and heads to the Transdimensional Portal to bring over his Rock Soldiers from Dimension X. He is watched by the Turtles, who decide to go and stop him from bringing over reinforcements. Meanwhile Splinter thinks he has found the Retro-Mutagen Ray Generator, but it is actually just a hologram. He engages in battle with Shredder.

Via the Transdimensional Portal, Krang contacts **General Traag**, one of his Rock Soldiers. There are 12 brigades of Rock Soldiers waiting to come to Earth, but before Krang can bring them forth, he is interrupted by **Leonardo**, Raphael and Michaelangelo**.** Krang activates his Molecular Amplification Chip and grows 20 times in size. The Turtles are chased out of the Technodrome, but Krang punches his way up and follows them to the surface. Just as the Turtles are about to be crushed under Krang's boot, Donatello swoops in to save them with his new invention – the Turtle Blimp.

In an attempt to shrink Krang back down to his normal size, two Turtles climb inside his body and remove the Molecular Amplification Chip, whilst the other two distract Krang in the glider. With the chip removed, Krang reverts back to his normal size. He decides to call Shredder for help. Shredder uses an electronic force field to contain Splinter and heads off to help Krang, taking the real Retro Mutagen Ray Generator with him. Splinter manages to knock out the force field generator and follows Shredder.

Just as Shredder is about to use the Retro Mutagen Ray Generator on the Turtles, turning them back into harmless pets, Splinter arrives and hurls his staff at the device. It crashes to the ground and is destroyed. Shredder and Krang flee to the Technodrome. Inside, they attempt to bring the Stone Warriors through the Dimensional Portal, but Donatello is able to reverse the flow. The Technodrome itself, with Shredder and Krang inside it, is sucked through the portal into Dimension X.

Whilst April reports for Channel 6 on the days' events, Splinter warns the Turtles they may not have seen the last of Shredder or Krang.

Themes

This is the last episode of season one, so it's a good time to review. The big difference between this season and those that follow can be summed up in one word: effort.
Take this episode for example. It features an awesome battle between Splinter and Shredder, where both of them really give it everything. Throughout the season, the Turtles really move and fight like ninjas – a huge contrast to the slapstick style fights that follow. Even Rocksteady and Bebop seem like a legitimate threat – one of them actually throws a car in this episode!

Why do all the characters seem so much more capable and determined in these first five episodes? It all comes down to one thing: motivation. In the early series, Shredder and Krang do seem to pose a genuine threat to the safety of the Turtles and others. The villains really believe they can win, so they give it everything. Similarly, the Turtles really believe they're fighting for the safety of the whole world, so they perform to the best of their abilities.

By the beginning of season two, the Turtles have become cocky about their ability to defeat Shredder. Deep down, Shredder himself has accepted that he can never win. So the battles between the two sides become little more than a "game" – a way for outcasts on both sides to pass the time and give their lives meaning.

Perhaps the key event in this episode is at the end – where we learn from the TV news that people are still divided over the TMNT, even after they've saved the world from Shredder and Krang. Maybe this is the point where the Turtles subconsciously realise that they'll always be outcasts, no matter how hard they try. So why bother at all?

Characters

We see how determined **April** can really be this episode, when she pretends her Turtlecomm is a death ray and threatens Burne into giving her a news crew. Clearly, getting the story is far more important to her than the office atmosphere the next morning. She's got her priorities in order and her career comes first.

Splinter doesn't seem too bothered when he loses his chance to become human again at the end of this episode. He's quite philosophical about it. It's possible that he was never really concerned about becoming human again – after all, as a rat who commands the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, he has a far better chance of gaining revenge on Shredder – something that's always at the top of his priorities.

Perhaps that's the reason why Splinter warns the Turtles not to celebrate too much at the end of this episode. Although they have no good reason to believe they'll ever see

Shredder or Krang again, Splinter warns they haven't seen the last of them. There's just no evidence to back that up – it has to be that Splinter wants the Turtles to stay vigilant for other purposes.

Season 2

Return of the Shredder

Synopsis

At the supermarket, Leonardo and **Michaelangelo** are shopping for groceries when a pair of burglars attempt to rob the store. In return for stopping the criminals, the checkout girl gives the Turtles free groceries. When April later interviews the checkout girl for Channel 6, the Turtles get a glowing review.

The Technodrome is still stranded in Dimension X, where it was left at the end of "Shredder and Splintered." **Shredder** begs **Krang** to let him return to Earth to take on the Turtles. Krang agrees, but doesn't let Shredder take any weaponry or reinforcements, because he wants Shredder to prove himself worthy.

At Channel 6, Burne is unimpressed with April's report. He's adamant that the Turtles are a menace to society and his bimbo girlfriend **Tiffany** agrees. Meanwhile, the Turtles themselves are discussing Shredder, when Splinter senses that something is amiss. He anticipates the return of his old enemy.

On the surface, Shredder is attacked by muggers, who he easily defeats. Then he heads over to the Slash for Cash dojo, where he takes on the dojo master and wins. Shredder starts training the men at the dojo and forms a "Crooked Ninja Turtle Gang." Wearing Turtle costumes, they go on a crime spree across the city. Shredder is hoping that the Turtles will be forced to come up to the surface to clear their names. Shredder then breaks **Baxter Stockman** out of an insane asylum and asks him to build a rat catching device.

When April gets footage of the Crooked Ninja Turtle Gang robbing a grocery store, she invites the Turtles to Channel 6 to watch the tape. Leonardo recognises the fighting style of one of the gang as that of Shredder. Whilst the Turtles are out, Splinter is captured by Baxter's new invention. The Turtles arrive home and follow the trail to an abandoned building, where they come up against four members of the Crooked Ninja Turtle Gang.

Having defeated the gang members, the Turtles learn that Shredder is waiting for them at the Slash for Cash dojo. They make their way to the dojo and proceed to defeat Shredder, Baxter and his rat catching device. Then they rescue Splinter and escape.

Shredder asks Krang for his help, but Krang is displeased with his performance. Meanwhile, April reports the real story on the Crooked Ninja Turtle Gang for Channel 6, much to the displeasure of Burne and Tiffany.

Themes

Remember the awesome Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles who trounced Shredder in magnificent ninja style in "Shredder and Splintered" and the episodes beforehand? As of this episode, they're gone, and instead we have the merely adequate Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles who take on the Crooked Ninja Turtle Gang with an altogether more slapstick

style of fighting.

What could be responsible for this sudden deterioration in the Turtles' fighting abilities? It couldn't be lack of practice, because we know that both Splinter and Leonardo are vigilant about making sure that all are prepared for Shredder's next escapade.

A more likely explanation is that the Turtles have realised that Shredder isn't the major threat to world safety that he once seemed. In other words, their hearts aren't really in it anymore. They'd rather mess about and have a slapstick fight, because they don't feel that the threat levels merit real ninja action. Already, the whole thing has become a game.

Characters

If you think **Krang** particularly cares about defeating the Turtles, then think again. If he really wanted them destroyed, why would he send Shredder back to Earth without any reinforcements or weapons? With every resource at Krang's disposal, it should have been easy enough to defeat the Turtles. Krang seems to care far more about making Shredder "prove himself" (i.e. having him humiliate himself by going up against the Turtles alone). Like the Turtles, Krang has already decided not to take this "battle between good and evil" stuff seriously. He's far more interested in pushing Shredder around for his own amusement.

Shredder isn't the only one Krang likes to bully. When Bebop and Rocksteady complain of being left behind, Krang explains his reason's for making them stay at home. "I enjoy seeing humans AND animals suffer. And you, my friends are both." Multi-tasking is obviously one of Krang's more useful talents. That, and being mean.

Shredder isn't much better as an employer. I'm pretty sure that calling Baxter a "useless jellyfish" would be against normal policy in most offices.

This episode begins with Leonardo and **Michaelangelo** shopping for groceries. Some of the choices reflect their personalities pretty accurately. Leonardo chooses tofu and bean sprouts; he's a practical guy most concerned with staying fit for leadership. Mike chooses peanut butter and jelly. He's far more concerned with drowning his sorrows in food. It may sound disgusting, but if choc chips and caramel fudge pizza (his choice of dinner the night before) helps him live with being an outcast, good luck to him.

Splinter quickly puts a stop to any philosophical debate when the Turtles are discussing Shredder this episode. The Turtles are talking about the paradox surrounding their relationship with Shredder – they hate him because he mutated Splinter, but they also owe him because they were mutated too. Soon, Splinter is claiming he can "sense" something nearby and warning them of Shredder's imminent return. Is it slightly possible that Splinter had no idea that Shredder was returning, but wanted to put the fear of Shredder back into the Turtles so he could end their debate? After all, it can't be the kind of thing that Splinter (who needs the Turtles' loyalty) wants to hear. This may be one of the first times we see him manipulate the Turtles for his own ends.

At Channel 6, **Irma** chips a nail and finds herself with no nail polish. She describes this as an emergency. No doubt this vanity relates to her constant obsession with finding a man, but does Irma really imagine that eligible men wander around checking the quality of women's fingernails before asking them out? Somebody needs to tell her that most men's attention is focused elsewhere on the female body.

Burne spends most of the episode doing an uncanny impression of Spiderman's nemesis Jonah Jameson. He demands that April expose the Turtles as a "menace" even when overwhelming evidence indicates nothing of the sort. Clearly, he's aware that scandal gets higher ratings than heroism. And it's probably just coincidence that Burne's younger girlfriend Tiffany also happens to be a complete turtlephobe. Is there anything that a man having a mid-life crisis won't do to impress a dumb young blonde?

The Incredible Shrinking Turtles

Synopsis

The Turtles are practising their martial arts in Central Park, when they see an alien spaceship crash into the nearby lake. As **Shredder** covertly watches from behind a bush, the Turtles rescue the ship's sole inhabitant – a small purple alien. The alien tells the Turtles that they must find three fragments of something called "the Eye of Zarnov." He tells them that whoever wields the three fragments together will have unimaginable power and hands them a device called a Crystal Converger to help them find the fragments. Then the alien disintegrates.

As the Turtles start tracking the fragments in the Turtlevan, Shredder contacts **Krang** and asks for reinforcements so he can find the fragments himself. Krang reminds him that he promised to help him only when Shredder proves himself capable of delivering the Turtles. Shredder follows the Turtles as the Crystal Converger directs them to a garbage truck. They find the fragment, but Shredder snatches it and aims it at the Turtles, shrinking them into miniature mutant ninja turtles. The tiny turtles escape and make their way back to sewers, where **Splinter** contacts **April** and asks for her help in finding Shredder and the crystal fragment.

Meanwhile, Shredder is using the fragment on buildings, shrinking them to the size of toys. However, this does not impress Krang, who will not believe that the Turtles are done for until he sees for himself. Shredder turns to **Baxter** for help and Baxter unveils a new invention: a heat-seeking Turtlescope.

Back in the sewer, the Turtles are enjoying a slice of pizza when a sewer tidal wave sweeps them away. After a confrontation with a sewer snake, they are attacked by a fish. However, they are rescued before being eaten when Baxter scoops them up in his fishing net. At Shredder's hideout, Shredder shows the tiny turtles to Krang and is about to destroy them when April and Splinter arrive in the Turtlevan. Whilst Splinter battles Shredder, April directs the crystal fragment at the Turtles and returns them to their normal size.

However, Shredder still manages to retrieve the fragment before escaping with Baxter.

Themes

If the Turtles are so persecuted and misunderstood that they have to live their lives in the shadows, then why are they practising jungle fighting techniques in Central Park? Anybody could see them – indeed, Shredder spies on them easily by hiding behind a bush. So much for the ninja art of invisibility.

Despite their practice session, the Turtles clearly aren't at their peak in this episode –

when Michaelangelo dresses as Shredder and pretends to attack, the others are very slow in noticing that their arch nemesis is the wrong height, wrong shape and has green skin all of a sudden. It's not like the disguise is all that convincing – Mike made the mask out of a pizza box. Later in the episode, Shredder easily snatches the crystal fragment away from the Turtles. It seems that are heroes simply aren't trying very hard today.

Is it fate or just coincidence that the alien spaceship just happens to crash into a lake where the Turtles are practising their fighting skills? Is some cosmic force trying to guide events by directing the alien craft towards Earth's premier heroes? Or is fate trying to deliver the crystal fragments into the hands of Shredder, who is watching nearby? Fate really needs to decide whose side it's on.

Characters

Despite the fact that Shredder failed miserably in his attempts to conquer the TMNT without **Krang**'s help in the last episode, Krang is still refusing to give any resources, technology or reinforcements to Shredder this time around. Even when Shredder shrinks a few buildings to convince Krang of his power, Krang is unimpressed. Taking down the Turtles clearly isn't on the top of Krang's priority list at the moment. Maybe he just wants Shredder out of the Technodrome so he can get some peace? Anything's possible.

Burne demonstrates the art of how NOT to give a pep talk this episode. Whilst lecturing April on the need for reporters to make quick decisions and be decisive, she receives a call from Splinter. When it seems she is following Burne's advice, Burne protests "but that was only a speech!" It's clear that whilst Burne is willing to pay lip service to journalistic values, he isn't too happy when they interfere with his activities.

Splinter commits something of a Freudian slip this episode. When Shredder starts using the crystal fragment on various buildings, Splinter frets "now he's turning that fragment on innocent people." Wait a minute… the Turtles aren't innocents? They didn't exactly do much to provoke Shredder's never ending campaign against them… most of the animosity so far has come from Shredder's side. It's telling that Splinter doesn't regard the Turtles as "innocents" because it indicates that he really sees them more as soldiers. To a certain extent, they're expendable, unlike "innocent people" who don't deserve to get involved. It's a very strange attitude to have towards your "sons", but not a surprising one given that Splinter trained those "sons" for the express purpose of fighting bad guys. The difference is, soldiers sign up to the army by choice. Nobody ever asked if the Turtles wanted to be soldiers, they just got stuck with it.

Splinter also demonstrates this callous attitude towards the Turtles' survival when he leaves them alone in the sewer, after their transformation to tiny turtles. Trouble ensues and Splinter, as someone who's lived in the sewers for many years, would have seen it coming if he really gave a crap about their welfare.

He may not have time to protect the Turtles or worry about their safety, but Splinter does find time at the end of the episode to remind them who is in charge. Michaelangelo arrives home with tiny mini pizzas that Splinter had specially made to remind the Turtles that they "have a long way to grow." By reinforcing the notion that they are not fully developed adults, Splinter reminds them that he knows best and reinforces the father/son relationship, even though he sees them less as sons than pawns in his battles against Shredder.

It Came From Beneath the Sewers

Synopsis

The Turtles and **April** are looking for the second fragment of the Eye of Zarnov, using the Crystal Converger given to them in "The Incredible Shrinking Turtles." The device leads them to a carnival and the Turtles go in without their disguises – reasoning that people will think they're part of the sideshow. Meanwhile, Shredder reports back to **Krang** and has to tell him that **Baxter** accidentally threw out the first fragment. Krang uses the technology at his disposal to track down the fragment at the carnival.

Before either party can locate the fragment, it's found by two young boys. April spots them and tries to get them to give it to her for three dollars – the only money she has on her person. She has no luck and goes to borrow some money off the Turtles – who have been mistaken for circus performers and are giving a show in the Big Top. By the time she comes back with more cash, Shredder has stolen the fragment from the two boys.

Back at Shredder's hideout, Baxter accidentally lets the fragment come into contact with some mud on Shredder's shoe. The mud is actually residue from some plant life in Dimension X, and contact with the fragment causes it to mutate.

In the sewers, Splinter tries to be encouraging about the Turtles' hopes of retrieving the fragment. Donatello worries that the Crystal Converger may be running out of power. Suddenly, the Turtles are attacked by a giant plant. The Turtles fight it off and it retracts its tentacles and retreats. Our heroes realise that the strange plant may have come from Dimension X.

April receives a note at her appartment, apparently from the Turtles, asking her to meet them at a warehouse. April follows the instruction only to discover it's a trap – she is snatched by Shredder, who uses her Turtlecomm to inform the Turtles that he has April. He invites them to rescue her and they arrive just as Shredder and Baxter escape.

Back at the Turtles' lair, the heroes arrive home just in time to see a news bulletin - the giant plant, now bigger than ever, is rampaging all over the city. It is now a six-eyed furry flower with huge roots and stems. The Turtles get into their van and go to take on the plant, but it merely snatches the bumper off the Turtlevan and retreats to the sewers. Splinter suggests that the Turtles find the plant by looking for the root. After following some green goo, the Turtles find their target.

The plant grabs Donatello, but the Turtles have a secret weapon – **Michaelangelo** dressed as a female plant named "Flora." When the plant moves closer to Flora, the root is left exposed and Leonardo stabs it with his katana. The plant dies and the city is saved once more.

Themes

When the Turtles know that Shredder already has the first fragment of the Eye of Zarnov, you'd think that they would be in something of a rush to track down the second one. Nevertheless, they take time out to put on a show at the carnival when they are mistaken for performers. Leonardo's reasoning is that the Turtles don't want to "cause a scene", but that's a fairly crappy excuse when you consider the urgency of the situation and the fact that the Turtles, as ninjas, could slip away without being noticed if they really wanted to. So

why do they perform? Two explanations spring to mind – either the Turtles are sick of performing heroics with no thanks from the general public and want to soak up the appreciation for once, or they're just trying to draw out the whole thing to pass the time.

The children who find the fragment come across as cynical little bastards. They refuse to accept April's offer of three dollars for it, reminding April that they are "children of the 80s." In other words, they know the price of everything and the value of nothing. April can't really argue with them, since she's pretty much the definitive 80s woman.

When the giant plant first invades, Mike mentions a movie he saw called "Invasion of the Green Mean Killer Beanstalk." This is pretty typical of the movies that the Turtles watch – it probably features innocent humans being terrified by a freakish creature. In this case, the creature is mean and green. Perhaps it reflects something of a wish fulfilment factor in the programmes the Turtles watch.

Characters

You may remember that, in the first episode of season 2, **Krang** promised not to give Shredder any help until he had proved himself. Apparently, Krang has changed his mind, because he helps Shredder in finding the second fragment even though Shredder managed to lose the first one because Baxter threw it out (or at least, that's what Shredder claims). He tracks down the second fragment easily enough using the equipment at the Technodrome, meaning that Krang had the technology to find the fragments all along. Krang clearly couldn't give a toss about defeating the Turtles or helping Shredder at this point – he gives as much help as he feels like giving at any particular time. It seems like Krang's motivation has more to do with what's on TV than how he feels about the Turtles.
Krang can't resist a quick quip when he sends Shredder to the carnival. "You'll fit in quite well with the other freaks," he snarks. Maybe that's what he gets up to all day, sitting around thinking of ways to insult Shredder.

When the other Turtles are supposedly looking for the fragment at the carnival, **Michaelangelo** is busy winning lots of soft toys by knocking over skittles. He clearly doesn't want the soft toys – he gives them all to April – and throwing a ball at some skittles represents no real challenge to a ninja at his level. So why bother? It's classic attention seeking behaviour from Mike – making a big scene for no real reason because he doesn't want to be overlooked.

Mike may be an attention seeker, but was it really necessary for the other Turtles to humiliate him by forcing him to dress like a female plant in order to "woo" the mutant monster? There must have been a dozen other ways to distract the plant long enough to attack the root – why choose a method which humiliates Mike? Clearly, he's already established at this point as the whipping boy of the group – from now on when the Turtles want a laugh, it's usually at his expense. This is only the beginning.

Splinter makes a mysterious statement when the Turtles are first attacked by the mutant plant. He immediately states that the plant must come from Dimension X because "strange organisms abound" there. How would Splinter know that? Either Splinter has visited Dimension X at some point and neglected to tell anybody, or he's simply pointing the finger at Shredder and Krang because he seizes any chance to increase the Turtles' hostility towards them. Either way, it constitutes more suspicious behaviour from the Turtles' sensei.

The Mean Machines

Synopsis

In the Turtles' lair, **Splinter** and **Michaelangelo** are sparring whilst Donatello builds a tracking device to replace the Crystal Converger, which has now run out of power. The device leads the Turtles to the second fragment of the Eye of Zarnov, which is near a bank which is being held up. Whilst the Turtles defeat the bank robbers, **Shredder** and Baxter find the fragment and return to their hideout. Shredder contacts **Krang** and tells him that he believes the fragment would be more powerful if hooked up to a computer.

The Turtles try to hook up Donatello's tracking device to the Turtlevan to increase its power, but the two are incompatible. They decide to contact **April**, hoping she might have news of any weird happenings that will lead them to Shredder.

Shredder and Baxter break into a laboratory where a sentient computer named OMNSS resides. When Baxter questions OMNSS' power, the super-computer trashes the room and boasts that it could do even more with a stronger power source. Shredder hooks OMNSS up to the Eye of Zarnov fragment, and orders the computer to seek and destroy the Turtles. OMNSS activates some large machines at a building site – including wrecking balls and piledrivers – and sends them after the Turtles, who are able to fend them off with the help of some dynamite.

OMNSS decides that it needs more power and begins draining energy from city power plants. Machines all over the city are out of control and Shredder is delighted with the chaos. The Turtles threaten a robotic parking attendant into revealing Shredder's location and race towards him in the Turtlevan, but OMNSS seizes control of the van and a collision with a wall is narrowly avoided, after Donatello short circuits the van using his tracking device.

Arriving at OMNSS' location, the Turtles fight off floor buffers and vacuum cleaners before reaching Shredder, who is telling OMNSS to seize more power and open a portal to Dimension X. April takes care of OMNSS by pulling the plug out of the wall socket. Shredder and Baxter escape and the Turtles head back to the sewers for celebratory pizza.

Themes

The name of super-computer OMNSS is actually an acronym for Omnipotent Multi-Processing Nexus Subuniversal Sentient. If OMNSS is really so "omnipotent" how come April was able to defeat it by simply pulling out the plug?

In any case, it seems the scientists who designed OMNSS were aiming to produce a computer that was both EXTREMELY powerful and deliberately sentient, which is a lethal combination that was bound to go wrong at some point. OMNSS has clearly let the power go to his head, because no sooner has he met Shredder and Baxter than he starts boasting about his power and trashing the room to prove it. It seems OMNSS was just an accident waiting to happen. I'd say this was just another example of good technology gone bad – but really OMNSS was just a bad idea from the beginning.

The robotic parking meter maid that the Turtles meet seems like a good idea though. It's a robot, so it won't get hurt feelings at the constant abuse that parking wardens suffer, plus if you get really ticked off, you can threaten it with a water hydrant (as the Turtles do in order to find Shredder).

Given the Turtles' experience with troublesome technology, and the fact that Donatello in particular is supposedly a scientific genius, you'd think one of them would have come up with the obvious solution to beating super-computer OMNSS: pull out the plug. Yet it's left to April, supposedly just an observer, to figure this out. You'd almost think the Turtles were dragging things out on purpose…

Characters

Although he has the reputation as "the dumb one" of the group, **Michaelangelo** manages to see off the last of the rebellious construction machines by luring a piledriver towards a box of dynamite. Clearly, he's capable of more than people give him credit for.

When April fails to show up at Channel 6, **Burne** gives the story about the malfunctioning machines to Vernon instead. However, Vernon backs out quickly when Burne tells him he'd better take a bullet proof vest. "I've seen things with more backbone paddling around a tidepool," Burne complains. He's right, of course, but it reveals a lot about Burne's attitude to news journalism: he's perfectly prepared to risk Vernon's life for the sake of getting a story about some out-of-control hair dryers. No wonder April is always getting herself into troublesome situations in the name of getting the scoop.

Curse of the Evil Eye

Synopsis

The Turtles are looking for the third fragment of the Eye of Zarnov, but **Baxter** finds it before they do. Baxter plots to turn the tables on **Shredder** and use the Eye of Zarnov for his own purposes. Shredder now has all three fragments – which he welds together and places on his helmet.

The Turtles find Baxter leaving a Chinese restaurant but are interupted by some vigilantes who are after a reward for the Turtles' capture. Baxter escapes. The Turtles eventually find Shredder, who uses the Eye of Zarnov to transform a picture of a red dragon on the side of his takeout box into the real thing. Shredder also manages to transform **Leonardo**'s swords into ice cream cones. As the Turtles back away from the red dragon, **Donatello** drops his crystal tracking device.

April arrives to cover the story and sees Leonardo and Michaelangelo riding on the back of the red dragon. **Blodgett**, the driver of April's news van, panics and drives away. Mike wrap his nunchuks around the dragon's mouth to seal it shut. Meanwhile, Donatello and **Raphael** are trying to get Shredder's helmet and when they manage to knock it off his head, the dragon disappears, leaving Leo and Mike to plunge into a conveniently placed pool.

Meanwhile, Blodgett has lost control of the news van and it plunges into the harbour. He is fired by **Vernon**, but as Blodgett leaves, he finds Shredder's helmet and takes it with him. Back at his appartment, Blodgett decides that positive thinking is the way to help him get a

new job. He listens to an inspirational tape whilst wearing the helmet and wishes for a limousine. A limousine materialises from nowhere.

The Turtles start looking for the tracking device to find the Eye of Zarnov, whilst Shredder is in a huff about losing the helmet. He refuses to let Baxter help, so Baxter takes Donatello's tracking device and goes looking for the helmet himself. Baxter finds Blodgett and takes the helmet. After throwing away the tracking device, he builds himself a regal palace. The Turtles notice the drastic alteration to the New York skyline and find Baxter, who creates a sludge monster and an electrical monster to destroy them.

Meanwhile, Blodgett finds the tracking device that Baxter has left behind and goes looking for the helmet. He and Shredder arrive at the same time. Baxter tries to convert a gold tower into a monster, but this fails because the Eye has no effect on gold. Shredder snatches the helmet and the tracking device and leaves on a flying carpet, but not before trapping the Turtles in a shrinking bubble.

The Turtles are freed by April and **Splinter**. Blodgett rescues April before she is hurt by the crumbling relics of Baxter's palace. Donatello warns that Shredder is now a walking time bomb – the tracking device was designed to destroy the Eye of Zarnov and the two could explode at any time. Blodgett tells the Turtles about the Eye's weakness – it has no effect on gold. April's friend works as a museum curator and she is able to borrow some golden shields from ancient Rome.

The Turtles track down Shredder using the Turtleblimp and are attacked by various monsters. Shredder discards the tracking device just before the big explosion, and manages to escape in the chaos. The Eye of Zarnov is no more. However, due to his bravery in rescuing April, Blodgett gets his old job back and celebratory pizza is ordered.

Themes

The Eye of Zarnov could theoretically be used to transform the world into a utopian paradise. It could wipe out hunger, end all wars, destroy all Coldplay records… that kind of thing. But all humans want to use the eye for is selfish things. Which just goes to show how selfish and crap we are.

Or does it? Although Baxter and Shredder immediately start using the Eye to fight the Turtles once they have it in their possesion, Blodgett seems only concerned with harmless, materialistic things. Okay, so his motives aren't noble, but how do we know he wouldn't get round to wiping out hunger and poverty, once he'd gotten bored of magicking up shiny cars? It seems a little unfair to judge all of humanity by the actions of Baxter and Shredder. Surely the Eye of Zarnov could also be used for the greater good.

Of course, if the Turtles did go around putting the Eye of Zarnov to use for this purpose, before long they'd have nothing left to fight for. With the Eye of Zarnov, they could stop all crime and evil-doing. And their raison d'etre would disappear just as quickly. So is their decision to destroy the Eye of Zarnov really an altruistic one… or is it one that just allows them to keep playing their games with Shredder and Krang?

Characters

Baxter plots against Shredder and decides that, with the Eye of Zarnov, there's no need for him to take orders anymore. But when Shredder shows up, Baxter blows it. Why didn't

Baxter use the Eye of Zarnov to kill Shredder outright? Well, it would seem that, deep down, having a father figure (even one like Shredder) is far more important to Baxter than the prospect of ruling the world. As always, Baxter is after approval, not power.

Nobody we've met so far who worked for Channel 6 has turned out to be a model employee. **Blodgett** is no exception. As part of a news team, he should really have a better grip on his nerves. As it is, he drives a news van into harbour after being spooked by Shredder's dragon.

If there's one person who you'd expect to sympathise with Blodgett, it's **Vernon**. After all, Vernon frequently shies away from covering the more dangerous news stories. He's even been known to faint when his nerves get the better of him. So when Vernon fires Blodgett, is he really angry at Blodgett, or is he just angry with himself and his own inability to control his fear?

When the Turtles go up against Shredder armed with golden shields, **April** claims that she "borrowed" the shields from a friend who is a curator at an exhibit about ancient Rome. This story seems a little odd to me. I have some pretty good friends, but none of them would let me borrow priceless golden artefacts from their workplace without a good reason. Did April use her feminine charms to get her own way, or did she resort to some trickery or deception in order to get her story on the Turtles' victory?

Case of the Killer Pizzas

Synopsis

To assist him in defeating the Turtles, Krang sends Shredder some Dimension X eggs via a portal. Shredder decides to use a Pizza Bake-off event as an opportunity to make the Turtles come to him. He steals some flyers and transports them to the Turtles by releasing water from a fire hydrant into the sewers.

In the lair, Michaelangelo is preparing to face off against Donatello's new invention, a fighting machine which gives him some trouble until Raphael cuts off the electricity supply. At this point, a giant wave floods the lair, bringing the flyers with it. Splinter deduces that the slashmarks on the flyers must have been made by Shredder, but the Turtles plan to attend the Bake-off nevertheless, planning to work up an appetite by defeating Shredder before they tuck into some pizza.

At the Pizza Bake-off, Irma and April are discussing men when Irma's last date shows up and she runs off to avoid him. April scares him off by introducing the Turtles to him as Irma's family. April enters the Turtle's names into the raffle for the prize pizzas. Meanwhile, Baxter Stockman is sneaking the eggs, which look like meatballs, onto the pizzas. However, two of the three pizzas are then taken to fill a delivery order and replaced with fresh ones.

When the Turtles learn that Baxter will be drawing the winners in the raffle, they suspect Shredder is nearby. He is seen heading into the Leaning Tower Pizzeria and followed by the Turtles. Battle ensues, but Shredder escapes. Baxter then reads out the winners of the raffle, but lies and names three of the Turtles as the winners. One of the pizzas is given to April in gratitude for helping them out.

At Irma's appartment, the pizza is warmed up in the microwave. As it heats up, the egg

cracks and a small red monster emerges and eats the pizza. Upon seeing it, Irma faints and April contacts the Turtles, who rush over but fail to capture the creature. They realise that two others must also be lose, or soon will be, in the city.

The Turtles follow the delivery boy to the penthouse suite of two kids, who ignore their warnings and heat up the pizzas. The two creatures escape into the sewers and meet up with the other red monster from Irma's appartment. In the underground river, they are all transformed into large yellow monsters.

In their search for the monsters, the Turtles find Shredder and Baxter and are about to engage in battle when Baxter uses a remote control to summon the monsters. During the fight which follows, Donatello hits the remote into the river and Baxter loses control of the monsters. Whilst Michaelangelo attempts to retrieve it, the other Turtles fight alongside Shredder against the monsters. Meanwhile, Baxter reads Krang's instructions for the monsters and tells them that a larger burst of energy will revert them back into eggs.
Michaelangelo retrieves the remote, but it is waterlogged and only has a temporary effect. Leonardo uses his katana to cut a nearby electricity cable, causing the monsters to be zapped back into eggs. Unsurprisingly, Shredder and Baxter escape.

Themes

One very obvious flaw in Shredder's plan to get rid of the Turtles: the eggs don't hatch into monsters unless they're put into the microwave. How many times in other episodes have we seen anyone bothering to heat up their pizza purchases before they dig in? I'm guessing none. So it's a nice coincidence that the one time it makes a difference, Irma and the bratty kids with the other pizzas decide to do just that.

Speaking of the bratty kids...how come they're not at all disturbed by the sight of humanoid giant turtles in their kitchen, but terrified by pesky small red monsters?
There are 27 mentions of pizza this episode. It's actually quite annoying.

Characters

Shredder does some cool ninja stuff this episode. It shouldn't be a rare thing, but it is. When he startles the guy handing out fliers for the pizza bakeoff, he neatly manages to catch all of them using some super fast grabby motion that any action figure would be proud of. And when the Turtles hurl lumps of pizza dough at him, he neatly shreds it into a net he can attack them with. Cool, huh? So how come he never usually displays this level of martial arts expertise?

Besides, if Shredder realises (and he clearly does) the extent of the Turtles' pizza love (and he clearly does), then why not use it against them more often?

Splinter displays an amazing sense of deduction by guessing that Shredder sent the pizza fliers towards the Turtles. What gave it away? The slashmarks which could "only" have been made by Shredder's gauntlet. Amazing.

April may seem like a good friend to poor Irma, getting rid of her latest loser boyfriend Alfredo. But what kind of friend would leave a friend alone in the sewers after fainting at the sight of a monster? The kind who is more concerned with a news story, that's who.
Michaelangelo really takes his pizza obsession too far this episode, going on and on about the stuff. In fact, a third of the 27 pizza mentions come from him. Like I said, it's

annoying.

Quintessential **Raphael** moment this episode where he's too busy being sarcastic to notice the huge yellow monsters creeping up behind him. There's a lesson in there somewhere.

But the most scandalous Turtle behaviour this episode comes from **Leonardo**. Firstly he makes up some bogus Splinter-style words of wisdom and claims his sensei came up with them. "Sometimes one must make a pact with evil in order to accomplish good." So the means justify the ends, then? When Raph mentions that he can't remember Splinter saying anything of the sort, he admits he invented this advice himself. Is this something Leo does often? It would explain to some extent why a lot of Splinter's advice seems so blatantly contradictory.

Leo also takes an almost suicidal risk in order to turn the monsters back into eggs. Baxter's instructions say that the monsters need to be zapped with a large burst of energy. So Leonardo cuts some nearby electric powerlines with his sword and lets the wet floor conduct the electricity and electrocute the monsters. There are only about a million ways that could have gone wrong. Aside from the fact that Leo could have electrocuted himself in the process, there's water everywhere and he could have ended up killing his brothers too. Very reckless strategy.

An exchange between Leonardo and **Donatello** illustrates some of the key differences between them. "At least we'll go down fighting with honour, like real turtles!" Leo shouts, staring death in the face. "Personally, I'd rather go on living, as a mock turtle," Don counters. The two of them may seem very simliar sometimes, but whilst Leo is an idealist, singing the praises of honour and reckless bravery, Don is ultimately a realist and a pragmatist. He's more concerned with the bottom line and the bottom line is he doesn't fancy dying much.

The lesson that Donatello draws from the whole pizza monster experience? "There's no such thing as a free lunch." That seems overly pessimistic, since the Turtles did get two whole monsterless free pizzas this episode. In fact, this attitude pre-empts the pro-capitalist leanings that Don develops in further episodes. The idea that you get nothing for nothing is an inherently capitalist one.

Enter: The Fly

Synopsis

The Turtles hear that Shredder and Baxter have been spotted at the top of the World Trade Center and take the Turtleblimp to see what they're up to. Baxter is attempting to create a forcefield between the two towers, but the plan fails when he makes a stupid error. Shredder spots the Turtleblimp and the two villains escape.

Later, Shredder contacts Krang and complains about Baxter's incompetence. He requests that Bebop and Rocksteady are sent to help him destroy the Turtles, but Krang tells him it is necessary to send someone back to the Technodrome in return, since the portal is unstable. Baxter is thrown through the portal against his will and the two mutants arrive in his place. Shredder plots to get at the Turtles via their weak point: April.

The reporter in question is busy at work when a potplant (i.e. a plant in a pot, not a plant

which is pot, though god knows she could do with some - Vic) arrives for her. She notices its strange fragrance and the lack of a card telling her who it is from. Irma suggests it could have come from the Turtles. April takes the plant to the Turtles' lair, preparing to tell them that any kind of relationship is out of the question. On arrival, Splinter snatches the plant from her hands and throws it in the trash. As Splinter asks her where the plant came from, April faints.

In the Technodrome, Krang orders that Baxter be thrown into the disintegrator unit. Unknown to Krang, a common fly follows Baxter in and when the unit is activated, the two merge into a large humanoid fly creature. Baxter escapes and heads back through a portal to Earth.

Meanwhile, the Turtles arrive home to find April seriously ill. Splinter explains that she was sent a Doku plant, which has a deadly fragrance. She will die without an antidote, which can only be made using a leaf from the rare Gazai plant. The Turtles start searching for a Gazai plant at a greenhouse for rare plants. On the way, they are attacked by Baxter, who they do not recognise in his new fly form. They escape when Baxter becomes entangled in a clothes line.

Baxter eventually comes across Shredder, Bebop and Rocksteady and begins to attack. However, Shredder manages to convince the confused man-fly that the Turtles are responsible for what happened to him and sends Baxter after them again. By now, the Turtles have managed to find a Gazai plant but they lose it in the ensuing battle with Baxter, Shredder, Bebop and Rocksteady. They return to the lair and find April still in drastic need of the antidote. Shredder contacts them to invite them to a dual at the junkyard, in order to win the Gazai plant which can save her.

At the junkyard, Baxter finishes setting up two giant electrodes just as the Turtles arrive. Shredder's plan is to drive the Turtles back between the electrodes, which will cause them to become "out of phase" with the rest of the world and powerless to fight Shredder. This plan is sabotaged when Splinter arrives in the Turtlevan. Baxter flies towards the electrodes to retrieve the Gazai plant and is himself zapped. He disappears.

Shredder, Bebop and Rocksteady escape in the confusion whilst the Turtles rush back to the lair. The antidote successfully cures April.

Themes

The Turtles throw away a good chance at catching Shredder yet again when they find him at the top of the World Trade Center. So what if he runs inside? Those towers were huge, it would take a good fifteen minutes at least to make his way to the exit of the building. If the Turtles had really wanted to, they could have caught him.

When Splinter shows the Turtles a picture of a Gazai plant in his book, it clearly looks exactly like the Doku plant which poisoned her in the first place. Weird. Maybe this is a metaphor for how good and evil are different sides of the same coin? Or maybe not.

The gardener at the greenhouse where the Turtles find the Gazai plant tells them it is the last one remaining in the WESTERN hemisphere. Um...am I missing something? There's no such thing as a Western hemisphere, there's a Southern hemisphere and a Northern hemisphere...in our version of Earth at any rate. If the Turtles' universe was geographically divided into East and West instead of North and South, what kind of other differences

might this result in?

Characters

Krang is a bit mean this episode. First, he asks Shredder to contact him from a trash barge just to tick him off. Then he tries to chuck poor Baxter into a disintegrator unit, which is harsh to say the least. Oh well. He is evil, after all.

As **Shredder**'s, worked out this episode, April is indeed the weakest point through which he can get at the Turtles. So why doesn't he use this knowledge to his advantage more often? Hmm...maybe he's not all that bothered either way.

It says a lot about **April**'s social life that she assumes that the flowers she receives came from the Turtles. That's what happens you make your career your priority. It says a lot about April's vanity that she assumes that whoever gave her the plant was after some kind of relationship. What if it just was a thanks-for-a-favour plant?

Michaelangelo and **Raphael** are actually acting like Turtles for a change. "Oh man, dig that dampness," Mike says when they get into the greenhouse. "Yeah, just like the aquarium I was born in," says Raph nostaligically.

Leo makes a joke this episode!!!! A bad one at that. Don observes that he was shortchanged by the gardener who sold him the Gazai plant. "That figures," Leo quips, "I always said you didn't have enough cents." So if you ever wondered why Leonardo doesn't tell many jokes, now you know.

Am I the only one who feels sorry for poor **Baxter Stockman**? He's been treated like crap by Shredder from day one, only to be tossed into a disintegrator unit for making a dumb mistake. It's hard enough being the science genius, what with the lonely childhood and having to suffer your intellectual inferiors. Imagine how much harder it must be to be an incompetent genius. Baxter remains optimistic until the end though, swallowing Shredder's lies about the Turtles being responsible for the transformation. Which just goes to show how desperate he is to believe that someone really is on his side. Tragic.

Splinter proves himself to be a dark horse this episode. The Turtles thought he didn't know how to drive. "It's amazing what one can do when one is forced to," he tells them. Or when one can be bothered to, for a change. Don remarks that he's also quite good at firing lasers for "someone who doesn't believe in violence." Hang on a minute. The former martial arts master who trained his four wards in the art of ninjitsu and sent them off to fight the forces of evil doesn't believe in violence? How else do the Turtles manage to defeat Shredder every episode? Violence for a good cause is still violence.

Enter: The Fly

Synopsis

The Turtles hear that Shredder and Baxter have been spotted at the top of the World Trade Center and take the Turtleblimp to see what they're up to. Baxter is attempting to create a forcefield between the two towers, but the plan fails when he makes a stupid error. Shredder spots the Turtleblimp and the two villains escape.

Later, Shredder contacts Krang and complains about Baxter's incompetence. He requests

that Bebop and Rocksteady are sent to help him destroy the Turtles, but Krang tells him it is necessary to send someone back to the Technodrome in return, since the portal is unstable. Baxter is thrown through the portal against his will and the two mutants arrive in his place. Shredder plots to get at the Turtles via their weak point: April.

The reporter in question is busy at work when a potplant (i.e. a plant in a pot, not a plant which is pot, though god knows she could do with some - Vic) arrives for her. She notices its strange fragrance and the lack of a card telling her who it is from. Irma suggests it could have come from the Turtles. April takes the plant to the Turtles' lair, preparing to tell them that any kind of relationship is out of the question. On arrival, Splinter snatches the plant from her hands and throws it in the trash. As Splinter asks her where the plant came from, April faints.

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Invasion of the Punk Frogs

Synopsis

Whilst the Turtles are training in the sewers, up on the surface Shredder is plotting to defeat them by using mutagen to create more mutants he can use against them. Krang agrees to teleport the last of the mutagen to Shredder, but an ion storm in Dimension X interferes with the transport. Instead of New York, the mutagen arrives in a Florida swamp, where it comes into contact with four frogs, who instantly become mutants. Shredder travels to Florida to recover the mutagen.

Back in New York, April notifies the Turtles of reports of "froglike monsters" seen in Florida. The Turtles suspect that mutants may be involved and are about to head to Florida when they receive news that Bebop and Rocksteady are rampaging in Times Square. The Turtles head out to stop them.

In Florida, Shredder discovers the frogs and introduces himself with the line "My name is Shredder and I love all living things." Convinced of his sincerity, the frogs agree to trust him. Shredder names the frogs after his own personal heroes, giving them the names Attila the Frog, Genghis Frog, Rasputin the Mad Frog and Napoleon Bonafrog. He trains them in martial arts and, on his return to New York, he demonstrates the frogs' abilities by setting them against Bebop and Rocksteady.

After the frogs rob a bank, eyewitnesses describe the culprits as resembling large turtles and one Captain Hoffman is appointed to head a new anti-turtle task squad. Seeing the news reports on TV, the Turtles realise they are being framed and head out to find the real villains.

Meanwhile, Shredder decides to make more mutants, but Krang has no more mutagen. He decides the solution is to make some more. He sends the frogs to steal chemicals from a local plant, but April hears the plant is being broken into and notifies the Turtles, who go to intercept the thieves. After a brief confrontation, the frogs escape (courtesy of Rasputin's blinding arrow of light, which stuns the Turtles). After seeing what has been taken, Donatello realises that the frogs are stealing ingredients for mutagen. Knowing that the frogs will need to steal one more chemical, the Turtles contact April, who tells them where the nearest supply is available using Channel 6's database.

Shredder is starting to put the mutagen ingredients together when Krang tells him where he can find the last ingredient. Shredder sends the frogs to steal it, telling them to destroy the Turtles if they show up. The frogs ask if it would not be better to reason with them, but Shredder insists they are "evil." The frogs and the Turtles both show up at the location of the final ingredient but, before they can fight, Hoffman's anti-turtle squad arrives and uses a freeze ray to capture the frogs in ice. Refusing to let them be killed, Leonardo insists they take the frogs with them as they escape the scene.

Back at the lair, the Turtles allow the frogs to thaw out, hoping they can talk them round by reasoning with them. Realising that the Turtles saved them, the frogs decide that Shredder lied to them and cannot be trusted. The two groups decide to team up against Shredder. The frogs return to him and apologise for failing to steal the last chemical needed to make the mutagen, but claim that they heard the Turtles were planning to hide it in the abandoned Stonewall Prison.

However, when Hoffman's task force arrives at the prison, the Turtles and frogs are forced to team up against them whilst Shredder and the henchmutants escape. Escaping the task force, the Turtles take the frogs into the sewers and tell them the route which will take them back to Florida.

Themes

Sometimes it's easy to understand the Turtles' prejudice against humans. When the punk frogs rob a bank, eyewitnesses report seeing giant turtles. Didn't the lack of huge shells make them think they might have got it wrong?

Myths about the Turtles existence must have been circulating through the city for many episodes by now, but it's only when the Turtles are suspected of robbery that the anti-Turtle military squad is established to hunt them down and exterminate them. This is revealing about the authorities' attitude towards the Turtles. Although they are vigilantes, it would appear that people in power are willing to turn a blind eye to their activities most of the time (perhaps in recognition that the police are unable to handle the situations the Turtles take care of so well). When big business is threatened, however, it's an entirely different kettle of fish.

This is backed up by the fact that Hoffman's squad track the Turtles using devices tuned to their personally bio-rhythms. If this information was available to the authorities before now, it's clear that the only reason they haven't gone looking for them before is that they didn't want to.

Characters

If you needed proof that **Raphael** and **Michaelangelo** aren't into the hero-gig as much as their fellow Turtles, look no further. Raph admits he's not enthusiastic over training at the beginning of the episode. "It's hard to get worked up over a stupid obstacle course," he tells Splinter. Mike explains that he gets through the course by pretending there's a pizza waiting for him at the end.

When **Shredder** heads off to Florida to track down the missing mutagen, he uses a holographic projector to disguise himself as a normal citizen. Why he doesn't just change his clothes is anyone's guess, but in any case, it proves useful later in the episode when Shred uses the device to disguise himself and the henchmutants as member's of Hoffman's anti-Turtle squad, allowing them to escape. There are potentially millions of uses for such a device like this, so why is this the last we see of it?

In yet another example of Shredder displaying talents he never makes use of in other episodes, Shredder somehow manages to return to New York from Florida in about the time it takes for the Turtles to arrive home from Times Square. How'd he manage that? It's clearly nothing to do with the Technodrome's transporter, since we establish early in the episode that the transporter isn't working properly. Whilst we're at it, where did Shredder find the time to train the frogs to such a high standard on this incredibly short journey? Clearly, Shredder has his ways of accomplishing things when he can be bothered.

Speaking of **the frogs**...they're clearly very naive and this is what allows Shredder to exploit them. As if the name "Shredder" itself wasn't a clue that Shred isn't the man he claims to be, the frogs don't question Shredder's orders to steal the chemicals (even though they all agree that stealing is wrong) and don't challenge his assertion about the Turtles being evil until the Turtles rescue them from Hoffman. Clearly, if someone else had got to them first, it might have been a very different story.

Leonardo is adamant that the frogs should not be left to be exterminated by Hoffman

because they are "mutants...like us." Fair enough. So how come the Turtles have never attempted to reach out to Bebop and Rocksteady in this way? They're mutants too, right? The Turtles' attitude to humanity may explain the difference in their attitudes here. Is it because the frogs started off as animals, not humans (as the henchmutants did) that the Turtles are willing to trust them? As we know, the Turtles don't have a very high opinion of humans. Some mutants, it would seem, are more equal than others.

It's **Splinter** who suggests that the Turtles should try showing trust towards the frogs in order to win them over. This is a risky strategy - after all, if the frogs refused to listen to reason, then it's altogether possible they could escape then lead Shredder back to the Turtles' lair. Why does Splinter take this risk? Well, he seems very confident that he can win over the frogs. And maybe he's right to be confident. He does have experience manipulating naive mutants, after all.

When the frogs tell Shredder that the Turtles are hiding the last ingredient of the mutagen at Stonewall Prison, **Rocksteady** and **Bebop** both mention that they have done time there. So if you were unsure if prison works or not, wonder no more. It doesn't.

New York's Shiniest

Synopsis

April arrives at her appartment to find she is being burgled. Helpless to stop the thieves, April calls the Turtles, who locate them and get her property back by lifting a van, thus showing their strength and frightening them off. April is still angry about the levels of crime in the city and decides to do a story about it. Thanks to a contact at the Police Department, she locates Rex 1, a prototype robot policeman and activates him. At this point she is found by some cops, but saved from arrest by Rex 1, who refuses to take no for an answer and follows her home, telling her she is his controller and his job is to serve and protect her.

April heads to the Turtle's lair and explains what has happened. They decide to help by abducting Vernon from Channel 6 and forcing him to operate the camera whilst April does her report on the new police robot plans. Meanwhile, at Channel 6, Burne Thompson has no idea what's going on (just for a change).

In the Technodrome, Shredder sees the report and decides to hack into the police computer system and duplicate the robot design, so he can create his own army of evil robots. As the Turtles return from taking Vernon back to Channel 6, they are met by the robot army and forced to dive into the water below. Shredder's robots cause chaos in the city, but the Turtles confront them again. Rex 1 is damaged and needs to be re-programmed in the lair using spare parts and videotapes. He is reprogrammed to control the other robots.

The robots are lured into the trap with the aid of some fancy fireworks and the robots are soon following Rex 1 into an aerobics technique. The resultant confusion overloads their circuits and they are deactivated. Unsurprisingly, Shredder is not caught.

Themes

The anti-authority themes continue, with the presentation of the police force as a complete waste of time. Not only is their information system so pregnable that Shredder manages to

find out the exact details of their robot police force, but the prototype robot, Rex 1, would cause a scandal if ever commissioned. Rex doesn't understand common sayings, attempts to arrest fellow policemen when they try to arrest April for breaking the law, only seeks to "serve and protect" whoever is holding the remote and drags April away against her explicit will. He's not good for public relations. Strangely, the one of the few skills you wouldn't require from a robot policeman, the ability to cook, is one of the few things Rex actually does well. And the robots created in his image are too dumb to understand how a carousel works.

Rex 1 is more like a bodyguard (with some severe flaws, obviously) than a policeman and you have to wonder if he was developed with the potential for profit in mind. After all, dictator-run governments and celebrities could probably offer a greater sum per robot than the city administration could ever hope to. The robots are actually more efficient and obedient when commanded by Shredder for evil purposes. This is what happens when you let private industries get involved in public services. For more information on this, see events in Great Britain and most other Western countries ever since the early Eighties. Blame Thatcher and Reagan.

Oh and the policemen (all two of them) sent to apprehend Rex 1 run away after being shot at. This explains a lot about the amount of crime in NYC. If policemen give up everytime they are shot at, in a city where guns are freely available, then it's unlikely much law enforcement ever takes place.

The robots are invented for noble purposes (sort of - depending on your view of the police as protectors of the state or enforcers of the status quo). They are easily usurped for evil purposes.

More anti-human comments this episode: the Turtles despair that the people of New York are polluting the local rivers - "destroying their own water supply." In modern Britain, drinking water is cleansed before it goes into reservoirs. I never realised that in the 1980s New York people drank straight from the riverside, used condoms and all.

The Turtles cleverly avoid fighting the burglars with a show of strength, by lifting a van. They seem to be evolving physically as well as intellectually. They demonstrate a new ability, climbing the walls of Channel 6 without any tools. Why don't they use this ability more often? Maybe it would just make things too easy. This new growth in their personalities and abilities is sadly cancelled out by other decisions made in this episode. As well as abducting Vernon against his will (so he can operate the camera, which the TMNT demonstrate they can easily do themselves), they mess around with the camera themselves, filming each other and creating evidence of their existence. Way to keep a secret guys.

Characters

Irma demonstrates her complete lack of standards once again, demonstrating her flattery after receiving the attention of some fat slob in a truck (who turns out to be a criminal). It seems humanity isn't even a necessary characteristic of Irma's dates. Rex 1 may be a malfunctioning robot fascist, but that's no barrier to Irma dating him.

Some choice words of wisdom from **Splinter** this episode. "All things in life are subject to examination" he tells the Turtles whilst watching them change a lightbulb. So the point he's making is it's best to be judgemental at all times? Hmm.... Another useful piece of advice

follows later. "There is a time for feeling and a time for action." Hard to argue with that.

April watches her news report on TV. Hang on a minute - does this mean Channel 6 news isn't even live? What kind of channel is this? And why does April need to watch herself present a news report recorded on the same day? What kind of narcissist is she? Earlier in the episode, April tells Irma that her police headquarters contact "owes" her one. What has she done for him? Well, apart from the obvious "favours" that women may perform for members of the opposite sex, there's always various other things that news reporters might do for policemen. Like withholding information that makes the police force look bad. Manipulating information regarding the levels of crime in the city is another one. Whose pocket is April in exactly?

She's not completely irredeemable though. For once April realises her own culpability for the situation after Shredder's army of robots starts posing a threat to the entire city. Doesn't last long, though.

If **Don**'s such a genius, why does he plug in and switch on a broken TV, breaking every rule in the dealing-with-electrical-things book? Unless he's not adverse to the odd electrical shock....or unless he's quite prepared to put up with worse.

Leo's also displaying reckless/suicidal tendencies this episode, setting a bad example for kids everywhere by throwing a metal sword at a powerline. Obviously, throwing anything at powerlines is completely stupid, but metal things are particularly dangerous because, as any non-idiot knows, metal conducts electricity. In fact, Leonardo's on a positively Klingon reckless-honour-in-the-face-of-death kick today, replying to the command "drop your weapons" with "we'd rather drop our bodies." And he's supposed to be the role model.

Vernon is deluding himself once again, describing himself as a "sensitive artist." **Burne** has no idea what is going on in his own news studio. Typical day at Channel 6 then.

Shredder can't be bothered today, or so it would seem. Perhaps he's on some kind of drugs to help him control his anger or maybe he's suffering from amnesia. Midway through the episode, he becomes intrigued with the idea of replacing people with robots after seeing April's report on the news. But HE ALREADY KNEW! In fact, he announced his intention to use this knowledge to his own ends at the beginning of the episode.

Shred's pretty sloppy in battle too, accepting the TMNT's death when they dive into the water, despite the not-exactly-little-known fact that water is a turtle's natural habitat. His strategy for taking over the city is slightly unfathomable. Rather than seize political institutions and take control of the police force, he has the robots take over a TV station, arrest random people and turn the city into a warzone. He seems unconcerned about whether the city is worth ruling or not, so long as he's the one ruling it. Chaos seems to be the central aim of the plan, although the ego boost that goes with the title of Emperor shouldn't be ignored.

Splinter No More

Synopsis

Observing Splinter's unhappy mood, the Turtles realise that he misses being human and Donatello proposes to turn him back using the remains of the mutagen which originally

transformed them. Splinter consents and the experiment works. Now using the name Yoshi again, the former rat decides to go for a walk around the city.

Meanwhile, April is doing public announcements for Library Week and sees Rocksteady and Bebop skulking around. She contacts the Turtles and they arrive at the library, where they fight the Shredder and the mutants, who escape. The TMNT uncover Shredder's plan to open a portal to Dimension X with an ancient spell and set about trying to find the underground temple which will serve as the location.

Yoshi's first day as a human again isn't going too well. After meeting rude passersby and an unsympathetic taxi driver, he is nearly mugged in a park and is only saved by the fact that the mutagen is beginning to wear off, frightening his attackers away. Yoshi rushes back underground, pursued by some cops who he eventually shakes off in a subway tunnel. The mutagen wears off completely and he reverts to Splinter.

Still heading towards the temple, Shredder contacts Krang and has an invention called the NeuroScrambler teleported to him. The device is designed to set the Turtles against each other and Shredder plans to use it to distract the Turtles and stop them getting to the temple on time to stop him doing the spell. The plan is partially successful, as the Turtles start fighting and bitching at each other as they get nearer to the device. Only April's urging them to consider how Splinter would view their behaviour calms them down long enough to destroy the NeuroScrambler.

Shredder starts reciting the spell and the Turtles arrive but are held back by Rocksteady and Bebop. At this point, Splinter shows up and interrupts the ritual, causing Shredder to open a portal to the wrong dimension. A large tentacled creature emerges from the portal and becomes trapped in this dimension. The Turtles destroy the temple with the monster in it whilst the villains escape.

Themes

The Turtles aren't tempted by the sight of Splinter's sushi. "Raw fish," says Don. "Yech!" And what exactly is it that constitutes the main foodstuff of a turtle's diet in the wild? Raw fish. Intriguing. The Turtles are always denouncing human kind for being losers, but how close to humanity are they themselves? What about Splinter in his newly refurbished human body? Will he want to "stay with his own kind"? Well apparently not, because, in case you hadn't realised, humanity sucks. The main reason that humans freak when Yoshi reverts to Splinter is that humans hate "everything that's different to themselves."

Yet it's the Turtles who choose to destroy the "monster" which emerges when Shredder opens the wrong portal. Yes, the monster is dangerous, but the Turtles have faced other dangerous creatures (such as dinosaurs and tigers) and haven't choosed to annihilate them. Why should the monster be killed rather than tamed or imprisoned? Because it's not from around here? Because it's freakish? Because it's different? Looks like humanity isn't the only species that could use a lesson in tolerance.

Characters

Splinter misses being human. Why he didn't remember how hateful and prejudiced humans are early in the episode is unknown, but before this revelation he is keen to "walk the streets, to feel the sunlight" again. This causes a dilemma. As a rat, Splinter's abilities include night vision and an enhanced sense of smell. These skills are useful to the Turtles.

However, as a human Splinter would be able to go "topside" whenever he wished to see what Shredder is plotting. Hmmm...regular viewers may have noted that the Turtles can and do go "topside" whenever they wish, in order to do this. Clearly, the Turtles don't feel that Splinter is all that valuable to them as a crimefighter and would rather see him happy as a human than retain his abilities.

As a human, Splinter resumes the identity of Yoshi, although Splinter and Yoshi differ in species only. What is the purpose of these separate identities? Hard to say. Maybe the memory of being human was so painful for Splinter that he tried to disassociate himself from it by adopting a new name. He probably has some weird Eastern rat philosophy to explain it.

When Yoshi takes some time to return, the Turtles wonder if he'll come back. Would Yoshi have returned to the sewers if he didn't have to? Notice that he doesn't give the Turtles any indication of what time he will return, or if he'll return at all before he leaves.

As it is, he doesn't get the choice. The mutagen is unstable and quickly wears off. Yoshi reverts to Splinter in public view and is forced to retreat to the sewers. He doesn't seem to mind though, because the things he's endured in his one day as a human have convinced him humanity is a waste of time anyway. After all, not only did he meet some slightly rude passersby who stared at him for being dressed in pyjamas, but the taxi driver he met refused to drive him anywhere for free and he was nearly mugged (in one of the most notorious cities for crime in the USA of all places). Which would surely be enough to convince anyone that humans aren't really all they're cracked up to be.

Don still has the remnants of the mutagen that created the TMNT fifteen years ago. You can only wonder why he kept it for so long, but in comes in handy when he reactivates it to turn Splinter human for a day. Y'know... Donatello's supposedly a genius. Wouldn't you think he'd have realised that the reversion to humanity might not be permanent? Wouldn't you think that if a chemical could create a change as permanent as Yoshi's original transformation to Splinter that it could reverse this permanently if wielded by an expert? Why didn't it work and why didn't Don warn Splinter about this possibility? In "The Gang's All Here", Don describes humanity as a lower form of life, worse than slugs even and warns Michaelangelo against attempting to become human. If this is Don's view, why did he attempt to help Splinter become human? DID he attempt to help Splinter become human?

Put yourself in Don's place. The closest thing you have to a father is an old rat who used to be human and appears depressed because he wants to be human again. You yourself cannot understand the attraction of being One Of Them but you don't know how to make your father-rat friend share this point of view. You're convinced that he would be happier with his life as a rat if he could witness the reality of human life for one day. So you dig up some old mutagen (or make up some new chemical and claim it's old mutagen - after all if Krang can create reverse mutagen, why can't Don?) and turn father-rat guy into a human...but only temporarily. Sure enough, your plan works. Splinter has a shitty day as a human, reverts to rat form and is a lot happier for the experience. Is Don clever enough to work all this out? Well, he is supposed to be a genius...

April's doing public announcements for library week. There really is no news in NYC this episode then? And she's still lying about the TMNT to Irma.

This episode's winner in the what-the-heck-are-you-doing-that-for stakes has to be **Krang**,

who decides to take a shower in his robot body, as you do. This is tantamount to plugging the toaster in and putting it in the toilet bowl. On a children's cartoon! But then again, Krang's robot body is technologically very advanced, so no doubt it's invulnerable to such things. Most likely, Krang is showering in his robot body BECAUSE it sets a bad example. He is evil, after all.

The most revealing moment of the episode takes place when the Turtles are manipulated by the NeuroScrambler and some home truths come out. Most notably, **Raphael** is called a "wimp." That would explain a lot, actually. Is Raph's constant wisecracking a way of keeping fear at bay or hiding his true feelings to protect himself? Whatever it is, he doesn't challenge this comment.

Teenagers from Dimension X

Synopsis

Whilst the Turtles are watching a monster movie on TV, **Raphael** teases **Michaelangelo** about his “romance” with Kala, of the Neutrinos. At that very moment, the Neutrinos are cruising around Dimension X in their flying car, the Star Mobile, and decide to “buzz” the Technodrome (whatever the hell that means). They spot an open cargo door and head inside. Tapping into the communication system, they learn of **Shredder**’s plan to turn the Turtles into mindless zombies using a device called the Mento Neutraliser. The Neutrinos decide to intervene and activate the portal generator they have in their car.

Once on Earth, the Neutrinos decide the best way to find the Turtles is to head to Channel 6 and get their attention. After they “buzz” the building (again, I have no fucking idea what this actually entails), **April** calls the Turtles and they head off to meet the Neutrinos in the Turtleblimp. Meanwhile, Shredder has seen a news bulletin and knows the Neutrinos are on Earth. He shoots them down and has Bebop and **Rocksteady** kidnap them. The Turtles try to follow but end up crashing the blimp.

At the Turtles’ lair, **Donatello** debuts his new inventions, the Cheapskate (i.e. a skateboard with an engine attached) and a device he can use to track down the Neutrinos. At the abandoned amusement park where Shredder is keeping the Neutrinos, he demands they hand over the device they used to open the portal. The device is built into the Star Mobile, so Shredder sends his henchmutants to go and get it, only to find it has been towed away.

Meanwhile, the Turtles arrive at the amusement park and rescue the Neutrinos. Donatello uses his tracking device to lead the good guys to the Star Mobile, but upon finding it, the Neutrinos realise they can’t activate a portal to get home because the crystal that powers it is cracked.

The Turtles and the Neutrinos make their way to the nearest particle accelerator, hoping to use it to fix the crystal. The resultant power surge threatens to kill them and is detected by **Krang**’s machinery, meaning that Krang is able to tell Shredder and the henchmutants where the crystal is. The bad guys arrive and manage to take out the Turtles and the Neutrinos using their stun guns. The impact causes one of the Turtles’ comm device to go off and alert April. The villains depart taking the Turtles with them, leaving the Neutrinos to be found by April shortly after. April and the Neutrinos are forced to flee from some local punks and escape to the sewers.

Shredder places the Turtles into the Mento Neutraliser and is about to activate the Star Mobile's portal and head back to Dimension X, when he accidentally activates the car's alarm system and founds himself frozen in his seat. The Turtles seize the chance to escape and disarm the henchmutants, who free Shredder before being forced to run from the same punks who chased April and the Neutrinos. April, the Turtles and the Neutrinos all leave the scene in the Star Mobile.

Themes

The episode begins with the Turtles watching a monster movie named "The Space Turtle that Ate Tokyo", in which a giant turtle terrorises a city. The Turtles, unsuprisingly, are cheering on the villain. Is this just harmless fun or is there something more sinister in the way the Turtles fantasise about humanity being terrorised by a giant turtle? Is it just entertainment or pure wish fulfilment? It's certainly part of a pattern in the movies the Turtles watch.

You really have to wonder about the teenagers of Dimension X. The Neutrinos have their own flying car, despite the fact that they're hardly the most responsible kids and they decide to "buzz" the Technodrome just for the hell of it. Luckily, things work out for them this time, but perhaps the whole incident should serve as a lesson to parents that teenagers simply don't *need* cars and that nothing much good can come out of bored teenagers having access to a trilithium powered flying vehicle.

When someone wonders why anyone would build a particle accelerator in such a run-down area, Shredder speculates it's because nobody would care about the neighbourhood if the device blew up. If this cynical observation is correct, it's an outrageous scandal. Did the officials who approved the building of the device really think it was okay to place a dangerous device in a residential area because the only residents were poor people? Shouldn't unstable particle accelerators ideally be built out in the middle of nowhere – if they have to be built anywhere at all?

Characters

Michaelangelo's relationship with Neutrino gal **Kala** is both confusing and worrying. They're different species, so there's never going to be anything physical between them, and they live in different dimensions so even the prospect of friendship is a little unrealistic. Mike's feelings are strong enough that Raphael embarasses him by mentioning it at the episode's beginning and when the Neutrinos arrive in New York, Mike speculates "I guess Kala just couldn't stay away." When he's about to see Kala, he asks "How do I look?" and when Donatello says "the same as always", Mike replies "I was afraid of that." Later, when the Neutrinos are captured by Shredder, Mike paces around worrying about her. He later tells Kala "I'd follow you anywhere" and gives her a pizza as a going away present – which is notable since Michaelangelo hardly ever passes up an opportunity to eat pizza himself and, to the best of my knowledge, has never given one up to anybody.

His feelings for Kala are hardly subtle – despite the fact that nothing could ever happen between them. It's understandable that someone in Mike's situation would relish any romantic attention at all, but getting obsessed and carried away is somewhat unhealthy. Perhaps Mike is just trying to imitate the romantic relationships he's seen on TV, as an attempt to live a more "normal" lifestyle, but he still goes over the top. Maybe this is just part of his ongoing lust for attention?

Far from giving helpful fatherly advice, **Splinter** is totally useless in this situation. When Mike is worried for Kala's safety, he offers this unreassuring advice: "One must be like the willow that bends with the storm." In other words? Go with the flow. Splinter is clearly no expert in matters of the heart. It's possible there was never any time for romance in his life even before he became a big rat.

Raphael seizes another opportunity to disparage Mike this episode. When the Turtles are placed in the Mento Neutraliser, which threatens to turn them into brainless zombies, he quips "Don't sweat it Michaelangelo, you don't have that much to lose." Well at least he has a girlfriend, Raph. She's a squeaky-voiced beehive-haired midget from another dimension, but she's one more than you got.

The Catwoman From Channel Six

Synopsis

Shredder is experimenting with his new matter transporter and manages to send Rocksteady and Bebop to a garbage dump. From there, they find their way to the Turtles lair by chance, interrupting them as they watch a horror flick. After defeating them in battle, the Turtles watch as the two mutants are teleported back to Shredder's hideout. Shredder is unimpressed when Bebop and Rocksteady are unable to give directions to the Turtles lair.

Meanwhile, the Turtles contact April, telling them they have a great news story for her and asking her to bring over a portable TV. They continue their movie marathon whilst April looks for clues to help her track down the story. Finding a food carton from Woo's Oriental Palace, she decides to head there first. Posing as a restaurant critic, she asks a few questions and finds out that Shredder's hideout is an empty warehouse on the dock.

She arrives at the hideout to find no one is there, but starts investigating the matter transporter. As she steps onto the platform, a stray cat wanders in, jumps onto the control console and activates the device. It then jumps onto the platform itself. April feels woozy and realises something has happened to her, seeing that she now has claws.

The Turtles arrive at Woo's restaurant, looking for April, and find themselves in the middle of a food fight. Meanwhile, April is becoming more and more catlike and Irma observes her behaviour and contacts the Turtles. April herself returns to the warehouse, hoping to reverse the process, but is captured by Shredder, who attaches a mind control collar and instructs April to find and kill Splinter.

Outside April's apartment, the Turtles come face to face with a tiger which has been set free from the zoo by April. After escaping from it, they work out what must have happened to April from the photos she took in Shredder's hideout. Meanwhile, at the Turtles lair, Splinter is meditating, hoping to rid himself of his fear of cats. April attacks Splinter, but Splinter pleads with her and their friendship interferes with the effects of the collar. The Turtles arrive in time for Leo to cut off the collar and save Splinter. The effects wear off and April reverts back to her normal self.

Themes

Splinter doesn't approve of the boys watching horror flicks - he's thinks TV promotes mindless violence. Ha!

First of all, Splinter himself promotes more than his fair share of mindless violence. Secondly, it's an ironic statement in a cartoon that was part of a phenomenon which reignited the whole movie/TV violence debate. Remember when parents feared to let their children watch the first TMNT movie? Remember the BBC editing out all the nunchakus from the cartoon? Remember all the kids who rushed out to get martial arts training?

Thirdly, though, Splinter may have a point. When Bebop and Rocksteady arrive in the Turtle's lair, it isn't the invasion itself which really riles the Turtles, but the trashing of the TV. The Turtles get violent. Later on, Don contacts April telling her they've got an emergency situation. They need to borrow her portable television (notice that none of the Turtles are too worried about the fact that Bebop and Rocksteady found the lair). The Turtles are too busy watching television to follow up on the clues as to how the two mutants found the place, leaving April to wander off by herself and cause a whole heap of trouble. Violence follows.

Characters

It's official - **Raphael** is sexist. At the beginning of the episode, he's watching some crappy old horror film. Mike wonders who the monster will attack next. "Who cares, so long as she's a good screamer?" Raph asks. At the end of the episode, April is moaning about the state of her nails. "Yep, she's back to being a woman all right," the enlightened one quips. If all of Raph's views on women are so controversial, no wonder he's frequently hiding his views behind jokes.

April's glitzy reporting career reaches a new heights when she is sent to cover a Fat Cabby contest. It's clear enough that she thinks she's too good for these stories when she complains to Vernon about having to do them, but putting herself in danger by going after Shredder is a step too far, perhaps. Remember, every time she gets herself in trouble, the Turtles waste time they could be using helping others. On the other hand, she clearly thinks enough of her friendship with Splinter for it to interfere with the mind control collar, so maybe there's hope for the selfish cow yet.

How desperate is **Irma**? She thinks the name "Splinter" is cute and wants to meet him. She scarpers after discovering he's a) a big rat and b) about a million years old. There may be hope for her too.

Return of the Technodrome

Synopsis

It's a slow news day at Channel 6, so much so that Burne tells his reporters to go out and "make news." April goes to see the Turtles, hoping they could provide her with a story. When she arrives at the lair, Splinter is preparing to go on a three day pilgrimmage.

Meanwhile, Shredder is taking control of the hydroelectric power station at Niagara Falls, hoping to steal enough power to bring the Technodrome back to Earth. They succeed, but the power surge leads to a blackout. Leonardo has a "psychic" feeling that Shredder and Krang are involved, which is confirmed when Donatello intercepts a transmission between the two villains. Along with April, the Turtles head to Niagara Falls.

When they arrive, they find Splinter has also sensed trouble and made his way there. Don

suggests they can stop the hydroelectric station by stopping the flow of the river. Although they manage to do this, it's too late and Krang uses auxiliary to open a portal and bring the Technodrome to Earth. Shredder is about to order his army to attack the Turtles, when Krang orders him to stop, demanding that he be allowed to personally destroy them using the Technodrome's lasers. When he tries to fire, however, he finds that there is not enough power.

The Turtles take the opportunity to escape but Krang is still determined to go on with his plan to take over the world. He intends to go underground and cause an earthquake in New York city, but this fails when the Turtles manage to get inside the Technodrome and alter the wiring, causing the Technodrome to burrow itself all the way to the Earth's core.

Themes

The most interesting part of this episode is the fact that the residents of New York city refuse to evacuate after Krang instructs them that he will cause a deadly earthquake. I don't know if this is a statement about New Yorkers or people in general, but why the hell not? Luckily for them, the mutant freaks half of them are scared of and the other half don't believe in save the day, preventing the need for anyone to get off their sofa and rush to safety.

There's a nice reminder for us that Turtles are the uber-race at the end of the episode. "I've just realised," April tells us, "I'm the only 100% human here!". Don't worry, someone tells her, nobody's perfect. Everybody laughs.

Characters

Burne's journalistic ethics are on display again when he tells his reporters to go out and "make news". Aren't journalists supposed to be observers by nature? Why is there no news to report on in the first place?

April surprises Irma by announcing that the Turtles ARE NOT the most exciting thing in her life. Really? So what exactly has April got going on in her life that's more exciting? A new Ikea coffee table? A date with a hot camera operator at the end of the week? Seriously, does April lead some kind of secret double life? That would explain her mysterious links with the police force.

Conversely, **Irma** mutters sadly that the Turtles ARE the most interesting thing in her miserable existence. To keep this in perspective, let's bear in mind that at this stage Irma has met the Turtles precisely once. They're barely acquaintances. Maybe she really does need to get a man.

Back to **April**. At the end of the episode she says she's "only just realised" she's the only 100% human in the group consisting of her, Splinter and the Turtles. Hello??!! It's the end of the second season. How long did it take her to have this brainwave?

Why do the Turtles take her with them to Niagara Falls? Are they trying to get her killed? You couldn't really blame them, but entirely more likely is the possibility that she nagged them so much offscreen that they couldn't really refuse. Anything for a story.

Splinter not only reveals some neat Jedi style skills this episode (sensing "danger" at Niagara Falls whilst away on his retreat and later being able to sense Shredder's presence

in the Technodrome), but we also get a few details of his spiritual side. At the beginning of the episode he takes off for a three day fasting and meditation and pilgrimmage. Interesting. Is Splinter a Buddhist? Or is this a purely ninja-related activity?

Similarly to Splinter, **Shredder** is able to sense Splinter nearby. How? If this is a standard ninja ability, why don't we see more of it? Maybe it pertains more to the link between Shredder and Splinter. Makes you wonder exactly what happened between those two.

Notice that the Turtles make no attempt to capture Shredder, even though he is trapped under a tree.

As if we didn't have enough wannabe Skywalkers around, **Leonardo** suddenly develops Splinter-stylee "psychic" abilities this episode and stops abruptly on the way home, sensing trouble. Maybe this psychic thing is a standard ninja ability after all, and the other Turtles just haven't got the hang of it yet. Or maybe Number One son was the only one to have the family secret passed on to him...

Whatever his relationship with Splinter, Leonardo isn't comfortable with the idea of relying on him. He refuses to seek Splinter's help and demands that the Turtles go to face Shredder alone (when they turn up, Splinter has already arrived, but that's hardly the point). Clearly a guy with something to prove. Raphael admits he is "hard to say no to."

It would seem for all of the Turtles' talk about respecting nature, not polluting the local water supply and the general inferiority of human city existence, that **Donatello** has no problem messing with nature when it suits him. It is he who suggests "stopping" the river in order to halt Shredder's plan, ignoring the effects this may have on the local habitat.

We also get an early glimpse of his reckless streak when he stands around near the unexploded device he chucked at the Technodrome. Genius, indeed.

Interesting to note that when **Krang** prevents Shredder from battling the Turtles in order to kill them personally, he chooses a relatively painless and quick method to do it. Surely he'd get more pleasure seeing them ripped apart by Shredder's army than he would from destroying them himself in such an impersonal manner. Is he just a glory hog or is it something else? Maybe he doesn't want the Turtles to have a drawn out, horrible death?

Season 3

Beneath The Sewers

Synopsis

Down in the sewers, the Turtles are slacking off rather than practising their katas. Splinter berates their lack of dedication and the guys argue that, with Shredder and Krang gone, there is no need to practise so much. Splinter tells them that even if Shredder and Krang are permanently gone, there is still lots for the TMNT to do. Suddenly, he attacks them, defeating them all and proving that their skills have deteriorated.

In the Technodrome, Krang blames Shredder for the damage that has been caused to important equipment and sends him up to the surface for replacements. Meanwhile, the Turtles are patrolling in the Turtlevan and decide to take the night off and see a kung fu

movie marathon instead, switching off their Turtlecomms to prevent interruptions. Back at the lair, Splinter becomes worried about them when they do not return and contacts April, who is at a hospital press conference and has not seen them.

At the press conference, a Medi-Laser gun for healing injuries is unveiled, only to be stolen by Shredder, Bebop and Rocksteady. Whilst the Turtles delay contacting Splinter and go for a pizza instead, Splinter tracks down Shredder and is shot by the Medi-Laser on its reverse setting. Splinter becomes comatose and Shredder escapes. April finds Splinter, and a section of the Medi-Laser that was knocked loose in the confrontation, moments later and takes him back to the lair. When the Turtles return home, they are guilt-stricken and decide to find the Medi-Laser and use it to restore Splinter's health.

In the Technodrome, Krang realises the Medi-Laser is broken and sends Shredder back to retrieve the missing section. Shredder realises that the Turtles must have it and sends Bebop and Rocksteady to draw them out by causing a rampage.

Meanwhile, the Turtles are driving around aimlessly and attack a man in a lilac coat who looks nothing like Shredder, before they realise what is going on in Central Park and go to face the mutants. Bebop and Rocksteady escape and the TMNT return to the sewers. They are followed by Shredder and a fight follows. The Turtles grab the Medi-Laser but Shredder gets the missing section.

Wanting to get the Medi-Laser back, Shredder contacts Krang for reinforcements. The Turtles have no luck using the Medi-Laser without the missing section, but see a second prototype advertised in the news. They race to the hospital, but Shredder has got there first. After a confrontation, the Turtles get the Medi-Laser and cure Splinter. April returns the Medi-Laser to the hospital on her way back to work.

Title

For some reason, the BBC saw fit to rename this episode "Beneath These Streets." Don't ask me. It does make more sense than "Beneath the Sewers" though.

Themes

The big lesson from this episode is one nicked from Spider-Man: with great power comes great responsibility. So the TMNT cannot relax. Ever. The city is filled with crime and even if Shredder was permanently defeated, this would change nothing. So how come 80% of the TMNT's battles are against Shredder? Doesn't this mean that with Shredder gone, they should have 80% more of their battle time to devote to leisure? No. Because after only a short period of slacking off on the training, the TMNT manage to confuse a man in a lilac coat with Shredder, the most conspicuous man in NYC. One evening at the cinema nearly gets Splinter killed and delivers the city to Shredder. Which just goes to show. Practise makes perfect and movies are evil.

Why on Earth would a device like the Medi-Laser, designed to heal, be made in the form of a gun? And why the hell would there be a reverse setting? The designer MUST have realised that this could only have evil implications. A possible answer could be that the Medi Laser was designed with the millitary, rather than medicine, in mind. Usurping good science for evil purposes. Again.

The TMNT have a particularly lame excuse for not capturing Bebop and Rocksteady this

episode. They choose not to pursue them after they jump into a lake. "Dive into that muck?" Don asks. "Forget it!"

Characters

Although **Splinter** has allowed the Turtles to go on vacation in other episodes, he is very firm this episode that they cannot ever relax against evil. They need to be permanently vigilant, yet they can have some time off occasionally. Huh? Splinter's problems are ones most fathers face. Basically, he isn't giving the Turtles space to be teenagers. He starts worrying immediately when they don't return home on time and is unforgiving when he catches them slacking off. Splinter may have brought up the TMNT and taught them many useful things, but does that give him the right of setting their agenda as constantly vigilant crime fighters? Is he a glory hound? Other evidence this episode would seem to support that, with Splinter rushing in to face Shredder without any weapons, reinforcement or protection. Is he in any position to lecture the Turtles, when he is so reckless?

Krang enjoys blaming all of his problems on Shredder's incompetence this episode, calling him a bungling idiot, but when asked to provide reinforcements Krang tells him he can only spare two foot soldiers. To help defeat his arch enemies and steal a device which his whole plan rests on he can only spare two foot soldiers? What can the others be doing that's so important he can't redirect more resources to a crucial plan? How willing to capture the Turtles is Krang if he prioritises household jobs over battling them?

Leonardo decides to be the wet blanket this episode, questioning if it's okay for the Turtles to take a night off and leading the Taking the Blame procession when Splinter is ill. In fact, he's so distraught that he can't come up with any better plan of action than randomly driving around hoping to come across Shredder

Why does **April**'s van have a radio which says "Attention all units" and directs her to news events? Is it a stolen police radio? She is known to have a contact at police headquarters. **Don**'s clearly been keeping an eye on current events. He seems to know all about the medi-laser, including why it won't work, even though it's only just been invented. How did he access this information? Who knows? He has his ways. He also does his part to keep the game going by suggesting they don't chase Bebop and Rocksteady after they dive into a river. His excuse? The river is too mucky.

And **Mike** is clearly in a look-at-me-aren't-I-messed-up mood again, declaring that he's eaten twelve pizzas. Sure you did, Mike.

Turtles On Trial

Synopsis

The Turtles are watching wrestling on TV when Michaelangelo switches to "On Trial", a show hosted by vicious hatemongerer Clayton Kellerman. Kellerman has found a new scapegoat for the city's troubles - the TMNT. The Turtles are mortified by the crowd's positive reaction to Kellerman's allegations. April arrives with masks for the Turtles made by the Channel 6 news department, to make them look more human.

Later on, the Turtles have just finished foiling a burglary at a jewel store when an angry mob forms and chases them into the sewers. The Turtles decide to confront Kellerman on TV, asking April to clear it with her boss.

In the Technodrome, there isn't even enough power left to keep the refrigeration units running and Krang complains that Shredder's incompetence is responsible for the situation. Shredder tells Krang he should go up to the surface himself to get what he needs and Krang decides this is a good idea. Shredder, Rocksteady and Bebop are to provide a distraction whilst Krang steals the army weapon he needs to destroy the Turtles.

The "distraction" consists of breaking into the Natural History Museum. On their way to the TV studio, the TMNT are contacted by Splinter, who tells them what is happening and they head over to the museum where they encounter the villains. Meanwhile, Krang is stealing a robot from an army base. Shredder manages to grab ahold of April and the Turtles seem to be defeated - but Krang contacts Shredder and demands he let them go. He's keen to destroy them himself.

The Turtles make it back to the studio in time for their appearance on "On Trial." They are nervous and don't manage to defend themselves too well. Krang then arrives outside the building and starts firing. The Turtles appear to be outclassed, until Shredder's arrival in a transport module distracts Krang and the Turtles take advantage of the confusion to destroy the robot. The villains escape.

Kellerman thanks the TMNT for the rescue, but assures them it won't change anything. He'll still go on badmouthing them.

Themes

Okay, I'm not just making it up this time. This episode has real, actual themes in it (and an unhappy ending to boot).

The Turtles are freaks. They're different, so people fear them. It's sad, but it happens. Ever been unnerved or worried about some animal or insect lurking about in your attic or basement? Or a monster under the bed? Right, now imagine that the monster is real or the insect has a laser gun. Of course you're gonna be scared. Until, that is, you make friends with the monster or realise that Mr. Cockroach is only gonna use the laser gun for good. Or whatever.

We know that the TMNT are heroes because we have the advantage of seeing it from their point of view. Explaining the disgraced martial arts master/alien brain/world takeover situation to an ordinary New York citizen is a bit like trying to explain the Israel/Palestine conflict to a five year old child. And since the Turtles have their own little prejudices (humans are crap, remember?), they've never really made much effort at putting the record straight. Even April's reports on them tend to be vague and neutral.

So in steps Clayton Kellerman, a guy who makes his career out of scapegoating suitable victims, to take advantage of the situation. As the name "On Trial" suggests, Kellerman's show is all about holding people up to public scrutiny. But since Channel 6 is a profit-making organisation and not a public institution, this has to be done in a way that's as scandalous, exciting and ratings grabbing as possible. Which is a bit like having the public courts sponsored by Coca Cola. There's an inherent conflict of interests.

Kellerman thrives on fear. He introduces the episode of "On Trial" seen here with the words "I bet you thought you knew about all the nutcases trying to sabotage our way of life!" The Turtles are the perfect target for Kellerman. Since no one knows anything about

them, it's easy to blame them for everything from increased crime levels to reduced spending on public transport. After all, they've got nobody to defend them.

Another theme in this episode is the power of television. If "On Trial" had taken the format of a website article or a piece in the New York Times, the most the writers could hope for would be an e-mail campaign or a nice speech from the mayor. As a prime time TV show, "On Trial" has such a wide audience that it manages to turn ordinary citizens into an unruly mob. The Turtles recognise that TV is the only way to put things right, hence their decision to respond on Kellerman's show. But, for once, they don't know the rules of the game they're playing. Even Donatello, the genius of the bunch, can't give a good answer when Kellerman asks why they aren't in the studio. Leonardo makes the truth sound completely unrealistic and even Michaelangelo, supposedly the laid back one, loses his temper when Kellerman asks why they carry weapons. As April notes, Kellerman makes "mincemeat" out of them.

Having said all of this....if the public don't know the truth about the Turtles, whose fault is that? Their public relations record is pretty dire. The TMNT have a TV news reporter as their closest friend and this would be a distinct advantage if they chose to stick around and explain their actions after dramatic battles and confrontations. Yet they don't. Look at the events in the Natural History Museum. The public saw four large turtles illegally trespassing and they did commit extensive property damage during the battle. Who could blame people for jumping to the conclusion that they trashed the museum for the hell of it? Did the Turtles explain themselves afterwards? Do they ever co-operate with the police? Do they ever talk with the citizens they are sworn to protect?

Who is to say that some of the worries aren't justified? Was there any real reason for the Turtles to head to the Natural History Museum? Splinter never said that Shredder had broken in, just that he had been sighted in the area. The TMNT have a tendency to rush off whenever Shredder is seen, start a fight for no good reason and cause property damage in the process. No one ever gets hurt, but that has more to do with luck than anything else. Maybe it's about time they were asked to account for their actions.

But not on Kellerman's show.

The army security around the robot Krang steals is pretty useless. They appear to have no weapons and they're playing cards when Krang arrives. Both of them. Let me remind you that this robot is powerful enough to destroy the entire city. Makes you wonder who's guarding the nuclear missiles.

Characters

The secret of **Kellerman**'s success is obvious - everyone loves a villain. He's like Anne Robinson, but for real. He's also a self-serving piece of crap. Kellerman doesn't particularly think the TMNT are a menace to society, he's just keen to keep the ratings high, even after Mike saves his life and he witnesses the TMNT fight off a hostile robot. He plays on New York's paranoia for his own ends. Nasty, nasty man.

Krang seems deeply ambivalent about how he wants to kill the Turtles. The atomic destabiliser is "too messy", yet the freeze ray is "too quick." This reflects the love/hate relationship going on between him and the guys in green. They may keep foiling his plans, but they are his only hobby.

He has no good excuse for making **Shredder** let them go. He's always been keen to let Shredder do the dirty work in the past, so why is it so important now that he kill them in person? Moreover, why doesn't Shredder tell him where to go and kill them anyway? He gets his own back, though, when he turns up at the confrontation between Krang and the Turtles, ruining Krang's chances in the process, just so he can laugh at the alien brain's inevitable failure. What's more important to Shredder? Running the world or getting the glory?

Mike's supposedly the most extrovert Turtle, so how come he's the only one to get nervous before "On Trial"? **Splinter** actually gives some decent advice for once: "A wise man has nothing to fear from laughter." But Mike takes no consolation from this. He doesn't have that much faith in his abilities. Once he gets on TV, however, this shyness apparently evaporates and he can't resist the chance to tell America what he's all about: "We fight for truth, justice and a bigger slice of the pizza pie."

Don's displaying his turtle-pride again at the museum, getting angry about the villains trashing the amphibian exhibit. He's got no qualms about knocking a stuffed alligator off the ceiling and damaging the museum floor, though. Clearly, some animals are less respect-worthy than others.

Frankly, you'd expect **April** to do more than stand around pouting in this episode. Her closest friends are being persecuted and she's the only one in any position to stand up for them. Guess her career's more important. And when the battle takes place at the end of the episode, she's stood nicely back, away from the action. So how did her camera get destroyed? Kellerman recognises there's more mileage in the TMNT if the public fear them. Maybe she's got the same idea.

Attack of the 50 Ft Irma

Synopsis

The episode begins with the Turtles preparing for **Irma**'s birthday party. Meanwhile, **April** is at the planetarium doing a story about a meteorite which has crashed nearby. The core of the meteorite is made of a rare isotope called Exaporon. As the Turtles watch her report, **Shredder** shows up at the planetarium and steals the meteorite. Splinter tells the Turtles there is no point dashing over to the planetarium. At the Technodrome, Shredder hands over the meteorite to **Krang**.

Having returned to Channel 6, April is trying to convince Irma not to give up on her new diet. Meanwhile, Krang has used the Exaporon to create a ray which will make its target substantially larger. He sends Shredder to the surface to do a test. April spots Shredder surfacing in his transport module and accidentally disrupts the experiment, so the Exaporon ray hits Irma instead of Shredder. Shredder takes the device and escapes back to the Technodrome. Back at the Channel 6, Irma is beginning to research meteorites, when she accidentally steps on **Vernon**'s foot. Her arms and legs are already beginning to grow.

Donatello examines the Exaporon crystals left behind at the scene of the crime and realises what they are. Meanwhile, Krang is displeased with Shredder's performance and demands he find more Exaporon to power the ray. Meanwhile, Irma is now skyscraper size and pretty clumsy with it. She's already stepping on cars and bulldozing scaffolding. The Turtles follow her across the city and try to curb the damage.

Shredder takes Bebop and Rocksteady back to the laboratory where they stole the Exaporon, but find no further supplies there.

Meanwhile, Irma's ponytail is knocking electric cables loose and the Turtles narrowly avoid catastrophe when the Turtlevan comes close to crashing. They climb a roof and bring the power cables under control. Meanwhile, Irma has started crying and her attempts to blow her nose shatters several windows. To make things worse, the Turtles learn from April that the military is now in pursuit of Irma. The Turtles decide to hide her in an air hanger at a closed-down airport.

Whilst Irma's snoring shakes the whole building, Donatello examines the Exaporon crystals in hopes of reversing the ray's effects. April tells the Turtles that the other half of the meteorite is in the vault at the planetarium. The Turtles pose as army officials in order to get the meteorite but Krang has told Shredder and the henchmutants where the Turtles are and they show up and intervene. The Turtles manage to escape with the crystal.

Unfortunately, Irma has now woken up and decided to head back to the city in hopes of finding something to eat. The Turtles catch up to her, but Irma cannot swallow the Exaporon pill they give her without ice cream. **Michaelangelo** steals a nearby ice cream cart and fills a cement mixer with its contents and the pill. Irma eats the Exaporon pill and starts to shrink.

Later at Irma's party, April chastises Irma for breaking her diet, but Irma doesn't care - having just lost 10,000lbs.

Themes

One of the major questions arising from this episode would have to be… how did the Turtles get a giant version of Irma away from the city centre and transport her all the way to the abandoned airport (probably some distance away) without the military managing to catch up to them or stop them? The only explanation is some serious incompetency on the part of the military.

Not one, but three weird pizza toppings appear on this episode. Michaelangelo brings vanilla meatball pizza, anchovie butterscotch pizza and chocolate fudge with garlic pizza to Irma's birthday party. All classic sweet/savoury combinations, which fit in with the Turtles' usual taste in toppings.

Characters

Just how empty is **Irma**'s life anyway? Not only does she spend all her time pining away for a man, but her birthday party is being held in the sewers and the only attendees are one work colleague and friends of the work colleague. The diet she's failing to stick to this episode is probably yet another attempt to attract a man, but she clearly has no willpower where eating is concerned, so she can't be all that concerned with wanting a man, **deep down**.

The Exaporon ray which increases her size unfortunately has no effect on her sense of co-ordination, but you'd think she'd at least try to be more careful when the wrong step could take out entire families. She even heads back to the city, when the military are after her, just because she's hungry. She won't even attempt to swallow the pill that could cure her

unless the Turtles provide her with ice cream to accompany it. It appears she isn't that concerned with her own safety or anyone else's. Perhaps the reason is that Irma is enjoying **being in the spotlight** for once. She's been on the periphery of a world of danger and excitement ever since meeting the Turtles, but this is the first time that all the attention is on her. Irma's man-seeking behaviour demonstrates a severe attention deficit, and now all eyes are on her, she's determined to give people something to see. Don't believe those tears of dismay for a moment, she's loving every minute of it.

Uncharacteristically, **Splinter** advises the Turtles not to chase after Shredder when he steals the meteorite from the planetarium. "Stop," he tells them, "Nothing will be gained by running around like a turtle with its head cut off." But that's the usual plan, isn't it? Seriously, Splinter is usually the first person to urge the Turtles to confront Shredder at every opportunity. What's so different about this occasion?

If you had any doubt that **April** was a body fascist, witness her behaviour towards Irma in this episode. On three separate occasions, she chastises Irma for breaking her diet or just thinking about breaking her diet. On her birthday. As a TV personality, April has every reason to look after her figure, but why is she so keen to see Irma stick to her diet? Perhaps April has denied herself tasty treats for so long that she doesn't like to see anyone else enjoying snacks either.

Krang and **Shredder** should really start keeping a list of plans that have tries and failed. Krang used a device in his very first confrontation with the Turtles that made him immensely huge. And they defeated him anyway. Why is turning Shredder into a larger version of himself a better plan? Maybe they've tried to many half-assed ideas by now, they've forgotten which ones they've done already.

The Maltese Hamster

Synopsis

The episode begins with **Donatello** narrating recent events in private eye fashion, much to the annoyance of **Raphael**. It seems that the mob has been taking down banks all over the city using weaponry so sophisticated that it could only have come from **Shredder**. The Turtles find out from April that the mobster behind the robberies was identified by the police as Tony Vivaldi, also known as "The Butcher." He hangs out at a club called "The Meat Rack."

As April is on her way back to Channel 6 and the Turtles are on their way to the club, April spots something of interest in a nearby antique shop which is conveniently open 24 hours. The item is a statuette of a hamster and April buys it for ten dollars, then has it delivered to her apartment. Meanwhile, Michaelangelo unsuccessfully negotiates to buy an "antique pizza maker" but is twenty-five cents short of the amount he needs.

Just after April and the Turtles leave, Tony Vivaldi and his goons show up at the antique shop looking for the hamster statuette. Meanwhile, Mike has found the twenty-five cents he needs to buy the pizza maker, so he heads back to the shop only to be captured by the gangsters. The other Turtles return to the shop moments after they leave and find out from the owner what happened.

The Turtles split up to search for the gangsters and Raphael is snatched too. At this point, **Leonardo** and Donatello decide to seek help from **Splinter**. Donatello theorises that

Vivaldi and his goons wanted something from the antique shop and they head back there. They find the Butcher there and he uses his fancy gizmos to capture Splinter and Leonardo. Donatello runs but is trapped under a pile of rubble created by the Butcher's laser gun blast. After freeing himself, Donatello heads to Channel 6 to seek help from April.

At Channel 6, **Burne** is insisting that April is the only one who has what it takes to tackle the mobster bank robberies story; all his other reporters are too scared. Donatello makes it to the reception desk before passing out. Irma takes him to April.

At the Meat Rack, the Butcher reports back to Shredder, telling him he has three turtles, one rat and no hamster. Shredder tells the Butcher to use a super-conducting device to attract antiques. When the device is turned on, antiques from all over town begin floating towards the club. Donatello and April follow the trail back to the Meat Rack. The hamster statuette still hasn't turned up, but whilst watching the scene, April and Donatello are found by the gangsters. A food fight ensues and our heroes escape and make their way to April's home.

By now, Donatello has worked out that the gangsters are after the hamster statuette and tells April to bring it to the docks. Meanwhile, Donatello goes on TV to tell the gangsters that he has the statuette and will exchange it for Splinter and the Turtles – actually he goes *into* the TV set at the Meat Club and makes a quick escape after getting his message across, but not before he learns that the hamster contains a formula for a super fuel which Shredder wants to fuel the Technodrome. Don also manages to snatch one of Shredder's ray guns on the way out.

At midnight, Shredder and the Butcher show up at the docks to meet Donatello. Don hands over the hamster statuette, but it is destroyed when April shoots it with the ray gun. Assuming that one of the gangsters was responsible, Shredder suspects a double-cross and teleports his weapons away. Shredder and the henchmutants escape, whilst Donatello frees Splinter and the other Turtles. The gangsters are defeated and left for the police to take care of.

Themes

We've seen quite a few indications that the Turtles know it's only a cartoon. This episode we learn that they know other things, such as when it's time for a commercial break. When Donatello and April are trapped at the Meat Rack, Don's internal monologue tells the audience "This was it.. I knew it was curtains. I knew we were finished. Most of all… I knew it was time for a break." Amazing how perceptive those private detectives can be, isn't it?

Like many private detectives, Donatello doesn't seem to have much respect for the cops. When he and April find some cops on the trail of the stolen antiques he tells them "all you flatfoots can find is a donut shop." Given the past record of the authorities in this cartoon, he's probably not too far from the truth.

Characters

Why is **Donatello** suddenly so obsessed with private detectives? He carries on his Sam Spade-style soliloquies throughout the episode and when Raphael asks him to stop he claims he can't help it, it's because he's wearing the trench coat. But the Turtles are always using their trench coat disguises and we've never seen Donatello do his private

detective bit before. Where did this fascination come from?

Could Donatello possibly be trying to escape his reputation at the nerd of the group? After all, private detectives are generally men who use their brains above their brawn, but they're rarely perceived as nerds. It's possible Donatello is going through a standard teenage identity crisis and this private detective persona is just a short-lived attempt at carving out a new persona.

Tony Vivaldi's gangster name is "**The Butcher"** and he hangs out at "The Meat Rack." He hooks up with Shredder on the basis that, when Shredder rules the world, Tony will get to run Detroit. If you could pick any city in the world to run, why would you pick Detroit? It seems that this guy is a little bit too much in love with being a gangster.

It's difficult to understand why **Shredder** would get involved with a guy like the Butcher? Why give all that equipment to the gangster and his goons, rather than use his foot soldiers and go after the hamster statuette himself? Why not cut out the middleman? Perhaps Shredder is simply feeling lazy this week.

Whilst we're asking questions about Shredder's behaviour, why does his super-conducting device have a setting to attract men's underwear? Does he have any particular reason for wanting to see men in the nude?

Sky Turtles

Synopsis

In the Turtles' lair, **Splinter** is criticising **Michaelangelo** for over-eating when everyone and everything in the lair starts floating upwards. We soon learn that this is being caused by **Shredder**'s new anti-gravity machine, which is being tested. Having gone power mad, Shredder ignores **Krang**'s advice and expands the test from subterranean levels to the surface. The staff at Channel 6 soon start feeling the effects, but the anti-gravity machine overloads and everyone falls back to the floor.

After two hours of searching the streets aimlessly, the Turtles have found no clue as to what has caused the floating. Suddenly, Michaelangelo sees something radiating from under the street. The Turtlevan is pulled towards it and objects are crumpled under the oppressive gravity whilst people find themselves stuck to the floor. Down in the Technodrome, Krang questions Shredder's plan, but Shredder points out "citizens that can't move, can't fight back." He sends **Bebop** and **Rocksteady** to the surface with anti-gravity boots which enable them to move around.

On seeing the henchmutants approach with two foot soldiers, the Turtles concoct a plan. Whilst Bebop is busy looting, Michaelangelo and **Raphael** taunt Rocksteady into entering the Turtlevan and **Leonardo** knocks him over and steals his anti-gravity boots. Mike then puts on the boots and manipulates the foot soldiers into shooting each other, before stealing their boots. As there are three remaining Turtles, and only two pairs of boots, Leonardo, Raphael and **Donatello** are forced to participate in a four-legged race style sharing of boots.

After learning of his henchmutants' failure, Shredder heads to the surface to take charge of the situation. Meanwhile, the Turtles have learnt that the anti-gravity field only extends

twelve feet above the Earth, so they are able to use the Turtleblimp to navigate the city. Suddenly, the setting on the anti-gravity machine is reversed and buildings, cars and other objects start floating away from the Earth's surface as Shredder explains "if I can't dominate this city I'll destroy it!"

April calls the Turtles and tells them that the Channel 6 building is pulling upwards. The Turtles use a grappling hook to tether it to the Empire State Building. Seeing the Channel 6 satellite dish gives Donatello an idea. The Turtles use their glider to find the source of the anti-gravity rays and point the satellite dish at it. Everything falls back into place. "We reversed the reverse gravity" Donatello explains. Krang's attempts to counter this by turning up the power fail and the anti-gravity machine goes flying off into space. Shredder and the henchmutants escape back to the Technodrome.

Themes

New Yorkers are a cynical breed – when visitors to a clothes store are immobilised by the anti-gravity machine, they think it's a ploy to make them buy more clothing. Having said that, with stores already using everything from mood-altering colours to enticing smells to prevent customers from leaving empty-handed, could you blame them for being suspicious?

Characters

The episode begins with **Michaelangelo** being criticised for being overweight at 190lbs, although given the shell and all those muscles, that doesn't seem too bad. Also, he appears to have the exact same build as the other Turtles. **Splinter** demands he practice self-discipline. Perhaps this has more to do with Splinter's **power trip** than Mike's eating habits.

The end of episode sees Mike eating pizza again. When Splinter complains, Mike says he's "gonna make sure I'm never gonna float away again." This is the final joke of the episode. Ha! **Eating disorders** are funny.

Shredder characteristically ignores **Krang**'s advice when testing the anti-gravity device and cranks up the power. When the result is the overloading of the machine, Shredder rejects Krang's chastising and storms "I don't have time for niggling details?" Even niggling details like whether the machine works or not? With **that attitude**, Shredder will never make world leader.

It doesn't take a genius to realise that, with the Turtles immobilised, Shredder had a clear shot at world domination. So is it any surprise that he "accidentally" overloaded the machine when he was so close to success? If his past record is anything to go by, success in defeating the Turtles is **the last thing** Shredder wants.

The Old Switcheroo

Synopsis

At Channel 6, April and Irma are discussing Irma's men troubles, when April is called into Burne's office and told to investigate a strange character hanging around Cybertech Laboratories. Burne suspects he may be connected to the Turtles.

In the lair, Donatello is showing off his new invention - the Superfast Pizza Maker. At first the others are impressed, until the machine is turned up to maximum speed, causing it to explode. The Turtles are then contacted by April, who has spotted Shredder, Rocksteady and Bebop hanging around at Cybertech. Splinter and the Turtles arrive on scene just in time to rescue April, who has been spotted herself.

During the battle, Splinter and Shredder are thrown onto large platforms, which are activated when the computer consoles are hit by laser beams. The mutants grab their respective masters and escape. However, when Splinter and Shredder awake, it is revealed that they have switched bodies.

Splinter in Shredder's body is taken to the Technodrome, whilst Shredder in Splinter's body is taken to the Turtles lair, although he is unable to learn the route because of a towel covering his eyes. The Turtles notice that "Splinter" is acting strangely. He is particularly harsh on the Turtles when it comes to housework and training and his fighting style is noticeably different. Meanwhile, Krang is told about the accident at Cybertech and insists on giving "Shredder" a brainscan.

Whilst Splinter in Shredder's body is able to fool Krang's machines, Shredder in Splinter's body is less successful in fooling the Turtles, and they sneak out of the lair to figure out what's going on. They are confronted by "Shredder", Bebop and Rocksteady. When the mutants are out of the way, "Shredder" sets about convincing the Turtles of his true identity and, although they are sceptical, succeeds. Donatello suggests re-creating the accident to reverse the mind-swap.

The Turtles return to the lair and tell "Splinter" that Shredder is at Cybertech again. Shredder in Splinter's body realises that this is an opportunity to destroy the real Splinter and return himself to his own body. They head off to Cybertech, where the accident is reversed. However, Rocksteady and Bebop's interference causes the machine to blow up and the Turtles are forced to grab Splinter's body and run. Michaelangelo verifies that it is indeed Splinter by offering him some pizza, which Splinter naturally refuses.

Themes

So are Cybertech Laboratories in the habit of informing local news stations of security threats? Obviously they feel it will accomplish more than contacting the police. Such is the power of TV and the powerlessness of the authorities in this city.

Characters

Irma thinks that "men are beasts" and you can't blame her, given the type of men she tends to go for. Her latest catch, Elliot, turned up for a date with another girlfriend, which is rude to say the least. **April** thinks she's too eager. "You'd never see me jump the moment a man calls." Her boss calls and she hurries into his office. Ha! It's a kind of joke, you see. But seriously...Irma and April have more in common than you might think. April may seem a more liberated woman, but she still needs to obey the same rules Irma does. She just does it with different goals in mind. Whether a woman wants a lover or a career, it would seem, she still has to play by rules set by men.

So what is the genius **Donatello** working on this episode? A cure for a deadly disease, perhaps? A manufacturing machine which will negate the need for child labour in developing countries? An anti-depressive pill that doesn't make your hair fall out? No. A

superfast pizza maker. Do the Turtles really have so much to fill their spare time with that they can't wait fifteen minutes for a pizza to cook in the oven? No, not really. After all, their hobbies include making soda can mountains, watching a lot of TV and, in Don's case, making more stupid inventions.

What the hell is he thinking of? All around the world, people are suffering, and he's using his considerable scientific ability on cooking devices the Turtles don't need. Unless he's thinking of the commercial possibilities...

Splinter must be feeling a little old and useless today, because he uses the fact that Leonardo is injured as an excuse to accompany the Turtles to Cybertech. Leo is suffering from a slight bruise he got from being hit with a loose screw (from the aforementioned pizza maker). It's hardly fatal.

It's interesting that, when he realises he is in Shredder's body, he decides that going to the Technodrome to discover Krang's plans is more important than informing the Turtles that Shredder is with them. I just want to emphasise this for a second. Splinter decides that spying on Krang is more urgent than THE VERY REAL RISK THAT SHREDDER WILL KILL THE TURTLES. Do I need to add exclamation marks? You need to wonder if Splinter really gives a crap about them at all.

When he's in Shredder's body, Splinter asks the Turtles to look beyond the surface and see the inner truths. He tells them he has always taught them do this and they realise that he is indeed their sensei. But has Splinter really taught the Turtles all about the importance of seeing beyond the surface? Have they ever tried to figure out Shredder's motivations? If they'd ever looked beyond the surface when dealing with Rocksteady and Bebop, they'd have realised that those two are victims just as much as they are. Maybe the Turtles are just afraid of not getting it?

Another disturbing thing is that Splinter is able to think exactly the same way as Shredder. He manages to alter his brainwaves enough to fool Krang's machinery. Remember, Shredder is the evil villain and Splinter is supposedly the good guy. So how come it's so easy for him to fool Krang?

In contrast, **Shredder** is really bad at posing as Splinter. He yells at the Turtles, gobbles up pizza and fights in a completely different style. His behaviour makes you wonder if he's ever MET Splinter, in fact. Since we know that Shredder really does know Splinter very well indeed, you have to conclude that Shredder's sense of sportsmanship prevents him from giving a more accurate portrayal.

Burne's Blues

Synopsis

It's summer in New York and its 112˚F. At Blink's pizzeria, the Turtles are eating pizza to stay cool (as you do). Unfortunately all the food at Blink's has gone off in the heat. A group of thugs burst into the pizzeria, but are quickly fought off by the Turtles.

April reports on the unsuccessful robbery for Channel 6. Her boss **Burne Thompson** complains that April didn't dig deep enough into the story and didn't get any footage of the Turtles themselves. Burne says that reporters were tougher in his day and decides to get

onto the trail of the story himself. He takes **Vernon** along with him and leaves April to follow up on a story about air-conditioning breakages occurring all over town.

Having done some research on her story, April meets up with the Turtles at Blink's and tells them that all of the broken air conditioners were all serviced by the same repair company: S&K. The Turtles head out to look for the S&K repair van.

Meanwhile, Burne and Thompson are wandering around a run-down area, looking for potential informers. They accidentally manage to walk into a meeting with a secret agent and get taken away. In the same neighbourhood, April has found the S&K repair company truck and decides to ignore the Turtles' advice to wait for them arrive. As a result, she finds herself face to face with **Bebop**.

Inside the S&K van, **Shredder** (for it is him behind the shenanigans!) informs **Krang** that the villains have found April snooping around. It turns out that Shredder has been stealing freon from air conditioning units to take back to the Technodrome. Krang is unhappy, as he would rather have Nutrifreeze, a new experimental gas which is less unstable. Whilst Krang is ordering Shredder to go to the Nutrifreeze plant and steal some, April unscrews the valve on a freon gas tank, causing the gas to leak out into the air (is that safe? Ah, who cares?).The Turtles arrive on the scene just after the S&K van has left, but they detect the smell of freon and decide to follow it.

In a warehouse somewhere, Burne and Vernon are being interrogated by the spy they ran into. The spy has been tickling them with feathers for hours and eventually becomes convinced that they know nothing. Just as he is about to "liquidate" them, a car breaks through the warehouse doors, causing the spy and his cohorts to flee. The owner of the car is mob boss Don Turtelli and he's convinced that Burne and Vernon have been looking for him. He decides to find out the truth by tickling them with feathers.

At the Nutrifreeze plant, Shredder is stealing the gas canisters when the Turtles arrive. A fight ensues and the Turtles manage to take out the Foot Soldiers, but find themselves frozen when they are shot with Nutrifreeze. The villains load up with Nutrifreeze and leave, taking April with them.

After Shredder's departure, Burne and Vernon find themselves dumped at the scene, courtesy of Don Turtelli, who decided to let them go when Burne started to cry. They rush over to the frozen Turtles, only to be abducted by aliens before they reach them. Onboard the mothership, Burne and Vernon are confronted by alien Elvis look-alikes who want to torture them for information by… tickling them for feathers (shock!).

At the Nutrifreeze plant, the ice soon melts and the Turtles find themselves free once again. They follow Shredder and the henchmutants into the sewers. The villains have been held up because the henchmutants forgot where the transport modules were parked. The Turtles arrive just in time to see the villains leaving and grab onto the transport module containing Shredder, who launches a missile at them. The missile misses its target and hits the other transport module, which contains the Foot Soldiers and the Nutrifreeze. The Nutrifreeze explodes, causing snow in summer time on the streets above.

Meanwhile, Shredder and the henchmutants have ejected from the other module, leaving April behind. The Turtles free her just in time.

Vernon and Burne are soon teleported back to Earth and the snow causes them to believe

they were gone for months rather than hours. At Channel 6, Burne goes live on air to report the night's events but loses all credibility when he starts talking about "Elvis clones from Mars."

Themes

It's strange that everybody in the Turtles' world – from trained spies to gangsters and aliens – seem to believe that tickling people with feathers is the most effective method of extracting information. Haven't any of these people heard of nipple twisting?

Why would alien life forms be modelling themselves on Elvis Presley? Hard to say. Perhaps they're hoping that anyone who sees them will be dismissed as an Elvis conspiracy freak. It's nifty how aliens generally manage to abduct only people who have no credibility to begin with. This leads to two possibilities – either the people who claim to be abducted are completely mad or the aliens are clever enough to only abduct people who would never be believed. Either way, the fictional aliens seen here managed to make themselves unbelievable enough to discredit Burne's story.

Characters

This episode is the strongest evidence we've seen that **Burne Thompson** is in the middle of a mid-life crisis. He's been perfectly happy to stay at Channel 6 and send out his reporters to do the dirty work in previous episodes, but he's spurred into action when Vernon tries to suck up to him, saying that if Burne wasn't so "old and out of shape", he'd get the story on the robbery himself. Disturbed that he's perceived as old and fat, Burne decides to go back onto the streets and do the job himself.

Burne's attire says a lot about his attitude to journalism – he dresses like an old fashioned reporter, donning a raincoat and hat to go and look for informers. Perhaps he's nostalgic for the past, when he was young and dynamic and didn't have to answer to a board of directors obsessed only with ratings.

When **Michaelangelo** finds out that April wants to meet the Turtles' in Blink's pizzeria, he doesn't really care why. "When in doubt, pig out!" he declares. It says a lot about Mike's reaction to uncertainty – he'd rather drown his troubles in pizza than face difficult truths.
April gets into trouble this episode because she ignores the Turtles advice to wait until they show up. You have to wonder why she's so eager to investigate without them when the Turtles are already on their way. Maybe the fact that April always seems to survive any situation she gets herself into has convinced her she's immortal? Or perhaps she's just addicted to danger by this point.

Shredder seems quite happy when April tells him he's "fiendishly inhuman" in this episode. Is that why Shredder puts himself through all this rather than pursue a normal lifestyle? Does he share the Turtles' distaste for the rest of humanity? It would definitely explain his desire to enslave humanity and take over the world.

The Fifth Turtle

Synopsis

Donatello is using a planetary chart to study the stars when the other Turtles nominate him to head out to the all night store to grab supplies. Raphael tags along and, on the way

back, the two Turtles are intercepted by a gang of thugs. As the Turtles are about to fight, a kid identifying himself as Zack bursts onto the scene, dressed as a turtle and waving a hockey stick around. After Zack falls over his own feet, Don and Raph take on and defeat the thugs (although, during the fight, Raph is knocked on his butt thanks to Zack's interference).

With the thugs dispatched, Zack tells the Turtles of his devotion to crime fighting, but the Turtles tell him he is a menace and send him home. Running off in a huff, Zack finds Raphael's Turtlecomm and keeps it as a souvenir.

Meanwhile, Krang has a new plan to produce enough energy to power the Technodrome. He orders Shredder to steal some Capsidium Crystals, take them to a local planetarium and place them at the base of a telescope. When the upcoming planetary alignment takes place, a beam of light will strike the crystals and create enough energy to raise the Technodrome.

When Zack arrives home, his older brother disparages his admiration of the Turtles. Via Raph's Turtlecomm, Zack hears April notify the Turtles of a break-in at the Marconian Laboratories. The Turtles arrive there as Shredder and the henchmutants are stealing the crystals, but are prevented from stopping him when Zack shows up and immediately puts himself in danger by falling into a pit in the middle of the room. Shredder activates a huge swinging pendulum over the pit and makes his escape as the Turtles concentrate on saving Zack from being crushed.

Zack gets another telling off and leaves, whilst the Turtles consider Rocksteady's claims about the Technodrome being due to rise. The Turtles return to the lair, but are followed by Zack, who uses a special paint to track them. After discovering Zack, the Turtles offer him a full tour, in return for his promise not to interfere from now on.

Meanwhile, Shredder watches footage of his confrontation with the Turtles at the Marconian Laboratories. Spying the license number on Zack's bike, Shredder contacts the police, claims he wants to return a lost bicycle and obtains Zack's address. Shredder sends the henchmutants to kidnap Zack, who hears them approaching and hides. Whilst hidden in a closet, Zack overhears them discussing their plans for the raising of the Technodrome. Donning his costume, he sets out to warn the Turtles.

In the sewers, Donatello has figured out Shredder's plan and the Turtles head to the planetarium. On arriving, however, they find that Shredder has captured Zack and are forced to surrender. As the planetary alignment occurs, the tied up Turtles search for some way to stop Shredder and Donatello muses that the crystals are sensitive to sound. That gives Zack an idea and he uses a Turtlecomm to create a high pitched noise that shatters the crystals and scuppers Shredder's plans.

Using a broken crystal shard, the Turtles free themselves and confront Shredder and the henchmutants, who use a smoke grenade to cover their escape. Back in their lair, the Turtles give Zack a Turtlecomm and declare him an "honorary turtle."

Themes

Zack may be a useless brat, but he was able to track down the Turtle's lair easily enough. He even knew their names on his first meeting with them. And he says he knows plenty of kids who would join a TMNT fanclub. Um...aren't the Turtles supposed to live a secret

existence? Nice job, guys.

The Turtles turn down Zack's offer to create a TMNT fanclub, but they do give him a Turtlecomm and make him an honorary turtle. Aww...how sweet. Actually, it's more of a security measure. The Turtles are no doubt aware that, as a teen with detailed information on the Turtles, letting him go is a risky thing to do. So they need to keep him sweet. An adult who discovered the Turtles lair may have got a better deal, but Zack's just a child, so he's happy with a shell-shaped walkie-talkie and honorary membership of an amphibian species. Kids, eh?

You have to wonder why the Turtles don't give Zack's fanclub idea more serious consideration though. Wouldn't popularity with the kids give them a route to becoming more respected and accepted through society as a whole? Why would they reject the idea of being adored by thousands? It may relate to the fact that the Turtles self-esteem is linked to their somewhat pessimistic attitude towards humanity. Perhaps they'd rather keep a distance from humans for reasons to do with their own self-image.

Michaelangelo is sceptical of Shredder's chance of success when the Turtles arrive at the observatory. "Get serious dude, they don't call this the Shredder show." Who told Mike it was only a show?

Scandalously, the police actually help Shredder to execute his evil plan this episode. Shredder sees footage of Zack's bike taken by a security camera, notes the license number and calls the police, claiming he has found a lost bike and wants to return it to the owner. So the police give him Zack's address. Crazy. In a way, Zack's lucky it was only Shredder looking for him and no one *genuinely* dangerous.

Characters

What can be said about **Zack**? Well, he's a useless brat, obviously. Aside from endangering the Turtles chance of success (and therefore the world's chance of survival) not once, but TWICE, he knocks Raph on his ass and falls over his own feet during his first appearance onscreen. Yes, he manages to help the Turtles get free, but he's also responsible for them being tied up in the first place. It says a lot about the Turtles' lack of security that someone so incredibly dumb manages to find their secret lair.

The shocking thing about Zack is the mid-episode revelation that he's a fourteen year old. Yes, he's a teenager. That explains some things, but leaves much more unanswered. Isn't Zack a little old to be following around superheroes in a home-made turtle costume (people looking out for hypocrites might, at this point, like to e-mail me and remind me that I'm 22 at the time of writing)? When Raph tells Zack "get real, no one wants to be us", Zack replies "you wouldn't wanna be me either." Could be that Zack's hero-worshipping activities are an adolescent response to his imminent adulthood. Maybe Zack's trying to hang onto his youthful sense of adventure by glomming onto the Turtles. Or maybe he's just an idiot. Who knows?

April is her usual compassionate self this episode. When Zack is about to get crushed by a huge metal swinging pendulum, April is not attempting to help, but filming the whole thing. Her reaction to Zack's impending crushing? "I love this footage!" She's all heart, that girl.

Enter the Rat King

Synopsis

Whilst driving to work, Burne Thompson crashes into a police squad car after being startled by a rat in his car. Still in a bad mood when he arrives at work, he orders April to prepare an editorial on the city's rat problem.

Down in the sewers, the Turtles find they're down to their last box of pizza dough. Unfortunately, its contents have been gobbled up by a a rat (not Splinter). The Turtles fail to catch the creature and it escapes. Just then, April arrives and tells the guys about her assignment. Splinter spaces out for a few seconds but then appears to be okay again.

Later, whilst April and Irma are in the Channel 6 newsvan, heading back to the station, the van's tires are flattened after being chewed up by rats. The two women are chased by rats and escape by catching a bus back to Channel 6. April gets there just in time for her editorial on the city's rat problem, an angry diatribe urging that something is done. In the middle of the report, the lights go out. When they come back, it's revealed that April has been kidnapped.

Having seen April's editorial on TV, the Turtles head to Channel 6 and talk to Irma, who knows nothing. Meanwhile, in an abandoned subway station, April's kidnapper introduces himself. He is the Rat King and claims that the city's rodents are his "loyal subjects." He reveals that he is establishing a new form of government called a "ratocracy" and that he kidnapped April to stop her spreading "lies" about his followers. April understably thinks he's a lunatic and tells him that her friends the Turtles will rescue her. After some more discussion about her friends, April lets slip that their mentor, Splinter, is a rat.

At Channel 6, Irma finds a ransom note from the Rat King and passes this information onto the Turtles using April's Turtlecomm. Splinter and the Turtles are searching for April in the sewers when they are confronted by the Rat King. After playing a flute, the Rat King puts Splinter into a hypnotic trance and orders him to destroy the Turtles. The Turtles soon realise they cannot defeat Splinter and it looks like they are headed for defeat, until Leonardo drops his weapons and refuses to defend himself. This gesture seems to break the spell on Splinter and he and the Turtles quickly escape. Back at the lair, Splinter tells the Turtles they will have to continue their search for April without him, as he may be unable to resist the Rat King a second time.

Meanwhile, Irma is still trying to help find April, by looking through old news footage at Channel 6. She eventually finds what she's looking for: a report on abandoned subway stations. Suspecting she may have discovered the Rat King's hideout, Irma takes Vernon and goes to search for her friend (although Vernon runs off the second he sees a cuddly toy mouse floating past). Unknown to Irma, April is escaping all by herself, using her nail file to get out of her cage.

April soons finds the Turtles, but when the Rat King grabs Irma, they hear her shouting and quickly arrive on the scene. After trying to use knockout gas on the Turtles, the Rat King accidentally drops an explosive soda can and April, Irma and the Turtles are all able to escape. Back in the lair, Splinter points out that the Turtles confrontation with the Rat King was a stalemate and they are likely to see him again in the future.

Themes

The Turtles' first scene in this episodes beginning with them begging Mike "not to do it."

You'd think he was about to put a gun to his head by the way they're acting, but in fact they're just urging him not go out for pizza, because it's raining. So? He's a turtle, isn't he? What's a little rain to an amphibious creature?

Later in the episode, the Turtles have a little trouble scaling the side of the Channel 6 building. "I wish we had those anti-gravity boots from episode 6," Don remarks, showing knowledge of reality for a cartoon character.

Splinter isn't exaggerating when he downplays the Turtles' "victory" this episode. In fact, "stalemate" is something of an optimistic term for what occurs. Remember at the beginning of the episode how the rat population of New York was making things difficult for the citizens of the city? How has this situation been changed by the fact that April was rescued by the Turtles? In fact, the Rat King is in a stronger position at the end of the episode because he's learnt he can control Splinter. The Turtles haven't done anything to confront the rat problem at all. How depressing.

Characters

Burne is his typical busy self, today, chatting away on his carphone whilst driving and crashing into a police car after being startled by the rat in his car. Like all careless drivers, he's quick to find someone else to blame and orders April to do an editorial about the rats in the city. Whether or not the city has a rat problem, though, a careful driver would be able to react safely in such a situation - being startled is no reason to crash, especially in a slow moving traffic jam. Burne only crashed because he was busy thinking about work and not paying enough attention to the road. Looks like his workaholic attitude may present even more urgent threats to his health than a heart attack.

There's a classic example of **Vernon's** toadying this episode, when he completely changes his opinion on rats in order to please his boss. When Burne first suggests the editorial, Vernon envisages it as a piece on the happy relationship between man and rat through the ages. Of course, when Burne starts shouting about how rats are a menace, he changes his mind pretty quickly. So much for journalistic integrity.

No Shredder this episode. Damn. But instead we get the **Rat King**, a very different villain. Although April is convinced that the Rat King is just a lunatic, he's actually far more realistic in his aims than most other villains we've seen. He's able to control rats using his flute, which theoretically makes him very powerful. After all, there are probably billions of rats in a city the size of New York, and they can spread disease to humans as well as chewing their way through tyres, power leads and all the rest of it. In theory, there's no reason the Rat King couldn't use the city's rat population to bring the whole city to a stop.

Fortunately for New York, that isn't what he wants. The Rat King is more interested in a fair deal for rats. That's why he takes offence at April's rant on the Channel 6 news and kidnaps her. He's worried that public perception of the "rat problem" is going to lead to widespread extermination. It seems that all the Rat King really wants for his "followers" is the right not to be killed. It's hard not to empathise with his views, however much you hate rats.

The ease with which the Rat King manipulates **Splinter** is surprising given the mental abilities the old rat's exhibited in other episodes. In "The Old Switcheroo" Splinter even manages to change the shape of his brainwaves by pure force of will. So how come he succumbs so quickly?

The answer may relate to the fact that Splinter is constantly having to manipulate situations around him. He's the architect of the battle between Shredder and the Turtles and has had to lie to and manipulate the Turtles at times to convince them to keep going. So Splinter constantly has to be alert, sharp and aware of what's going on around him. Is it really surprising that he might welcome a chance to just let go and do as he's told for a change? The fact that the Rat King's hold on him isn't all that strong is demonstrated when Splinter resists the Rat King and helps the Turtles escape.

At the end of the episode, **Donatello** debuts a new invention - the super rodent trap. It doesn't work, but that's not the point. What is the point of putting together such a large, complex looking invention just to catch the Rat King? After all, there's only one Rat King and not only is he unlikely to be beaten by such a device, but once he's caught, the device becomes useless. It's altogether more likely that Don was thinking of the city's rat problem and the commercial potential when he invented the machine.

Turtles at the Earth's Core

Synopsis

Leonardo is briefing the other Turtles on the recent surfacings of Shredder's transport modules when the Earth starts to shake. April and the boys go up to investigate and find a large dinosaur roaming the streets. They follow it into a park and watch it disappear down a large hole.

Meanwhile, in a prehistoric land, Shredder, Bebop and Rocksteady are attempting to steal a giant crystal which is resting on a large pillar of Earth. The crystal will help to repair the Technodrome, but difficulties in obtaining it arise when it emerges that Shredder's Anti-Gravitational Skimmer will not operate within close range of the crystal.

With the use of the Turtleblimp, the Turtles and April arrive in the prehistoric world beneath the Earth's crust and are attacked by a pterodactyl, which soons starts fighting with a tyrannosaurus rex over who gets to eat them. They escape to find the diplodocus they followed through the city, which turns out to be a friendly dinosaur. Nicknaming it Dippy, they ride on his back across the jungle.

At the Technodrome, Krang learns of the Turtles' arrival and sends his foot soldiers to construct a fortress from which to combat them. Shredder, meanwhile, has finally managed to obtain the crystal when the Turtles arrive, causing him to drop it and create a tiny fracture in the crystal. He uses a Microwave Ray to turn the ground under the Turtles into lava and makes his escape.

After being pulled out of the lava by Dippy, the Turtles notice a change in their friend's disposition and deduce that the crystal stolen by Shredder was a lifesource for the prehistoric world. They pursue Shredder to get it back. Arriving at the fortress, Dippy begins to bang his tail against it and call other dinosaurs to help. Soon, a hole appears and the Turtles rush inside. They retrieve the crystal and escape, returning it to it's rightful place.

Themes

So a prehistoric world exists at the Earth's core....not a ton of magma then? Goes to show

what scientists know.

As Donatello remarks, following a dinosaur into a large hole in the ground wasn't the bestest plan ever. The fact that the Turtles took this course of action demonstrates their willingness to rush into action at the first sign of danger. Is this rashness brought on by stupidity or just boredom?

Why do the Turtles have to follow the dinosaur around the city? "'Cause if we didn't," Raph tells Mike, "it wouldn't be much of an episode." Only a cartoon, after all.

Characters

Splinter's advice on holiday destinations:- "to journey without a point, is pointless." The point of vacations is to relax and have fun. Vacations aren't pointless at all. Foolish old rat. Here's another one: "Constant vigilance is the best weapon against tyrants." Better than nuclear weapons? I think not.

April Foolish

Synopsis

April is reporting live from the Malicurian Embassy on the visit from the Malicurian Emperor Aleister and his daughter, Princess Mallory. The Emperor is visiting in order to sell the mining rights to a substance called Lydium 90 that was recently discovered in his country. After the report is finished, April heads off to report on a party at the Embassy, but is persuaded by Irma to go home and get dressed for the occasion first.

Down in the Technodrome, the cooling system is failing and more power is urgently needed. Krang suggests that a piece of Lydium 90 would be a sufficient power source.
In the sewers, the Turtles are eating pizza when April arrives, showing off her snazzy new look. Splinter and the Turtles are all impressed and when April leaves, the Turtles decide to follow her and make sure she doesn't get into any trouble.

At the Embassy, Princess Mallory is forbidden to leave and ordered to prepare herself for the party by her overprotective father. As her father leaves her to get ready, we see that Mallory looks exactly identical to April, who has just arrived outside the Embassy to find that she has actually arrived at a costume party. As she is about to go home and change, she is stopped by guards who mistake her for Mallory. She goes along with their misapprehension and lets them escort her to the party.

At this point, Shredder, Bebop and Rocksteady arrive. Their plan is to kidnap Mallory and ransom her for the sample of Lydium 90 in the Emperor's possession. Before they can attempt to break in to the Embassy, they are found by guards, who assume they are guests and escort them to the party. The Turtles see this happening and decide to get a closer look.

Meanwhile, in the Princess' bedroom, Mallory decides to sneak out and see the city. After she shimmies out of the window, the guards bring April to the room and she puts on the dress laid out for Mallory, hoping that she might get an exclusive story from the experience. Whilst the Turtles are trying to warn April via her Turtlecomm, Shredder rushes in and kidnaps her, believing her to be Mallory. The Turtles crash the party to find April, but when the Emperor discovers the ransom note in Mallory's room, he orders all the exits to

be sealed, trapping the Turtles in the building.

In New York, Mallory sees the news about her "kidnap" and decides to return home to set things straight. On his way out of the Embassy, Shredder realises he has April, not Mallory. When he hears an announcement telling the kidnappers the ransom will be paid, he realises that the Emperor believes that he has Mallory and can still exchange his captive for the Lydium 90. He heads to the roof, as directed by the announcement.

Having heard the same announcement, the Turtles are headed for the roof when they are intercepted by Embassy guards, who are ready to shoot when Mallory arrives and orders them to put down their weapons. When the Turtles realise that she is not April, they realise that Shredder must have their friend and rush up to the roof.

Shredder gets there first, and takes the Lydium 90 sample from the Emperor before escaping in the helicopter, taking April with him. The Turtles grab onto the helicopter as it's taking off, then let go as they near the Turtleblimp, which Donatello stashed nearby. After chasing the helicopter in the blimp, the Turtles chase Shredder and the henchmutants through a museum, but whilst April gets away from them, the villains manage to escape and get back to the Technodrome with the Lydium 90.

All is not lost, however. Down in the Technodrome, Krang finds the Lydium 90 is highly unstable so far underground and his attempts to use it end explosively.

Title

I've seen this episode alternately named "April's Fool", "April Fools" and "April Foolish." Don't look at me, I don't know why.

Themes

Malacuria appears to be a pretty poor country. Emperor Aleister is so keen to sell the mining rights to the Lydium 90 that he appears personally in April's announcement about his visit, standing at her side as she makes her live report (not something you'd often see the Queen doing). Although the Malacurian Embassy looks fancy enough, the fact that pizza is served at an important diplomatic engagement is somewhat revealing - as is the extremely small size of the portion that Michaelangelo manages to track down. If even the royal family are poor, it's not surprising that Princess Mallory seizes the chance to grab a look one of the richest countries in the world rather than go to some dumb party.

Yet again, we're shown examples of the relevant authorities being quite unable to take care of the situation themselves. The guards at the Malacurian Embassy are responsible for not one, but two major security lapses. Not only do they let a reporter into the Princess' bedroom just because she happens to look like her, they also direct Shredder and the henchmutants to the party. In neither case do they ask to see invitations, something you think they'd be extra careful about at a costume party involving royalty.

Later on in the episode, the same guards risk the safety of Princess Mallory further by intercepting the Turtles as they head for the Embassy roof. Minutes earlier, Emperor Aleister had used the p.a. system to request that the kidnappers make their way to the roof, so why were the guards attempting to stop anyone from reaching it? Luckily, Mallory shows up and takes control of the situation, but had she been in any genuine danger, the guards' actions could have sealed her fate. Once again, vigilante action is needed to

compensate for the failure of the authorities.

Michaelangelo's response to Splinter offering him some raw tuna roll seems pretty strange for a turtle."Whoa, major grossout, no thanks." What kind of turtle doesn't like fish?
Raph seems keen to point out the safety ramifications of grabbing onto the bottom of a helicopter as it takes off. "Remember kids, we're professionals, don't try this at home," he warns. So how did he know there was anyone watching at home?

Characters

Unusually, much of the blame for this episode's events can be placed on one person: **April**. If she hadn't been trespassing into the private room of a royal princess in the first place, she wouldn't have been kidnapped and Shredder would have had no hostage to exchange for the Lydium 90. Of course, there's nothing that April won't do for an exclusive story, but you'd expect her to be at least a little contrite at the end of the episode. But no. When asked what she's learnt from the whole affair, April responds that "a disguise is a great way to get a story." Great wisdom from April there and a great message for any kids watching too: put career before personal safety, and assume someone will be there to help you out of any trouble you get yourself into.

Her lookalike **Mallory**, is thankfully, a more considerate girl. Although she does covertly sneak out of the party to get a look at New York, she rushes back to Embassy when she sees the news, helps the Turtles get to the roof and rushes to intercept Shredder before he escapes. It's a shame she's only been in this one episode, because she may be the closest we've seen to a female role model on this show.

More of **Splinter**'s make-it-up-as-you-go-along philosophy this episode: he disparages Mike's refusal to try sushi, saying "The wise person embraces as many new experiences as possible." When offered some pizza by Leo, he adds "The wise person also realises that some experiences are less embraceable than others." Not *too* open minded, eh?
We also see more of **Shredder**'s oft-used abilities this episode when he uses what looks like a Vulcan death grip to knock out April. Nifty. Seems like the kind of thing you'd use all the time if it suited you.

Raphael offers a charming response to Mallory's assertion that she is not April. "Maybe that new hairdo is pulling her brain too tight," he comments, patronisingly. Later, he appears overwhelmed, nay petrified, when a woman at the party asks him to dance. He's certainly no ladies man.

Conveniently, **Donatello** announces mid-way through the chase after Shredder that he "stashed" the Turtleblimp on the top of a nearby building. Why? Don's supposedly a genius, what led him to think that the top of a skyscraper was a good place to hide a vehicle/weapon belonging to a group whose existence is supposedly secret? Either Don left the Turtleblimp (with it's giant TMNT logo) there as an advert for the Turtles' heroism or he had some kind of prior knowledge of Shredder's plans that enabled him to know that the Turtleblimp would be best positioned there to help the Turtles at that point in the plan. Either way, something shifty is going on.

Talking of unusual goings on...bizarrely, **Michaelangelo** turns down an opportunity to eat pizza at the Embassy party. After the smell of his favourite foodstuff leads him and the other Turtles to the party hall, he discovers that the pizza portion on offer is extremely small and rejects it. Is this the same Turtle whose fanatic devotion to pizza led to him

needing hypnotherapy in "Cowabunga Shredhead"? Or is it just that this extremely small portion of pizza affords him no opportunity to make a pig out of himself and display his eating disorder in his usual way?

Is that bitterness in **Krang**'s voice when Shredder contacts him from the surface and asks if he's there? "Where else would I be," the hermit alien replies, "out nightclubbing?" Maybe if Krang got out a bit more, he wouldn't take it out on the human race.

Attack of Big Macc

Synopsis

The Turtles are watching an Ace Duck film festival when someone switches over to April's special report on a new super-laser being demonstrated by the army. When lightning hits power cables nearby, the laser goes into overload and a portal opens in the army base. A robot emerges from the portal and is immediately attacked by soldiers. It retaliates and easily destroys the super laser and defeats the other soldiers. Whilst the Turtles speculate on how much Krang and Shredder would love to get hold of that robot, Krang is telling his cohorts in the Technodrome exactly how much he would love to get hold of that robot. He hands Shredder a device which will help control the robot and sends him up to catch it.
Back at the army base, the robot grabs April, seeking to rescue her from the crossfire. To the TMNT, it appears to have captured her and they rush out of the lair to save her. The Turtles appear to be no match for it, until Michaelangelo surrenders and expresses comradeship. The robot introduces himself as Macc (Motor-Armored Computerized Combatant) and tells them he is from the year 2390AD. Macc has picked up a cowboy accent from watching old Western films.

As they are leaving the army base, Macc falls into Shredder's trap and the controlling device is placed on his neck. When ordered to destroy the Turtles, however, Macc rips the device away and attacks Shredder and the mutants, who retreat. Macc then tells the TMNT he is opposed to violence and was actually a factory reject. April is excited by this news and wants to interview him.

Whilst Shredder is sent back up to the surface with a new, improved robot controlling device, April wraps up her interview with Macc and the Turtles take back to their lair, stopping off at the library on the way so Macc can absorb data. They are chased away by an irate security guard, who Macc stops by zapping his belt, causing his pants to fall down.

At the lair, Macc begins to feel strange. He accidentally zaps Donatello and destroys the television. After some thought, Donatello tells the others that Macc's trip through time has caused his circuits to deteriorate. If he doesn't return soon, he's going to become a danger to himself and others. Macc overhears this and leaves, but is soon captured by Shredder. The new device works and Macc is sent on a rampage. At Channel 6, Burne is complementing April on her interview with the robot, when it's learnt that Macc is attacking the police station. April heads off to get the story.

Concerned that the device Shredder is using to control Macc will speed up his deterioration, the TMNT arrive on the scene, only to be attacked by Macc, who promptly escapes. Meanwhile, Shredder is disobeying Krang's orders by luxuriating in an expensive hotel (paid for by one of Krang's credit cards) rather than hurrying to get Macc back to the Technodrome. The Turtles trace Macc there and find he is leaving a trail of clues for them

to follow. Shredder takes the robot to the Technodrome and is followed by the Turtles, who pursue them in a spare transport module which Shredder left behind.

Krang is about to send Macc through a time portal to retrieve more robots from the future, when the Turtles arrive and are taken prisoner. Whilst Krang is explaining his plan, the device falls from Macc's neck and he frees the Turtles. After fighting off the villains, Macc is persuaded to return to his own time, where he can be safe and become a "warrior for peace."

Themes

Why are the army demonstrating their newest technology on television? Is this some kind of tactic to intimidate international adversaries or an attempt to distract curious parties from something more sinister they're developing? Whichever it is, they clearly have the media eating out of their hand.

The TMNT aren't the only ones capable of adopting the less-sucky-than-thou attitude to humanity. Macc observes on his arrival that, because people are shooting things, "This can only be Earth." I had got the impression that Krang's home dimension wasn't a peaceful utopia either. But Macc's from the future, so it looks like nothing much is going to change here at any rate.

So what's the future like? Pretty crappy, apparently. Even more violent than the present. On the plus side, humanity has been smart enough to get robots to do the actual fighting for them, which has to be better than the mass graves and bodily mutilation approach. So we get our "TV movie of the week" style foreign affairs coverage on the news without anyone having to die. Sounds neat, right? Unfortunately, some bright spark seems to have slipped up and given the robots the ability to think independently, decide that violence sucks and rebel. Oh dear.

And what is this "Sector 4 level 8" business? Are the people of 2390AD so passionless they've dropped evocative and history-laden placenames for cold and factual number designations? Or have numerical designations, which are perhaps more computer or technology friendly, been adopted under pressure from business interests?
Turtles love water, right? "Totally bogus concept" Mike tells Raph, referring to the nasty rainstorm. Call yourself a turtle?

The Only A Cartoon clause is invoked again, this time by Krang, who uses it as an excuse not to explain how he got hold of a robot controlling gadget. "We've got to keep the story moving."

Title

At no point in the episode is the robot referred to as "Big Macc", so what's with the title? It's obviously a reference (either deliberate or subconscious) to the favourite foodstuff of the patriots of McDonalds (a fast food restaurant chain you may have heard of). The episode is about our grim future, where technology has advanced but human nature hasn't. The Big Mac and McDonalds are two of the most widely recognised symbols of our current system of global capitalism, which pursues technological advances and encourages less than positive aspects of human nature (materialism, greed, envy, etc) in order to create profit. Does "The Attack of Big Macc" refer to the dark forces of international business which could bring about Macc's nightmare future?

Characters

Macc is one weird robot. Someone's obviously made a mistake on the assembly line and he's wound up with a conscience and a dislike of violence - the last things you need in a soldier. Macc claims to dislike the time and place he comes from because he's opposed to violence, but he's no pacifist. Rather than try to explain himself to the millitary who greet him on his arrival, he shoots everything in sight. He then decides to "rescue" April from standing perfectly still and using her camera in a safe and orderly fashion and attack the TMNT, who are quite obviously trying to protect her from him. In the end, he decides to return to the future and be a "warrior for peace", which suggests from what we've seen that he'll be shooting people to make them lie still whilst he tells them there's a better way to live. That or handing out leaflets in the shopping malls on Saturdays. Oh well, good luck Macc.

Oh, and if you hadn't already worked it out, Macc is a homage to/rip-off from Johnny 5, the robot who doesn't understand death, dislikes violence, jumps on frogs then demands they be 'reassembled', makes friends with amusingly stereotypical Asian inventors, reads extra fast and wanders around singing Motown tunes in the Short Circuit movies. As well as having his own quick-reading abilities and hippie tendencies, Macc also mistakes a TV camera for a friend named "Number 5", later remarking that it looks just like his cousin.

Mike's hippie tendencies save the day when his expression of "peace dude" ends the initial confrontation with Macc. He's clearly realised that the best way to deal with a wannabe-pacifist is to express peacelike notions. Not as dumb as he looks. Incidentally, with **Raphael** making remarks like "Who needs Macc to cause damage? We've got Michaelangelo" when Mike burns the pizza, is it any wonder that the poor guy might have crappy self esteem?

The ethics are typically lax at Channel 6 today, with **April** more interested in the implications for her story when Macc goes bad than for the safety of the NYC's citizens. **Burne** has similar feelings and only views Macc as a "gimmick" in the first place.

Shredder is in quite a rebellious mood, choosing to disobey Krang's orders and use his Alien Express card to pay for a fancy hotel suite to luxuriate in whilst Macc causes chaos. Is this really necessary or is he just giving the Turtles time to catch up? And why on Earth did Shredder allow a spare transport module to be left behind, providing a method for them to follow him to the Technodrome? Come to think of it, why does **Krang** take the time to explain his plan to them if he knows he only has a short time to execute it in? Anyone would think they didn't want to succeed.

The Ninja Sword From Nowhere

Synopsis

Shredder is sent up to the surface to retrieve an alien metal detected by Krang's machines. Meanwhile, the Turtles buy a ninja sword for Splinter (it's National Sensei Appreciation Day). A conflict ensues when Shredder shows up and realises that the sword is made of the alien metal he's looking for. Unusually enough, the Turtles lose and Shredder gains possesion of the sword. When he tries to use it, however, he cuts a hole into nowhere, which he is then pushed through. Shredder has disappeared.

At the Technodrome, Rocksteady and Bebop are trying to explain when Shredder emerges from another hole. Krang tells Shredder that the alien metal is a substance which was once used to create spacecrafts that could travel through dimensions instantaneously. The metal was left on Earth thousands of years ago and made into a sword by skilled craftsmen.

Meanwhile, the Turtles intend to recapture the sword by setting up a fake newscast, with the help of April, revealing the location of the Turtles lair. Shredder arrives before they're ready for him and grabs Splinter, leaving him in the void behind reality. Shredder gives them an hour to surrender if they want to see Splinter again.

Another broadcast is faked, this one claiming that the Turtles are ready to surrender to Shredder. Shredder arrives at the destination set by the Turtles, a nearby salvage yard. The two sides battle until another hole is opened and an alien spacecraft arrives. The aliens are antique collectors, who take the sword and head back through the hole. Splinter sees his chance and escapes. Unfortunately, Shredder has done much the same thing.

Title

The British aversion to the word "Ninja" was demonstrated once again with this episode, which was retitled "The Sword From Nowhere" for it's BBC screenings. Both titles were pretty inaccurate, since it's explained early on in the programme that the metal comes from an alien planet, rather than from nowhere. Once again the BBC demonstrates it's attitude to television: factual errors are okay, so long as there's no violence.

Themes

The sword is made from alien metal which was designed to make interdimensional travel easier and faster. On Earth, it was forged into a weapon. Is this just another example of mankind's tendency to usurp creations designed for the greater good and use their secrets in the pursuit of war? This point is further illustrated when the sword is taken away by aliens at the end of the episode. The aliens are not hostile beings who want to use the sword in some intergalactic war. They are antique collectors. Whereas Earthlings consider the weapon useful, to higher civilizations it is an outdated object. It's highest value is nostalgic. Yet more evidence of the "Humans are crappy" viewpoint. The aliens add insult to injury by noting that "these Earthlings sure know how to foul up their environment." Charming.

As far as I can tell, there's no such holiday as National Sensei Appreciation Day. Who came up with the idea, the Turtles or Splinter? Did the Turtles invent it as a substitution for Father's Day - a way of showing Splinter they care? Or did Splinter feel that his "sons" did not appreciate him enough and create a mythical holiday to change this? In any case, Splinter isn't too upset by the absence of a gift, suggesting it's not a real event.

Why are the Turtles using sun-dried tomatoes as payment for goods? Come to think of it, what do the Turtles live on if they have no money? How do they pay for all that pizza and how did they come across sun-dried tomatoes? Did they steal them from someone's yard? Do they pay for everything with sun-dried tomatoes?

The TMNT are downright diabolical in their first confrontation with Shredder in this episode. They didn't have to do anything except keep the sword away from Shredder and instead they end up separately embarassing themselves before losing the damn thing. Highlights

include Donatello trying to stop Shredder by hitting a watermelon with his bo staff and Raphael standing still whilst a trashcan is placed on his head. What's up with them today? Are they so smug after finding the perfect present for Splinter that their arrogance costs them the battle? Or are they simply bored and trying to drag the whole thing out?

Characters

Bebop mutters something telling when he is roused from his sleep. "Mommy, do I have to go to school?" That attitude explains a lot about his mental faculties. Did Bebop's mother let him skip school whenever he felt like it? Stay in school kids; or else you might end up a hideous, deformed and idiotic mutant.

Leo's a morning person. Wouldn't you know it? He actually uses the phrase "rise and shine." He likes pain.

Mike's breakfast meal of choice is oatmeal flavoured. "Oatmeal flavoured what?" I hear you cry. Go on, guess. Yeah, pizza. Does he ever eat anything else? He also manages to display uncanny insight in this episode: "What we need is professional help." Too right, they do. Psycho freaks.

Irma sinks to new lows in her quest to get a man, attempting to strike up conversation with a guy who dials the wrong number. Someone needs to introduce her to a dating service. Also at Channel 6, **Burne** again advises **Vernon** to go and make news ("go bite a dog"). How there can be no news to report in all of NYC is anyone's guess, but Vernon takes this advice anyway (literally).

There's a brief glimpse into **Shredder**'s fatherly side when we find out he let Rocksteady sit on his lap and steer the transport module. Y'know, he may shout at the mutants and call them stupid and what have you, but he cares about them really. Aww. Shred's clearly in a good mood this episode, because he chooses to open a portal with the sword and escape when he's got a clear shot at gutting Leonardo. He also gives the TMNT an hour to surrender after fighting Splinter, presumably so they have time to come up with a plan, in the interests of fairness. However, this doesn't really count for much since he forgets to provide them with any means of informing him of their decision, meaning the TMNT have to spend much of the allotted time setting up another sattelite broadcast. Shredder's not keen to let Splinter see his honourable side either, refusing to fight him without the sword. "Only a fool would throw away his advantage." Cynical but true. You don't see the Turtles dropping their weapons whenever Bebop and Rocksteady rush forward at them empty handed.

Krang's a secret culture junkie! No really. It's not all that surprising. He doesn't get out much, so presumably he doesn't have much to do except plot to take over the world and veg out in front of the TV. The A-Team's Hannibal is clearly one of his heroes and Krang quotes the infamous catchphrase "I just love it when a plan comes together", despite the fact that the plan came together very early in the episode and in fact is already being executed. Random and inappropriate use of catchphrases is the signature of a true fanboy.

As if this wasn't enough to convince us that Krang really is down with the kids, we catch him twice watching the same trashy TV movie, which chronicles the story of Jon and Marsha, lovers who may in fact be siblings but are in fact not because one of them was switched with another baby by an insane nurse. The saddest thing is that Krang believes

the movie is "true to life" which proves that he doesn't know much about reality. Something should be done really. Are there no support groups Krang could join, which would take the occasional meal down to the Technodrome for him and offer a trip to the shopping centre every week? If Krang just had someone to talk to, his whole outlook on life could change. Maybe if the world seemed like a nicer place to him, he wouldn't plot to take it over all the time? Just a thought.

What can you say about **April**? Well, you could say she's a career-obsessed, self serving bitch and there'd be plenty of proof in this episode to back you up. Splinter's been kidnapped and the Turtles are worried for his safety. April is worried about her camera.

Later, when she makes a second broadcast (the one which is supposedly addressed to and expected by Shredder), she presents it once again as a fake newscast rather than a simple message, not willing to risk her job in return for guaranteeing Splinter's safety by being seen to co-operate. Predictably, April is less glad to see Splinter safe and sound at the end of the episode than she is sorry to lose the hot story that is the alien's arrival on Earth.

Incidentally...

This has nothing to do with anything but I thought I'd just mention that this episode has the best TMNT joke ever.
DON: How can you think about food? Don't you know what day it is?
MIKE: Not thinking about food day?

20,000 Leaks Under the City

Synopsis

Krang has invented a Super Pump in an effort to flood the sewers and "liquidate" the Turtles. Whilst the pump starts sucking water (and wildlife) from the ocean, Rocksteady and Bebop are sent by Shredder to steal a getaway boat. Meanwhile, Burne Thompson is being treated to a birthday meal by his Channel 6 colleagues. He's miserable not only because it's his 50th birthday, but also because Channel 6 hasn't broken a big story in weeks.

When Shredder and the mutants are in position, Krang releases the water in his tanks and floods the sewers with water. The Turtles survive, but Krang has further problems as he is not able to shut off his Super Pump. It continues to suck water from the sea and the city is now flooded.

April leaves Burne and her colleagues and heads off in search of the story, with the aid of a salad barge from the restaurant. Meanwhile, the Turtles have made their way to the Turtlevan, modified to float on water and are also investigating the flood. They find April's boat being circled by a shark and manage to rescue her, but Shredder sees that the Turtles are still alive and calls Krang for help in destroying them. Krang decides to unleash a giant squid sucked into his water tanks in order to deal with the Turtles.

Shredder uses a Brainwave Neutraliser in order to take control of the giant squid, but after being tossed around for a short while, the Turtles find themselves in possession of the remote control. The squid is sent after Shredder, but due to Michaelangelo's grabbing of the remote to have some fun, the villains manage to escape. The Brainwave Neutraliser is

removed from the giant squid and, since Krang's Super Pump is now stuck in reverse, water from the city starts flooding the Technodrome. April gets her story and the city returns to normal.

Themes

In trying to get rid of the Turtles, Krang nearly destroys the city he wants to take over so much. Is that a theme? No? Well, I can't think of anything then.

Characters

So let me get this straight. **Krang**'s plan to eliminate the Turtles is to flood their home with water? If you can't see the flaw in that plan, you need to pick up any kid's encyclopaedia and look up "turtles". What's next? Trying to take out the Punk Frogs by putting a big lilly pad in their swamp? Trying to take out the Rat King by flooding his lair with cheese? Trying to take out the Fly by giving him a big pile of crap to swarm around?

Burne is a man going through a midlife crisis, no two ways about it. Not only is he lying to his girlfriend Tiffany about his age (and if he really thinks he can pass for "thirty something" he's got problems), but Tiffany herself is how old? Twenty? Twenty five at the most? She's half his age, for godsakes. It's sad really.

Like any man going through a midlife crisis, Burne is overeager to prove himself in his career. Despite the fact that Channel 6 sometimes seems to cover up more news than it exposes, Burne is miserable about the lack of hot stories flying around lately. But note that when the city is flooded and Burne sees an opportunity to investigate, he sends Vernon rather than going himself. He's clearly not under any illusions about his capabilities.

Once again, **Splinter** claims he can "sense" Shredder's involvement in a nefarious scheme. Does this really indicate some sort of psychic ability? Or maybe a psychic link between the two of them? Or is it just a good guess?

Michaelangelo's turn to let the villains get away this episode. Donatello's doing a fine job of controlling the giant squid when Mike snatches the controls away and starts playing with them, allowing Shredder the opportunity to escape. If that isn't a deliberate attempt to make sure the bad guys get away, I don't know what is, because Mike simply isn't that stupid. Maybe Mike feared that Don was getting carried away and would ruin the game by allowing them to finally capture the villains?

The "hilarious" joke ending this episode takes place when Splinter announces he has prepared dinner and brings out some fried squid. Although all the Turtles recoil in somewhat inexplicable shock and terror, **Raphael** is quick to draw attention away from his own reaction and towards Michaelangelo's. "In Michaelangelo's case," he tells his sensei, "you should've prepared chicken." Very funny, except Raph had the exact same reaction. Sneaky little monkey.

Take Me To Your Leader

Synopsis

The episode begins with Leonardo dreaming that the Turtles are beaten in battle due to his inability to decide on a plan of action. Taking the dream as an omen, and worried further

when he makes a stupid mistake whilst sparring with Donatello, Leonardo decides he is not fit to lead the Turtles and leaves.

Meanwhile, Shredder and Krang have set up shop in the Mile High Tower, leaving a robot at the entrance to prevent anyone from entering. The evil plan this week is to use a Solar Siphon device to drain the sun's energy, storing it in batteries and initiating a new ice age, leaving the planet powerless to defend itself from Shred and Krang.

Whilst unsuccessfully searching for Leonardo, the Turtles observe that the Sun seems to be getting smaller and return to the lair to ask Splinter what they should do. Splinter suggests they view this as a learning opportunity and appoint a leader themselves. After playing "Spin the Pizza" to choose Raphael as their new leader, the Turtles head to the surface to have a look around.

On reaching the surface, the Turtles find that not only is it snowing, but they come face to face with penguins and a polar bear. It turns out Raphael has brought the Turtles up in the middle of a zoo. When Donatello proposes to use an energy tracking device to lead them to the source of the drain, Raphael abdicates leadership in favour of the guy with "all the answers." Donatello immediately gets to work, using complex calculations to try and work out which direction is East, whilst Raphael and Michaelangelo have a snowball fight.

Over at Channel 6, Burne is complaining because nobody can get in or out of the building to cover the major weather story going on outside. April can't even contact with the Turtles because her Turtlecomm is frozen. Meanwhile, Leonardo is still wandering around the city feeling sorry for himself. Although he's beginning to notice that it's getting colder, he blames himself for not wearing a warmer disguise and is convinced that the others will be better off without him. At the Mile High Towers, Shredder's solar batteries are nearly full.

Don's energy tracking device leads the Turtles to an old schoolhouse, where they use their climbing gear to climb a frozen staircase. Although they don't find the source of the solar drain, they do find an explosive device designed to fool Don's energy tracker. The Turtles manage to contain the explosion in a huge school bell, but Donatello has to return to the lair to pick up a spare energy tracker. Michaelangelo becomes leader by default.

On the way out of town, Leonardo finally opens his eyes to what is happening around him when he sees a bridge collapse under the weight of all the snow on top. He heads back to help the Turtles. At Channel 6, April hits on the idea of lighting a fire to thaw out her Turtlecomm, but this backfires when Irma uses the Turtlecomm as fuel for the fire.
Michaelangelo and Raphael are lost, but luckily Mike spots the ray of energy leading to the Mile High Towers. They unsuccessfully battle the robot at the entrance until Leonardo arrives and saves them. Donatello returns at this point. Going inside, the Turtles climb up the lift shaft and find the villains at the top of the tower. After a quick battle, the villains parachute to the ground and use a transport module to escape. Don reverses the energy drain and destroys the Solar Siphon. At the lair, the Turtles discuss what they have learnt from the experience.

Themes

The police are typically useful this episode. They receive word of a disturbance involving a robot outside the Mile High Tower, but only three cops are sent to deal with it. These cops are easily despatched off and retreat without calling for reinforcements, telling their foe they have learnt "never mess with a robot."

Raphael worries that if the Turtles don't hurry up and foil Shredder that "this is gonna turn into a two part episode." Who told him it wasn't real?

Characters

Let's look a little more closely at **Leonardo**'s dream, shall we? Shredder is planning to take over Earth's bakeries so he can have the entirety of the world's supply of cheese danishes. The Turtles rush in, but because Leonardo can't decide on a plan, they are defeated. Donatello and Raphael rush forward and are beaten by the henchmutants, whilst Michaelangelo leaps onto a giant pizza which turns out to a trapdoor to nowhere. Leonardo is disarmed by the henchmutants, then attacked by poodles who back him into a cauldron, where his fate is to become turtle soup.

You can see why Leo would be disturbed by such a gruesome nightmare, but why does he take it so seriously? Perhaps it's because the dream contains real insights into Leonardo's life that have hit a nerve. For example, the frivolous nature of Shredder's plan – to get all the cheese danishes for himself – symbolises Leo's own realisation that there's no real need for the constant battles between Shredder and the Turtles, because Shredder isn't a real threat to anybody. Similarly, the fact that Mike disappears into a trapdoor in the shape of a pizza may symbolise Leo's awareness of the risk that Mike's pizza habit could pose to both Mike and the team as a whole.

A cauldron, such as the one Leonardo is backed into, symbolises femininity in psychoanalysis as well as in various religions. Does this symbolise Leonardo's own fear of women or fear of his own femininity? After all, as leader, he has to be the tough guy and can't show any sign of "weakness" or emotion. It's likely that, with Leonardo's own self-image wrapped up so much in his status as leader, that any suggestion that he's not a good leader could throw him for six.

Whilst it's easy to see why Leo could be unsettled by his dream, it has to be said that he milks it a little bit. Perhaps he's seeking reassurance from the other Turtles or trying to make a point about how valuable his leadership is to the team dynamic, but in any case, one lousy dream alone doesn't explain his behaviour in this episode. When he's sparring with Don, he loses a fight after hitting himself in the head with his bo staff. Clearly this is for Don's benefit – nobody's co-ordination is **that** bad.

Announcing to the other Turtles that his instincts are shot, Leo decides to leave. No one physically stops him from going, or really tries that hard to stop him, it has to be said. Almost as if they're not taking his threat to leave seriously. Have they got a point? After all, Leonardo's behaviour shows him to be more than a little self-centred throughout the rest of the episode. He doesn't even notice New York's freak weather until he witnesses a bridge collapse under the weight of all the snow, at which point he admits he's been thinking only about himself and heads back to town.

And yet on his return, he's unrepenetant and smug. "I knew you guys would get into trouble without me," he quips as he rescues Mike and Raph from a robot. At the episode's end he tells Splinter he learnt "not to let doubts get in the way of my duty," but what really led to Leo's spaz in the first place? Two options present themselves: either Leo's self-image is so wrapped up in his leadership of the team that even the slightest doubt was enough to freak him out, or Leo went for a walk knowing full well the guys would mess up without him and anticipating they would appreciate him more on his return. Or to put it

another way: he either put the others in danger either because of his own fear of failure or because he wanted to prove a point.

Wow, that's probably the longest anyone's ever talked about Leo without falling asleep.

Moving on…Raphael gets first go at being substitute leader and proves pretty quickly that he isn't great at putting his money where his mouth is. Wanting to quit at the first sign of trouble, he brings the Turtles up from the sewers in the middle of a zoo, then abdicates to Don. At the episode's end, Raph tells Splinter that he's learnt it's "easier to make wisecracks than decisions." So will he stop making wisecracks and start being more constructive in future? No, of course not. He's learnt nothing, except that he doesn't like responsibility.

Donatello as leader in the long term would probably be the worst possible thing that could happen to the Turtles. Early on in the episode, he dismisses the possibility of the sun getting smaller as "scientifically impossible" even though he can see with his own eyes that this is EXACTLY what's happening. Raphael's abdication seems to cheer him up considerably – his vanity is flattered when he becomes leader. A refusal to listen to his peers when they're clearly in the right and immense vanity….remind you of anyone? If Don's not on the path to being an evil supervillain, he is at least on the right track to being an arrogant prick.

Still, for now at least, Don's inability to rely on his instincts and over reliance on scientific methods of double checking absolutely EVERYTHING make a coup led by him pretty unlikely. Rather than trusting his own Energy Tracker invention, he insists on calculating manually the direction in which to go. When Raph quite reasonably points out that this is a waste of time, Don ignores him. "I'm the leader, we're gonna do it my way," he responds, sounding more like Shredder than Leonardo. When Don's invention leads the Turtles to an old school house, he tells Mike and Raph "you can't argue with scientific data." Only you can, because in this case, the Energy Tracker has led them straight into a trap.

With his scientific methods proved to be flawed, Donatello eventually opts for dereliction of duty, running off to pick up a replacement Energy Tracker without even leaving a deputy in charge.

The result? **Michaelangelo** becomes the "Big Kahuna." Mike claims he's always wanted to have a bash at the old leadership thing, which isn't surprising given Mike's huge lust for attention. What better for an attention starved turtle than having everyone looking at him, asking what they should do next? Unfortunately for Mike, his only subordinate is Raphael, who makes unhelpful comments for the duration of his period of leadership, so it's probably not quite the experience he imagined it would be.

After the excitement of being leader dies down, Michaelangelo is predictably lost and doesn't know what to do. Although he's probably a better leader than Donatello (purely because he listens to his teammates and avoids leading the group into any explosively rigged school houses), it seems that the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles led by Mike would probably spend more time wandering around hoping to get lucky than following any specific plan. Luckily, Mike does get lucky and finds the source of the energy rain by pure chance – he looks up sees it streaming into the Mile High Towers. Whether Mike's leadership ability would increase over time is something we'll never know, since Leo returns whilst Mike and Raph are fighting the robot guard outside the building.

At the end of the episode when Splinter's asking his students what's they have learnt from the whole experience, Mike tells him he's learnt to stick to what he does best. "And in this dude's case, that's scarfing down pizzas." So Mike has learnt to keep doing what he does all the time anyway. Great. That was a waste of time for everyone then.

Is **Splinter** in the middle of writing one of those tiny book of philosophical sayings? He tells the Turtles that "he who would be a boulder on the path of life must first be a pebble" but can't explain what this means or why he said it. His excuse is that the phrase loses something in translation. Or maybe you just made it up, you silly old rat.

With Leo gone, Shredder gets perilously close to achieving his aims this time around, but although the threat to the Earth is real, the threat of Shredder becoming it's supreme overlord is not. In what must rank amongst his all time stupidest plans, Shredder intends to use his Solar Ciphon device to drain all of the energy from the sun and store it in solar batteries. So if the sun loses all it's energy what exactly is going to sustain all forms of life in the solar system? Someone clearly hasn't taken the time to think this all the way through.

And even if Shredder DID manage to initiate a new ice age, how would he himself be immune from this? A woolly coat? Why would thawed out Earthlings be his "willing slave"? Ultimately Shredder probably didn't bother to sort out these details because in the back of his mind he knew the Turtles would defeat him anyway and was only having a go to pass the time.

Incidentally, Shredder mentions this episode that he always wanted to be a writer and that being a ruthless villain was his second choice. Explains why he never puts much effort into it.

Four Musketurtles

Synopsis

At a Mardi Gras parade, the Turtles meet April, who is dressed as a 17th century noblewoman. She reveals that her costume was inspired by Dumas' book "The Three Musketeers" and hands a copy to Leonardo to read. Leo loves the book and empathises hugely with the characters, who also stand together at all costs.

At Pfeiffer Jewelry Store, April is reporting on the exhibition of the priceless Star of Brazil diamond. Watching the report, Krang realises that the Star of Brazil is actually impervium - a substance sent to Earth from Dimension X in a botched experiment. Krang tells Shredder that, with the impervium, he could create formidable weapons. Shredder immediately sends Bebop and Rocksteady up to the surface to steal the gem.

Irma and April are browing at Pfeiffer Jewelry Store when the mutants arrive and attempt to steal the diamond. At that moment, the Turtles arrive, but Leonardo is knocked unconscious and the diamond flies out of the store and into a nearby trash can. Irma rushes outside and finds the diamond. Believing it to be unwanted junk, she takes it for herself. Leonardo wakes, but he is not his usual self. He believes himself to be Dumas' character D'Artagnan and his fellow Turtles are in fact Musketeers.

At the Turtles lair, Splinter advises that the best course of action is to humour Leonardo

and act along until he begins to realise the truth of his own accord. Dressed as Musketeers, the Turtles head off to find the impervium gem.

Down in the Technodrome, Krang is unimpressed with Rocksteady and Bebop's performance and sends Shredder up to find the gem. Sick of being bossed around by Krang, Shredder also takes the forcefield generator that Krang has developed to use with the gem. He plans to use it on himself once he has recovered the gem.

At the parade, Shredder bumps into Irma, who is wearing the diamond around her neck, and kidnaps her. Although Leonardo chases him up to the top of a huge float, Shredder manages to esape by helicopter - a route accidentally supplied by April. Taking April and Irma to Channel 6, Shredder rehearses his announcement to declare himself emperor of the world. Alerted to the fact that the forcefield generator is missing, Krang arrives and prepares to take over. At this point, Leonardo arrives and is fired upon by the mutants, who cause him to fall from a great height. The knock on the head reverts Leo back to normal and the Turtles leap into action. The villains retreat back to the Technodrome, whilst the Star of Brazil slips down a sinkhole and is lost.

Themes

When the Turtles originally show up at the Mardi Gras parade, April can't help but notice their nakedness. The Turtles explain that it's refreshing for them to be able to walk around sans disguises, but isn't it something of a security risk nonetheless? And why do the Turtles want to walk around naked anyway? Clearly, they see themselves more as animals than as humans and want to be as nature intended.

"Do you have time for a flashback?" Krang asks, stepping outside the confines of cartoon land for a second before he explains the story of the Dimension X impervium. The flashback itself is also intriguing. All the Dimension X scientists appear to be brains without bodies, just like Krang when he arrived on Earth. But we were told long ago that Krang had his body taken away from him when he was banished to Earth, which means that Dimension X inhabitants aren't just brains in their natural state. This is confirmed in "Blast From the Past"

So why didn't the Dimension X scientists we saw have bodies? One explanation is that scientists in that world were stripped of their bodies to focus their minds on their work. Harsh, but not out of line with what we know about Dimension X. After all, if they punish their war criminals in this way, who knows what kind of society they really are? It's no wonder they turn out psychos like Krang.

The Turtles are watching Revenge of the Polka Dot Monster V in this episode. Yet another horror movie featuring some freakish creature and a bunch of humans getting hurt. Hmm... It's interesting that Leonardo can see a lot of similarities between the Turtles and the Musketeers. "Three Musketeers" by Alexandre Dumas is quite different to the various Hollywood adaptations of the novel. In the actual book, the Musketeers are "drunken bums", their quest is "farcical" and D'Artagnan is "more in love with his idea of himself than with the women who cross his path." And Leonardo thinks they're an accurate analogy to the Turtles. Interesting (see Richard Seltzer's review at http://www.samizdat.com/isyn/dumas.html for more details of "Three Musketeers" or read the full text at http://www.bibliomania.com/0/0/20/47/frameset.html).

Characters

Krang and **Shredder**'s relationship has seen better days. Krang is surprised by Shredder's betrayal but he himself planned to use the impervium only to make himself invincible. It's unlikely he'd be willing to share success with Shredder if he'd ever gotten his hands on the gem. After Rocksteady and Bebop's failure to grab the gem, Krang has a full blown tantrum, chucking furniture and inexplicably blaming Shredder. Is it any wonder Shredder decided he'd had enough and decided to use the forcefield on himself? Notice also that Krang suspects Shredder to be up to no good even before he finds the forcefield generator missing. Unfortunately for ol' tingrin, his own vanity secures his defeat. His insistence on rehearsing his victory speech is what gives Krang time to arrive and take over.

Leonardo sees himself as the cultural leader of the Turtles, as well as their leader in battle. Hence his annoyance that they couldn't care less about reading Dumas. He tells Splinter he just wants to "expose them to great literature." What does he expect from teenagers anyway?

Bizarrely, Leonardo decides that dressing up as the Musketeers will garner the Turtles some respect. Eh? Apart from the fact that it's Mardi Gras and people will know they're just dressing up, as mentioned above, the Musketeers are hardly brilliant role models. Is this just an opportunity for escapism from Leonardo? An excuse to dress up?

There's also more to Leonardo's delusion that it initially seems. Whilst he claims to think he is D'Artagnan, he certainly doesn't act like Dumas' protagonist, since he is genuinely heroic. He's also got an English (not French) accent. Whilst the fact that his companions are very obviously big huge turtles doesn't mean that he's faking his delusion, Leo does strive to hold onto it. When he sees April on TV, he slips, exclaiming "look, there's April at the station." When the others encourage him to remember more about reality, he denies knowing what they are talking about and rushes off to face Shredder/Richelieu alone. Clearly, the delusion of being a Musketeer, which combines his current action packed lifestyle with a sense of being respected and accepted by the general public, is much more seductive to him than reality.

Whilst we're on the subject of Leo's delusion, what the hell is **Splinter** thinking when he tells the other Turtles to "humour him"? How will that help Leonardo face reality? Notice that when Splinter loses his memory in Blast From the Past, he encourages the other Turtles not to lie to him, but to tell him the truth about his past. Why is that situation any different? Perhaps Splinter realises the appeal that Leonardo's delusion must have for him and is willing to allow him to dwell on it for a while...

Irma has a particularly bad attack of "dumb bitch" this episode. She finds a diamond in the trash and thinks it's been thrown away. She operates her camera backwards, giving the audience a lovely view of her neck. She refuses to realise that Shredder is kidnapping her for the gem, not her obvious charms and is flattered that Shredder and Leonardo are "fighting over" her. Someone give that woman an education.

Turtles, Turtles Everywhere

Synopsis

April is doing a story on a fully automated recycling centre (which also houses robotic trucks that collect trash without drivers), whilst, unknown to her, Bebop and Rocksteady

are watching her. The news story inspires the Turtles to finally clear up their lair. Meanwhile, Shredder plans to reprogram the robot trucks to retrieve turtles instead of garbage.

Using a reprogramming device, Shredder manages to convince Dump 1000 (the sentient computer that runs the centre) to obey his commands. However, Dump 1000 does not realise that Shredder is talking about four specific turtles and starts stealing all sorts of turtles from all over the city.

April is doing a story on a rare galapagos sea turtle is about to give birth when the turtle is kidnaped by the robot trucks. Trying to stop this, April herself finds herself stuck in a robot truck and taken back to Shredder. She calls the Turtles for help.

The Turtles arrive at the Recycling Centre and try to get inside, only for Donatello to get turtle-napped himself. Eventually getting in, the other Turtles make their way inside and distract the villains whilst Donatello frees himself. Reprogramming the computer, Donatello allows Dump 1000 to take control again and dispense of the villains. Whilst the robot trucks return most of the stolen turtles, April and the Turtles take the galapagos sea turtle to the beach, allowing it to lay its eggs and return to the sea.

Themes

A fully automated recycling centre must be a dream come true for city officials. There are no employees, which means no wages to pay, no unions to deal with and no minimum conditions to guarantee. Hundreds, or possibly thousands, of people must have lost their jobs when the recycling centre opened.

The events of this episode serve as a warning as to what happens when you try to cut human beings out of an industry entirely. The central computer, Dump 1000, may seem sufficiently intelligent to run the centre, but that's only if you don't take unusual possibilities into account. For example, near the beginning of the episode, Vernon falls onto a garbage conveyor belt. Quick action by Dump 1000 saves him, but only just in time. Later on, Shredder only has to use a reprogramming device to switch Dump 1000's alliances. What if a hacker decided it would be cool to mess with the robot trucks? Or what if a visitor fell into a garbage chute whilst Dump 1000 was pre-occupied doing more interviews with the media?

The Turtles seem particularly aware that it's only a cartoon this episode. "We're turtles in a halfshell, remember the theme song?" Donatello asks when trying to rally the Turtles. When the Turtles are racing along to some inspirational theme music later on, Michaelangelo asks "Whoa isn't this music excellent?" And Raphael notes that a sticky siutation constitutes a "great cliffhanger."

Characters

Once again, **Shredder** fails because he just can't be bothered to do things properly. When he realises that Dump 1000 is seizing ALL turtles, not just the mutant ninja variety, he doesn't bother to give the computer new instructions. Instead he agrees with Krang, who tells him that Dump 1000's relentless efficiency will ensure that he catches the Turtles EVENTUALLY. Which is okay, because after all, Shredder has all the time in the world.

Cowabunga Shredhead

Synopsis

When Michaelangelo eats all the pizza in the lair, Splinter decides to take action and uses Kung-Pow, an ancient form of mind control, to hypnotise Mike so that he no longer craves pizza.

Meanwhile, Shredder explains a new plan to Bebop and Rocksteady. He has created a hologram of Michaelangelo, which he will use to infiltrate the Turtles' lair. As part of this plan, he has developed a disc containing everything known about Mike's personality. However, when Bebop and Rocksteady try to insert this into the machine, they break it, causing it to zap Shredder. Shredder wanders away, feeling very strange.

At the lair, Michaelangelo proves that he no longer desires pizza, when Shredder walks in acting and talking just like him. Splinter hypnotises Shredder and realises that he thinks he is Michaelangelo. He instructs Shredder that he will revert to his true self upon hearing his name. When this happens however, Shredder becomes uncontrollable, and Splinter is forced to make him think he is Michaelangelo again, until they discover Shredder's plan.

Mike resents having another him around and leaves the lair to sulk. Then Donatello finds the holographic disc, which Shredder has dropped, and suggests they take it to Channel 6 to learn what it contains. Once there, they discover the plan to clone Michaelangelo.

Whilst this is happening, Mike has gone to Vinny's Pizzeria, although he realises once he gets there that he doesn't want anything. Rocksteady and Bebop turn up and manage to capture him and escape moments before Raphael, Leonardo and Shredder arrive. Whilst Raph and Leo search the building, Shredder finds some cheese on a cheese shredder. On saying the word "Shredder" he reverts to his normal personality and takes the opportunity to attack the Turtles. He leaves them on a conveyor belt, trapped in pizza dough and heading for the oven.

Shredder gets back to his hideout, where Bebop and Rocksteady have Michaelangelo tied up. He quickly finds that he no longer has the holographic disc he needs to carry out his plan and races back to Vinny's Pizzeria to retrieve it. As soon as he gets there, the Turtles manage to give him another personality change by calling him "Michaelangelo." He helps them out of the pizza dough.

At Channel 6, April and Donatello have discovered phase two of Shredder's plan, which involves cloning the President of the United States. When the others arrive, it is decided they need to find the real Michaelangelo and destroy the holographic synthesiser. Donatello comes up with a plan.

The Turtles return to Vinny's and attempt to re-create the situation when Shredder turned up looking for the disc earlier. Shredder is reverted back to his old personality and demands the disc. The Turtles oblige and escape. They then follow Shredder back to his hideout, where he discovers that the disc has been reprogrammed. It creates infinite Michaelangelo holograms, which confuses Bebop and Rocksteady, causing them to start firing their lasers guns randomly.

Shredder manages to use the synthesiser to trap the real Turtles in a forcefield, but after being called "Michaelangelo" once again, he smashes up the machine in order to free them. As the synthesiser malfunctions, Shredder is zapped again and reverts to his nasty

old self. Bebop and Rocksteady, believing he's really a Turtle in disguise, drag him back to the Technodrome.

Themes

Once again, there is no attempt to capture the villains, even though they're in something of a state. Shredder's unconscious and Rocksteady and Bebop are....Rocksteady and Bebop. Maybe a good time to go after them? The Turtles don't bother to find out.
See below for more on pizza and addiction themes.

Characters

It appears that **Michaelangelo**'s pizza habit is far more serious than previously thought. Not only has Mike eaten all of the pizza in the lair at the beginning of this episode, he's also hidden in a cupboard for fear of reproach. When Splinter finds him, he reveals that this has happened before. So Mike makes a habit of binging on ridiculous quantities of pizza? Not only that, but the fact that he hid suggests that he knows this is not healthy and feels guilty about it.

Splinter's got the ideal solution - using Kung Pow to hypnotise Mike so that he "crave[s] pizza no more." Problem:- Michaelangelo is used to a lifestyle with significant emphasis on pizza. It's the staple of the Turtles' diet. It's a social activity. It's a reward for good behaviour. It's comfort food. It's compensation for being a big bloody turtle with no friends outside your immediate family and no hope for a normal life. Ever.

So what happens when Mike just stops eating pizza? Like an alcoholic or a drug addict, his problems continue even after he's successfully given up his poison of choice. Mike doesn't know any alternatives. When he leaves the lair, he automatically goes to "drown his sorrows" at Vinnie's Pizzeria, despite the fact he doesn't want any pizza. Where else is he going to go?

Perhaps his pizza problem is part of why he resents having the deluded Shredder around so much. When Shred arrives in the lair and starts acting like Michaelangelo, the real Mike isn't even curious about what's happening. He just wants to get away from the double he resents so much, because he is a reflection of his own self. And Mike does not like what he sees - a loud, overenthusiastic guy shouting about pizza and fighting over who gets to use which skateboard.

Predictably, when the Kung Pow on Mike is reversed, the pizza habit is as extreme as ever. He demands eight (yes, eight) pizzas to satisfy his appetite, and he's not shy about doing this publicly. This suggests that however much Mike might be ashamed of his flaws, he's also desperate to draw attention to them. Nothing like being the overlooked middle kid, huh?

Shredder's a bit nasty this episode. He elects to cook Leo and Raph in a pizza oven but doesn't stick around to make sure they die. And although the machine which traps the Turtles in his hideout is able to vaporise Raph's sai, he chooses to use it merely to contain the TMNT. He's also uncharacteristically unambitious, willing to settle for the title of "vice president" when he and Krang discuss taking over the world. All in all, Shredder's not really in the mood for taking over the world today.

Just for a change, Shredder's plan is a stupid one. The main element is the hologram

which is supposed to impersonate Mike and kill the Turtles. But for this to work, Shredder would have to get Mike out of the way (i.e. capture him) in the first place. If Shredder could achieve this much, there'd be no need to create a hologram - the Turtles would have to surrender in order to ensure Mike's safety. The hologram plan is unnecessarily complicated and there are too many ways for it to go wrong. Does Shredder even want to take over the world?

In addition to this, the fact that brainwashed Shredder shows up at the lair means that somewhere on the disc containing everything they know about Michaelangelo was the location of the Turtles' home. So Shredder actually knew where the Turtles' lair was all along. Am I missing something? Just nuke the place, chrome dome.

As for **Splinter**'s weird psychic abilities, why doesn't he use them more often? Kung Pow is clearly an effective method of hypnotism, it could prove an invaluable tool in the fight against evil. If that's what Splinter is really interested in...

Whilst we're discussing Kung Pow, why does Splinter decide to undo his hypnotism of Mike at the end of the episode? Surely anybody can see that Mike's pizza habit is damaging and unhealthy? Perhaps Splinter sees a need for Mike to have a crutch - something to rely on? Or perhaps he sees the need for the other Turtles to have someone to look down on...maybe Mike's problems are a crucial element of the team dynamic? Once again, Splinter shows himself to prioritise the welfare of the team over that of his individual "sons."

Rocksteady and **Bebop** manage to ambush Michaelangelo this episode, which is probably their biggest achievement to date. Notice that this occurs after several hours on their own, without Shredder yelling at them and calling them idiots every two minutes. Are they truly incompetent idiots or is Shredder's behaviour towards them counterproductive? Later in the episode, working alongside Shredder once more, they instantly reverse to stupidity, shooting up holograms even though they've already been told why they shouldn't.

Invasion of the Turtle Snatchers

Synopsis

In the Turtles' sewer home, a celebration takes place to mark April's first anniversary at Channel 6. The catsuit wearing reporter isn't too happy though – she's been warned by Burne that if she doesn't deliver a big story soon, then she won't be around for another year. Donatello goes out to pick up a pizza for the occasion, accompanied by Irma.

At the Technodrome, the Plasma Heat Dissipator has overloaded (whatever that means), so Rocksteady and Bebop are sent to steal a nuclear fission reactor from a university, as a replacement. Being morons, the henchmutants confuse Shredder's request for "fission" with an order to go "fishing." So they go angling. And Rocksteady gets abducted by aliens. No really, this all happens.

Just as he is entering the pizzeria with Irma, Donatello is also abducted.

Bebop lets his bosses know what happened and they theorise alien involvement. Splinter comes to the same conclusion when Irma tells the Turtles what she saw. April is delighted that a big story may be taking place. Meanwhile, Donatello finds himself in some red and

pink caves, and trades verbal blows with Rocksteady before they team up to escape. They are pursued by a huge monster, which they outsmart together.

At Channel 6, Vernon is demanding a new chair for his new office, formerly belonging to April. Burne isn't interested in April's big story and sends her to help on Vernon's story – as his camera operator. They go to investigate some strange radiation coming from the reactor at the university.

Meanwhile, the "caves" which Donatello and Rocksteady were running around and the "space monster" they ran away from both disappear and the two abductees find themselves on board a spaceship. It seems they were abducted by an alien boy who wanted someone to play with. The boy's parents explain to Donatello that they have come to Earth to retrieve a toy that was left there 4000 years ago, whilst they were on vacation.

A nuclear reactor was built on top of the toy, causing it to approach meltdown. This would end all life on Earth, so naturally Donatello offers his help.

Back at the glue factory Shredder is using as a hideout, Krang orders Shredder and Bebop to forget about Rocksteady and go to the university to get the nuclear reactor. Shredder insists on taking over the spaceship instead – intending to use the weapons to double cross Krang and take over the world for himself. On board the spaceship, Rocksteady uses his communicator to inform Shredder of his location. Donatello then takes Rocksteady's communication device and rewires it to contact the Turtles (he lost his Turtlecomm when he was abducted) and directs them to the glue factory. Splinter and the Turtles arrive at the glue factory just before Shredder can teleport himself to the spaceship. After a fight, Shredder and Splinter are teleported onto the ship. Splinter searches for and finds Donatello, whilst Shredder and Rocksteady locate the weaponry.

On Earth, Bebop contacts Krang and tells him what has happened. Krang sends him to the university, where Vernon is doing his report on the radiation, to retrieve the nuclear reactor. On the spaceship, Shredder uses the alien's weapons to imprison Donatello and Splinter, whilst the aliens themselves have been sent to sleep by pizza that Donatello cooked for them. Shredder then teleports himself and Rocksteady down to the university reactor, where Bebop and some foot soldiers are digging up the space toy. The Turtles show up and battle commences, with April recording everything on camera.

Shredder and Rocksteady are using the alien's weapons to telekinetically retrieve the space toy, when Donatello and Splinter arrive – apparently the alien's "great powers of recuperation" woke them up and they freed our heroes. The aliens make the stolen weapons disappear, so Bebop relies on his laser to attack the Turtles. Unfortunately, his laser blasts accelerate the meltdown of the alien's toy. The bad guys sense trouble and leave in their transport module.

Suddenly, April has a good idea. Yes, really. She takes the batteries out of the toy – and the meltdown process is stopped. Furthermore, once she gets her story back to Channel 6, Burne is so pleased she is offered a three year contract. The good guys celebrate with pizza.

Themes

We know, of course, that humanity is crappy and violent and all the rest of it. The Anterean aliens serve to underline this point. Although they're very technologically advanced, they

detest violence (although they admit this is mostly because they "don't like to clean up afterwards.") Jesus, aren't there any other violent planets in all the galaxies that exist besides Earth? Or is it only visitors from the peaceful ones who drop by to make us feel bad?

Anyway, peace-loving as the Antereans may be, they're not *too* different to humanity. Klatu refers to his wife Veretta as "the little woman" and their son, frankly, is a four-armed brat. I mean, how advanced is an alien race whose kids think it's okay to abduct people from other planets just because they're bored? At least Donatello and Rocksteady can be grateful the kid was interupted before the anal probes commenced.

Characters

Burne's up to his usual tricks this episode – manipulating April by threatening her with dismissal on her first anniversary at Channel 6. Sharp viewers may have noticed that April succeeds in finding a big story nearly every episode and overall seems to have a much higher success rate than her rival *Vernon* – who is promoted above her this episode. So what is Burne up to? Is he sexist? Possibly. More likely, he's just learnt how to pull April's strings in order to make her perform as well as she can. Everytime he threatens her position as Channel 6's top reporter, she works extra hard at finding a big story and succeeds. Burne's decision to award April a three year contract at the episode's end shows he's aware of the extent of her talent. He's just displaying effective (and sneaky) leadership skills.

It's amazing that Donatello can still stomach the idea of pizza after **Irma** gets all excited over his declaration that he "needs" her. He just wants her to help him pick up the pizza, but she's initially overjoyed at the prospect he may want more. Looks like Irma's desperation has reached the stage where she isn't even limiting herself to same-species to relationships.

This episode makes me suspect that **Bebop** and **Rocksteady** are not as dumb as they appear to be. For example, they hear Shredder's request for them to go to the fission plant and interpret this as an order to go "fishing." Now, this simply could not happen. Nobody is that stupid. It's impossible. So we have to conclude that Bebop and Rocksteady simply decided they'd rather slack off than do any work tonight, relying on their bosses' low opinion of them to trust that they were merely being stupid, not disobedient. At the episode's end, Bebop appears to deliberately slam the doors of the transport module of Shredder's hand, but gets away with it because everyone assumes he's just being a klutz. See? Maybe they're **not so dumb** after all.

Splinter's doing his whole **fake-Jedi thing** again this episode, claiming to have sensed an "alien presence, unlike anything Earth has seen before" when Irma informs him of Don's disappearance. Well, if he sensed an alien presence, why not say anything before? Does Splinter remind anyone else of fathers/uncles/neighbours who claim to have known there was a problem with the car all along right after the brakes give out and it crashes into a ravine?

April allows herself to be manipulated by Burne again this episode. You'd think she would have learnt from previous experiences that Burne is just pushing her to do better and that her job is safe. But no. And, as usual, the pressure turns her into a **total bitch**. When she learns Donatello has been abducted, she doesn't give a toss that he may be being anally investigated on the mothership, she's just happy that she may have an opportunity for a

story. When trying to convince Burne to let her follow the lead on the alien story, she shamelessly flaunts her curves and pouts – but it gets her nowhere. To her credit, she does manage to stop the radioactive space toy form killing everyone – being the only woman present, she's the only one capable of formulating a plan of action so simple as "take the batteries out." It turns out to be a pretty good day for April overall, as the alien story gets her a three year contract. Will this increased job security teach her to relax a little and put her friends before her stories occasionally? What do you think?

Once again, **Donatello** demonstrates he is a pragmatist. Whereas any of the other Turtles may have had issues teaming up with a bad guy, Donatello doesn't hesitate to suggest co-operation with Rocksteady once they're trapped on the spaceship together. This isn't the only time he demonstrates that, for him, **the ends justify the means**. Later on, after meeting his alien hosts, he bonds with them by cooking them pizza. Meanwhile, the radioactive space toy is becoming more and more dangerous. Hello? Is Donatello even bothered about saving the Earth? Would it be overly harsh to suggest he's not so bothered about the planet because he isn't on it? After all, the spaceship is filled with modern technology and we all know how Donatello feels about **machines**. Why else would he dilly-dally when the whole Earth is at risk?

Krang can be hard to figure out. Although he's appears to be unmoved at the news that Rocksteady has been abducted by aliens, he shows himself not to be **emotionless** when Shredder makes a remark about him having no feet. Clearly the loss of his body is something that genuinely scarred him mentally – despite the nifty robot body he later received. Shredder's realised this is a good way to upset his rival/ally/enemy and teases him at the end of the episode for having no hands.

Once again, **Shredder** plots to take over the world without Krang, disobeying orders to go after the spaceship weaponry. He tells Rocksteady that Krang is "pompous" and he wants him to "beg for mercy." And yet, he always goes back to him. Surely with all the villanous types in the universe, Shredder could find a better offer if he genuinely wanted to leave Krang. Further evidence of the strange **love-hate relationship** between the two.

Finally, Raphael is typically open-minded and equal-opportunity minded when April climbs into the smoking crater of the dangerous space toy. Somebody asks what she is doing. "Ah, with women you never know," Raph quips. Actually, she's saving the day. Whilst you stand around and make sexist quips. Nice work, Raph.

Camera Bugged

Synopsis

The Turtles convince Splinter of their need of a vacation after performing poorly in practice. Whilst they argue about where to spend this vacation, an alien tourist arrives on Earth and starts taking pictures of everything with a special camera which sucks everything inside. Soon, City Hall has disappeared and calls are flooding in to Channel 6 news. April goes to get the story.

Watching a newscast at the Technodrome, Krang realises a Polarisoid alien must be visiting Earth and Shredder comes up with the idea of using the alien camera to capture the Turtles.

Whilst preparing to film the alien, April spots Shredder in the vicinity and contacts the

Turtles. She then witnesses Shredder tricking the Polarisoid into letting the villain take his picture. The alien, along with Rocksteady and Bebop, disappear into the camera. At this point, the Turtles arrive and battle commences. In the ensuing chaos, April and Shredder manage to end up with the wrong cameras. Shredder finds the camera he has does not work against the Turtles and escapes, whilst April takes the Polarisoid camera, believing it to be hers, back to Channel 6 to file her story.

Krang realises that Shredder has taken the wrong camera and sends him back to the surface to retrieve the other one, whilst April's tape is aired during the news. Seeing Rocksteady and Bebop banging on the screen, the Turtles realise that April has the Polarisoid camera and hurry to Channel 6 news. They arrive shortly after Shredder and April tries to film the confrontation, only to suck the Turtles and Shredder into the camera.

April contacts Splinter for help, whilst the Turtles chase Shredder through the scenery captured in the camera. They are released when Splinter breaks the screen of the monitor playing the videotape, releasing everything trapped inside. The villains escape, but the Polarisoid has his camera safely returned and decides to just buy postcards from now on.

Themes

The Polarisoid's travel book has some useful advice on Earth - don't drink the water, always tip 15% and be sure to compliment Earthlings on their pets. Personally I prefer "mostly harmless".

This episode parodies tourists pretty effectively. The useless travel guides, the bizarre compunction to photograph everything (including a manhole in an alley, in the case of the Polarisoid), the gaudy attire tourists wear marking them out from normal people. Like many tourists, the Polarisoid puts his own vacation above any regard for the environment he's visiting, not stopping to behold the damage he's doing in the name of his own pleasure. Like Krang says, tourists want to take the "entire vacation back with them." He's easily taken for a ride for the local ruffians (Shredder and the mutants, in this case). There's a lesson in here somewhere about showing respect to the places you visit. Or you could just forsake vacations altogether. As Mike says "Who needs tourists anyway?"

On a separate topic, why do the Turtles bother chasing Shredder and the mutants through the images trapped inside the camera. They're all trapped together, so what's the point? Perhaps a more effective use of their time would be to arrange a truce and work together to find a way out of the camera? Another illustration of how keeping the game going is more important to the Turtles than any practical considerations.

Characters

There's not much in the way of character development this episode, but the Turtles' argument over the potential locations for their vacation is interesting. Mike wants to check out Malibu, Don wants to go to the Smithsonian Museum, Leo's more interested in the War Museum and Raph wants to head for Vegas.

These all seem like fairly predictable choices, except perhaps for **Raphael**'s choice. Raph is the turtle who most likes to play it safe. He doesn't have any of the reckless tendencies demonstrated by Leonardo occasionally, he doesn't put himself on display as Michaelangelo does and he's not the curious-by-nature type as Donatello is. Raphael hides behind quips, likes to shove the attention away from himself and generally avoids

the spotlight.

So why Vegas, with it's bright lights and gambling and vivacious personality? Does Raph's wish to visit the city reflect some desire to let go a little or shove himself into the spotlight for once? Does he want, deepdown, to be the cardshark attracting all the ladies with his bold and outgoing personality? Because god knows Las Vegas is not the destination of choice for people looking to hide inside themselves.

Green With Jealousy

Synopsis

The episode begins with Krang whining about Shredder's incompetence and the power shortage at the Technodrome. Despite Krang's warnings about conserving power, Rocksteady and Bebop turn on the TV and catch April's report on a nuclear submarine which is docked in the city's harbour. Krang plots to steal the nuclear energy from the submarine then use it to drill to Earth. Meanwhile, at the pier, April has just finished her report and sees Irma chatting to four admiring sailors. Unfortunately for Irma, they're all married. The ladies head back to the office.

Nearby, the foot soldiers commence Operation Barnacle, attaching electrodes to the submarine so they can drain the nuclear energy into a storage battery. This causes the submarine to lose power.

At the Turtles' lair, Donatello is attempting to fix the broken TV when April contacts the Turtles and suggests they head to her place and watch TV there with April and Irma. Down in the Technodrome, Krang has a plan to make sure the Turtles don't interfere with his submarine-draining antics: a love potion. He hopes it will make the Turtles so consumed with jealousy and infighting that they will be too busy to thwart his evildoings. Rocksteady and Bebop sneak into a pizzeria and manage to get the love potion onto the pizzas just before Michaelangelo calls in to pick up some pizza for the trip to April's. In the van, the Turtles tuck into their snack – except Don, who is busy driving.

By the time they arrive at April's apartment, Leonardo, Raphael and Michaelangelo are feeling very strange. The second they lay eyes on Irma, they simultaneously fall for her. Irma tells the Turtles that April has gone to the submarine base to cover the story of the power drainage. Irma heads back to Channel 6 whilst Leo, Raph and Mike run off to buy presents for her. The presents are delivered to Irma at work and she is delighted to discover that they were sent by three different guys – all wearing sailor suits (the Turtles' choice of disguise for the episode).

At the submarine base, April finds that the submarine crew have deserted the area. Meanwhile, at the Turtles' lair, the infected Turtles are fighting over Irma. Donatello tells Splinter why they are fighting and they theorise that Shredder is involved. Donatello examines the remains of the pizza that was eaten and discovers traces of the love potion. He starts working on an antidote.

Over at the pier, Rocksteady is hungry and eats a slice of pizza infected with love potion, confident it won't affect him. Until he bumps into April and decides he's going to marry her. Whether she likes it or not. He picks her up and drags her off to the submarine. April drops her Turtlecom on the way. Meanwhile at Channel 6, Irma is looking at wedding dresses, the puppy bought by one of her admirers is causing chaos and Vernon is threatening to

call the dogcatcher.

In the submarine, Rocksteady plans the wedding, ordering Bebop to “swipe a ring and kidnap a preacher.” April appears to change tack and agree to the marriage after all, but she’s actually just being nice so she can ask Rocksteady to go to the pier and fetch her “make-up compact” (i.e. Turtlecom). When Rocksteady retrieves the communicator, she uses it to call Don and let him know what is happening. Donatello lets her know he has formulated an antidote and is about to use it on the other Turtles. They are initially reluctant to eat the pizza that Donatello offers them – with the antidote on it – until Splinter tells them that April prepared it. After wolfing down the pizza, the Turtles are cured and they all head off to the submarine base to free April.

At the pier, Mike and Raph dive under the submarine and detach the electrodes from the sub, using them to fry a foot soldier that tries to interfere. Meanwhile, Don and Leo look for April and see that she is with Rocksteady and Bebop, who are attempting to escape in a life craft. The henchmutants launch a tornado in the Turtles direction, but it is turned back towards them and they abandon ship, leaving April to jump ship herself. Mike and Raph rescue her.

Rocksteady and Bebop escape in a transport module. In the Technodrome, Krang rejoices that they have successfully stolen all that energy from the submarine, but when the module tunnel opens, a wave of water destroys the storage battery. The stolen energy is lost just as the last of the Technodrome’s power is drained and the lights go out.

At the pier, Irma shows up in a wedding dress, declaring her intention to marry whichever of her three sailors shows up first. When the Turtles reveal the identity of Irma’s admirers, she screams and runs off.

Themes

The episode gives another reason to be suspicious of the armed forces – why would the navy be happy for April to do a story on their largest nuclear sub being docked in the city’s harbour? If nothing else, this news would attract anti-nuclear protesters. At worst, it could have attracted terrorists. Luckily, it just attracted two mutants and some ninja robots. The only explanation I can think of is that the US navy is trying to intimidate its enemies. Moreover, the media co-operates with this by publicising the event.

Or course, if the US navy want to come off as intimidating, they may wish to train their sailors not to abandon ship the second the lights go out, as they do this episode… yet another example of the armed forces running away from a situation the Turtles can handle with ease.

This episode has another example of good science being usurped for bad purposes. Well, if you can argue that a nuclear powered submarine constitutes “good science” anyway. Which you can’t. But in any case, the nuclear powered sub provides an ideal opportunity for Krang to steal power for the Technodrome. So it’s still science being usurped by evil. And they told you nuclear power was safe…

Once again, pizza is used as a means to get at the Turtles this episode. The toppings of choice this episode are peanut butter and clams for the first pizza and chocolate chilli for the second. Two more examples of the sweet/savoury dichotomy the Turtles generally enjoy…

Finally, a theme we hardly ever see in this show – love. In this case, it makes the Turtles spend all their money on tacky crap (Mike buys Irma a statuette with a love heart and cupid aiming an arrow) and kick the crap out of each other in a jealous rage. And they don't restrict themselves to their usual style of fighting either – they're actually out to hurt each other. Strange how it never occurs to any of them to approach Irma and say "hey, wanna go for a drink sometime." But then, it never seems to any of them to wonder how Irma feels about them – it's more like they just need to settle who gets her and the rest is a mere formality. The same can be said of Rocksteady's "love" for April – he kidnaps her and makes preparations for a wedding without even asking how she feels. Is it possible that Krang is confusing his love potion with a potion that makes men become incredibly possessive and act like idiots? Or is that the same thing?

Characters

At the beginning of the episode, **Irma** bemoans the fact that, although she's met plenty of sailors at the pier, they're all married. Why would Irma want to settle with a sailor anyway? He'd never be around, he'd forever be in danger and, let's face it, the chances are he's gay. Perhaps what Irma really wants is the status of being a married woman without actually having to do the hard bits of marriage. A husband who's never around would give her that.

Typically **oblivious to logic**, Irma doesn't think it's strange when three different sailors send her gifts at work – even though all the sailors she met earlier were married. Clearly she's desperate enough to have disregarded the notion of common sense long ago. She starts looking at wedding dresses before she's even met any of her admirers and turns up at the pier intending to marry whoever shows up first. Which just confirms that she's more interested in **being married** than in who she's marrying.

You may remember in "**Case of the Killer Pizzas**", **Krang** came up with a stupid plan to attack the Turtles by putting monster eggs on their pizzas. The problem with this plan was this: if you're going to give the Turtles food, the best idea is simply to poison it, that way nothing can go wrong. Clearly having forgotten any lessons learnt from that incident, Krang chooses to attack the Turtles via pizza once again this episode. And instead of poison, he uses a love potion, which it takes all of five minutes for Donatello to reverse. Clearly, Krang doesn't want to take out the Turtles for good. Who would he have **left to play with**?

Weirdly, **Bebop** doesn't object to Rocksteady's plans to abandon the evil schemes they've been assigned to and marry April instead. In fact, he's put in charge of the wedding arrangements and even attempts to help find a preacher and a ring. The most likely explanation? He realises that the love potion on Rocksteady's pizza is responsible and decides he'd rather humour Rocksteady for a short while than carry out some stupid plan that will **most likely fail anyway**.

Raphael displays yet more of his **impressive knowledge of women** this episode, justifying his decision to eat April and Irma's pizza with "you know women, they're always on a diet." Patronising *and* self-serving.

Return of the Fly

Synopsis

In the Turtles' lair, Raphael and Michaelangelo are sparring when Splinter senses an "alien" presence. In the Technodrome, Shredder experiences a similar sensation whilst Krang is explaining his intention to bring the Technodrome closer to the surface to retrieve water supplies from an underground reservoir.

The "alien presence" watching the Turtles and Shredder is actually Baxter "The Fly" Stockman who has been left slightly out of phase with this dimension since his last battle with the Turtles (see "Enter: The Fly"). Seeking to correct this situation, Baxter flies to the top of a skyscraper and waits for a bolt of lightning to hit, bringing him back.

Back in the sewers, Donatello has just finished building a gamma ray sonar tracker designed to track the Technodrome's movements. Learning that the Technodrome is heading for the reservoir, the Turtles go to intercept it. Taking April with them, they arrive before Shredder. Whilst they prepare for battle, April is kidnapped by Baxter.

After battling Shredder, Bebop and Rocksteady, the Turtles start looking for April and find the Rat King, who offers his help. Meanwhile, Shredder has begun draining water from the reservoir, when he encounters Baxter. Once again, he convinces Baxter that he is a friend and ally and asks for his help in dealing with the Turtles, promising to make the scientist human again in return.

Having led to the Turtles to April, the Rat King disappears. At this point, Shredder and Baxter arrive and unleash toxic gas into the air, knocking out the Turtles before making a hasty exit. Michaelangelo manages to shut off the gas.

At the reservoir, Bebop and Rocksteady's fighting freezes the water and damages the transport module's guidance systems. When the Turtles arrive, the place starts falling apart and all everybody is forced to escape. Frozen by Bebop and Rocksteady's freeze rays, Baxter tumbles down the module tunnel after them and arrives in the Technodrome, where he breaks free and flies off - vowing revenge.

Themes

Why do the Turtles object to Shredder and Krang taking water supplies from the underground reservoir? The water is a public resource, there isn't any shortage of it and surely even villains are entitled to a basic supply of essentials necessary for life. Do the Turtles really want to deny their enemies the right to live or do they just go along looking for something to do?

Characters

With "proper motivation" in *"Leatherhead Meets the Rat King"*, **Michaelangelo** wipes the floor with Leonardo and Donatello. So why does he let Raphael throw him around and defeat him so humiliatingly whilst sparring at the beginnning of this episode? Is he having a bad day or does Mike maybe realise the need for the other Turtles to have someone to look down on? Did he let Raphael win?

Shredder and **Splinter** clearly have some Kenobi/Vader type psychic powers. Sort of. Both are able to sense an "alien presence" when the intangible Baxter is nearby. Good for them.

So what could have prompted **Bebop** and **Rocksteady** to take a self-improvement anger-management video course? Seems like they may have finally realised that their thuggish tendencies are holding them back. Although the mantra from the video - "I am in control" - helps to calm them down, it doesn't llast for long, because they're not in control - Shredder is. Both of the henchmutants work hard at controlling their anger but in the end their job is just too stressful.

Once again, **Baxter** falls for Shredder's "but I'm your friend" nonsense. Despite his initial cynicism, Baxter's clearly desperate to believe Shredder when he tells him he looks upon Baxter as a son. Makes you wonder why Baxter's so desperate for a father figure. Lousy parents would certainly explain how he ended up hanging around with a sinister older man who wants to take over the world.

Why does the **Rat King** help the Turtles find April? Does he just want to help them so they will leave his lair without a fight? Is he trying to suck up to them so they won't kick his demented ass? Is he even trying to help at all? Sure, he leads them to April, but as soon as the Turtles arrive they are gassed by Shredder and barely manage to escape. Whichever side he's on, he's clearly playing a more complex version of the game than any of the other bad guys.

Casey Jones: Outlaw Hero

Synopsis

All over the city, small-time criminals are being beaten up by a vigilante named **Casey Jones**, who wears a hockey mask whilst taking on would-be muggers and burglars. The police and the media believe that the Turtles are responsible for the violence that Casey Jones is committing. Burne puts April on the assignment for Channel 6. Whilst headed to the grocery store, the Turtles run into Casey Jones themselves. He believes they are criminals, until he sees their faces and decides they are actually aliens from Mars. He runs away.

Down in the Technodrome, **Krang** has developed a bug-like device that can infiltrate and control any machine. Krang is also planning to make a giant spider-like machine called a “Supersize Knucklehead” which he will use to fight the Turtles. **Bebop** and Rocksteady unleash the bugs in the city. Before long, the city’s electrical appliances have been taken over.

The Turtles find Casey Jones in a park, attacking a homeless man for illegally sleeping on a bench. He is chased off but the Turtles realise that Jones’ kung-fu skills and vigilante activities will lead people to confuse him with them. Meanwhile, April’s camera scooter is out of control and the Turtles arrive to try and bring it under control. They soon find themselves fighting all manner of appliances – from toasters to vending machines. Meanwhile, Shredder orders some factory machines to start building Krang’s Supersize Knucklehead.

The Turtles fare badly against the bug-infested machines, and it looks as though they are about to meet their end when Casey Jones intervenes and saves them from being crushed by a falling refrigerator. Donatello finds one of the bugs and starts to follow it back to Shredder. Casey and the Turtles pursue in the Turtlevan, but unfortunately a bug has gotten into the equipment and the van leads them right into a lake.

Using Donatello's portable tracker, the Turtles track down Krang and Shredder and see the Supersize Knucklehead in action. Whilst the Turtles fight off more bug-infested machinery, Casey follows the Supersize Knucklehead. The Turtles defeat Shredder's machines and grab the control box, using it to summon every bug in the city. Casey makes a hole in the side of the Supersize Knucklehead and throws the control box inside. The bugs swarm in after it and cause the giant machine to malfunction.

Krang ejects from the machine and escapes with Shredder and the henchmutants. The Turtles want to thank Casey but when they look for him he has gone.

Themes

What is the message we are supposed to learn about vigilantes this episode? To begin with, Casey is condemned for his behaviour. Clearly, beating up a homeless old man is not cool. But later Casey becomes a hero, because his recklessness in jumping into the conflict with Shredder saves the day. So what have we learned?

The Turtles are not a legal crimefighting force, but April insists that they are not vigilantes. Yet Casey Jones is definitely a vigilante. The one difference is that the Turtles go up against supervillains whereas Casey takes on normal criminals. Burne Thompson says that the vigilante is breaking civil liberties. The Turtles certainly do that when they use excessive force on Bebop and Rocksteady. When have they ever been given a fair trial?

The overall message seems to be that normal criminals have civil liberties, but supervillains do not. Or maybe it's one rule for mutant vigilantes, another rule for human vigilantes. Since humans can't be trusted anyway.

Given the examples we've seen of the inability of New York's authorities to tackle crime, it's no surprise that individuals like Casey have emerged to tackle the problem themselves. When the police are so ineffective, desperate individuals may feel they have a duty to intervene. And why couldn't the police catch Casey themselves? He isn't exactly stealthy, in fact he causes as much noise and damage as the criminals he aims to stop.

It's fairly obvious what Shredder's mechanical insects are supposed to represent – they're computer bugs. One little glitch in the system and everything goes crazy. It just goes to show – you can't trust technology. Even Donatello, the most pro-technology Turtle acknowledges this when he laments "What a way a way to go. Done in my modern conveniences." The Turtles' own dependency on technology is highlighted when the malfunctioning Turtlevan leads them straight into a lake.

Characters

So what is the deal with **Casey Jones**? For a start, he isn't the brightest star in the heavens. He mistakes the Turtles for aliens – despite the fact that they're constantly featured on TV news programmes. He goes after the Supersize Knucklehead alone, when he doesn't stand a hope in hell of stopping it without the Turtles' help. He certainly isn't an expert in his field. The fact that he wears a facial disguise but uses his real name screams "amateur."

Casey seems to lack a sense of perspective on crime. Beating up someone for trying to mug a little old lady is one thing, but is it really necessary to beat up a homeless guy for sleeping on a park bench? "All lawbreakers must pay the price," Casey asserts. He

describes the city as “a cesspool of crime. Somebody’s gotta clean it up.” And someday a rain will come to wash the scum from the streets, eh? Casey seems more like a film-nut who’s lost the plot than someone with a genuine reason for turning vigilante.

Krang’s mechanical bugs are programmed to return home when discovered. The obvious question is why? Why would Krang programme the bugs in a way that just helps the Turtles to track him down? Maybe he feels that he needs to give the Turtles **a fair chance to beat him**… and allowing the bugs to lead them to the villains does just that.

When attempting a dangerous stunt, **Bebop** and **Rocksteady** break the fourth wall in order to appeal to the kids: “We’re trained professionals, don’t try this at home.” But surely the kids realise that Bebop and Rocksteady are idiots, so why would they listen to them anyway?

Corporate Raiders From Dimension X

Synopsis

The Turtles are making soda can mountains when April's news reports begins. Leaders of industry are threatening to leave the city due to a wave of kidnappings. The Turtles decide it's none of their business - until a corporation which supplies pizza dough is hit, threatening a worldwide shortage. Disguised as roadworkers, they stake out the Incredibly Huge Corporation and, sure enough, a group of suspicious men in business suits turn up. They have laser guns and a fight ensues. The businessmen get away, but Leonardo manages to grab one of their briefcases. The businessmen appear to be from a company called Octopus Inc.

The Turtles decide they need a human to go undercover in Octopus Inc. and recruit outlaw vigilante Casey Jones. Casey impresses an interviewer and gets a job. He makes an impression and is asked to attend a seminar, during which he and his colleagues are hypnotised into becoming slaves to the company.

Meanwhile, the TMNT spy another group of businessmen getting ready to hit the Itty Bitty Corporation. The fight is ended when Donatello throws water on them, which breaks their conditioning. The Turtles realise that the businessmen were hypnotised and disguise themselves as city washbasin inspectors so they can get into Octopus Inc. to rescue Casey. After being doused with water, Casey reverts back to his normal self and smashes up the hypnotic equipment.

Casey and the Turtles make their way to the company president's office, only to find that the president of Octopus Inc. is Shredder, who captures them and leaves them in a broom closet. Here they find Octavius Ogilvy, the real president of the company. The Turtles realise that he is deaf and was locked up because he couldn't be hypnotised. Don fixes his hearing aid and they escape, discovering Shredder's plan along the way. During the "Grand Arising", the Technodrome will rise from a stadium and wackiness will take place.

Arriving at the stadium, the Turtles mess with the plumbing in the basement and manage to douse all of the corporate slaves in water, freeing them from Shredder's hypnotism. When the Technodrome does not rise, Shredder escapes. The episode ends with Ogilvy apologising for trusting a "slimeball" like Shredder and promises that Octopus Inc. will become a more ethical company.

Themes

The business kidnappings raise the interesting issue of what exactly the Turtle's jurisdiction is. Should they interfere in non-earth threatening events? In the end, it's the pizza issue that clinches it, but if there had been no pizza suppliers involved, would they be right to stay out of it?

Some interesting thoughts on capitalism this episode. Most interesting is the Turtles' visit to the Russian Pizza Room, where they are served one measley slice of pizza between the four of them due to the pizza dough problem. "And I thought Russia had shortages," remarks the waiter. It became commonplace, during the 1980s, for Western nations to point to Communist Russia's shortages and say "and this is why capitalism rocks!" This episode demonstrates how even capitalist societies can experience problems when things don't go their way.

From watching the episode without any accompanying explanation, you can't tell if the name of the company Shredder is running is Octopus Inc. or Octopus Ink. Octopuses use ink to blind their prey to make them vulnerable. Octopus Inc. uses hypnotic equipment to manipulate its staff into doing evil for them. Octopuses are many armed beasts. Octopus Inc. is a capitalist conglomerate, and therefore a many armed beast by its nature.

The whole episode has a nice anti-capitalist flavour to it. The companies mentioned at the beginning are given cynical names like "Titani Corp", "Giganti Corp" and "Behemoth", reflecting the capitalist primeval urge to be as big as possible just for the hell of it. Octopus Inc. employees become mindless slaves, blind to the consequences of their actions and loyal to their "beloved chairman of the board", an individual who is seen to be of greater importance than any, or even all, of the workforce. At the end of the episode, Octavius Ogilvy admits that he didn't listen to his conscience when he let Shredder become a partner in the company. His main concern was obviously profit. The fact that Shredder was legitimately involved in the company is most worrying of all. He didn't have to kidnap anyone, threaten anyone or steal anything to find himself in that position. The greed and desire for profit in capitalist society lets evil people like him get into positions of power with very little difficulty. And they want "ruthless, violent" people like Casey, who knock out their supervisors and smash up desks with a baseball bat, as their employees.

There is, however, an optimistic side to these events. Underneath the Octopus Inc. stadium is the exposition of 1890, built to commemorate the founding of the company. The Turtles tell Ogilvy that this exposition will help to save the country, and the world. Is the episode advocating a return to a simpler form of capitalism, with the aims and dreams that founded Octopus Inc. in 1890 in mind? In the 19th century, companies were certainly more community-orientated (hence the building of the exposition in the first place). Maybe this is the solution.

The ending highlights the potential of capitalist companies to do good. Octavius Ogilvy states that "there will be a new Octopus Inc. No longer will greed be our single motivating factor. We will clean up the environment. We will help the underpriveledged. We will make this a better world for everyone regardless of race, creed or colour."
But as Raph points out, although it may be a happy ending, it's not a realistic one.

Characters

Splinter isn't making any particular kind of sense at the beginning of the episode. "The

wise bird does not nest in another's tree," he tells the Turtles when they wonder if they should investigate the kidnappings. Surely the Turtles have a responsibility to fight ALL evil, not just evil relating to non-capitalist regimes? Splinter backtracks a moment later, when the Turtles decide to investigate anything. "I knew that would stir their patriotic spirit," he says to no one in particular. Splinter clearly considers taking an interest in business to be a patriotic, American trait. Since he willingly moved there, from a country only in the nascent stage of capitalist at the time, is it presumptious to conclude that Splinter is on the pro-capitalist bus?

Dance around your living rooms, children, **Casey Jones** is back. And he's madder than ever. The Turtles know that announcing their plans to break into the snack machine in the park in the local newspaper will grab his attention and, sure enough, he turns up and starts a fight. Whilst attempting to stop the Turtles, he destroys all of the vending machines he was trying to defend, but that's besides the point. For Casey, anyone who ever attempts to do any type of crime ever is deserving of an ass kicking. The fact that he himself is a worse criminal than most of those he pursues completely escapes him. He's your typical neighbourhood, self-appointed vigilante idiot, basically.

How did **Don** know that throwing water at the slaves would break their conditioning? And how come he only displayed this knowledge when it became absolutely urgent that he do so? Possibly, Donatello had already worked out that water would act as a cure, but didn't use this information until it was necessary. His contribution to keeping the game going this week?

It's **Mike** who works out that the fact that the sprinklers have been shut off means that someone in the building isn't hypnotised. Clever observation from Mike, no?

Rocksteady and **Bebop** clearly enjoy being something other than good-for-nothing thugs and make the best out of the situation, selling programs at the grand arising in order to make a bit of spare cash. Interesting what they can do when they're given the chance.

So **Shredder** had the TMNT captured and tied them up in a broom closet, with a conveniently placed saw that they used to free themselves. If he really wanted to finish them off, why didn't he just kill them?

Pizza by the Shred

Synopsis

Down in the sewers, the Turtles are working on the Starcruiser, the flying car left on Earth by the Neutrinos. Michaelangelo arrives, having seen a belly board perfect for sewer surfing. Unfortunately, he spent the last of his money on some fuzzy dice for the Starcruiser. The other Turtles are unable to lend him any cash, having spent all of their funds on the Starcruiser too. Mike discusses the prospect of getting a job, but the others think it’s too risky.

After watching an advertisement for “Weird Pizza,” a new pizza parlour, Mike decides to apply to be a pizza delivery boy. Unknown to him, the pizza parlour is run by Shredder, who is hoping the parlour’s “no topping too weird” policy will attract the Turtles. Shredder does not recognise Mike when he applies for the delivery boy position and gives him the job. Mike steals the Starcruiser in order to help him make his deliveries, not knowing that the airbrakes are not in working order.

Mike's first couple of deliveries go smoothly enough, but when he gets stuck in traffic, he has to launch the Starcruiser into the sky. With the airbrakes not working, he nearly crashes the car. Meanwhile, the other Turtles decide to order some food from Weird Pizza. When they order a peanut butter and avocado pizza with extra pickles, Shredder realises that the caller must be one of the Turtles. When Mike is given the pizza order for the Turtles (topped with an anchovy-shaped homing device to locate them with) he realises who ordered it and enlists April's help in delivering the order.

Bebop and Rocksteady follow the Starcruiser in a stolen tanker truck. Meanwhile, the Turtles are forced to go to Weird Pizza to collect the pizza in person when the phone company takes away the phone booth where the pizza is being delivered. When April cannot find the phone booth, she is confronted by the Rat King, who takes the pizza for himself. Back at Weird Pizza, Mike hears Shredder plotting from outside the building and realises that his plan involves trapping the Turtles with pizza. The other Turtles arrive and Mike explains what's happening to them.

Shredder, the henchmutants and some Foot Soldiers set out to locate the Turtles by tracking the homing device on the pizza. The Turtles follow them and defeat the Foot Soldiers one by one, before Shredder arrives at the Rat King's lair. Faced with a battle against the Turtles and the Rat King, Shredder decides to flee. He steals the Starcruiser to make his getaway, but Mike consoles the other Turtles that at least they still have the fuzzy dice.

Themes

Why are the Turtles spending so much time and money working on the Starcruiser when they already have a perfectly good vehicle in the form of the Turtlevan? The Starcruiser is an open-top convertible so it's completely impractical for use on the surface, since the Turtles are supposed to be incognito. My theory is that it's simply something to do. Hanging out in the sewers practising martial arts and watching TV all day is not the most stimulating lifestyle and whilst they're working on the Starcruiser, the Turtles can fantasise about the lifestyle that might come with such a flashy car, even if it is just pure fantasy. Like their constant battles with Shredder and Krang, it's just a way of killing time.

This episode, we see April reporting that the police are "baffled" by the disappearance of a tomato sauce tanker truck. It's hard to understand why they would have so much trouble with this one. First of all, the truck was stolen by Bebop and Rocksteady, who are hardly master criminals. Secondly, it is parked in a public street for most of the episode. Thirdly, since when does one stolen vehicle merit such a huge investigation or media attention in the first place? Not only do the police appear totally incompetent (again), but they also need to reassess their priorities.

Characters

Michaelangelo ignores his brothers advice this episode so he can get a job at a pizza parlour. He claims that he simply wants some extra cash, but it's likely that he also enjoys the opportunity to behave like a normal person for once. Whilst his brothers are happy to waste their time fixing up the Starcruiser, Mike tells Splinter he wishes they'd never started work on it. Whilst his brothers are usually happy to distract themselves from the worst parts of their lifestyle (the exclusion, living in a sewer, etc), Mike craves something more normal.

This would explain why he appears not to recognise Shredder's eyes, hands or voice when he meets his new boss. It's ludicrous to believe that Mike doesn't recognise his arch-nemesis, but it's altogether possible that Mike is deliberately deluding himself into believing that this is a real job because he doesn't want to accept the alternative – that this is really just another game being played out to waste the time of both Shredder and the Turtles. This suspicion is confirmed when he tells April that his new boss seems like a "totally mellow dude" when Shredder has come over as a complete asshole. Mike's lying to himself and others about the normality of the situation. Such is his determination to maintain this illusion that he steals the Starcruiser (even though his brother will know he was responsible) so that he has a delivery vehicle.

Mike's dejection over the cash-flow situation doesn't convince **Raphael** to go easy on him for once. When Mike complains that he had his "belly set on that heartboard," Raph can't resist quipping "it's not meant to [make sense], Michaelangelo said it."

Donatello has the other Turtles working on the Starcruiser even though several of the parts are highly dangerous, and it appears he hasn't even told them this because Leonardo is throwing around explosive components like there's no tomorrow. Later in the episode, the Pizzamatic (another Donatello invention) starts going crazy and Leonardo has to destroy it. It seems like Donatello really isn't concerned about putting his brothers at risk for the sake of his inventions or his scientific curiosity.

Shredder's plan this episode is so stupid I don't know where to begin. In the advertisement for Weird Pizza, we clearly see Shredder's hands (wearing his gauntlet) handling the pizza dough. It's like he wants the Turtles to know he's involved. Shredder's plan relies on the Turtles ordering pizza from him, but rather than simply poisoning the pizza, he decides to put a homing device on it instead. Why? Not only are there a million ways for the plan to go wrong, but even if Shredder did track down the Turtles, they've beaten him in battle before. Why would it be any different if the battle took place in their lair? Shredder hasn't even bothered to think out the details of this plan.

Splinter tries to give Michaelangelo some useful advice this episode but ends up merely confusing him. When Mike complains that the Starcruiser is taking up all of his cash, Splinter tells him "the path that leads to what we truly desire is long and difficult, but only by following that path do we achieve our goal." Mike interprets this as Splinter telling him to "take a hike." One could argue that Splinter may have meant something else, but was it wise for Splinter to be so ambiguous when he knows Mike isn't the most spiritually minded person? Could it be true that Splinter deliberately lets Mike get the impression that he should "take a hike." After all, Mike doesn't fit in as well to Splinter's plans for the Turtles as well as the others.

Bebop and **Rocksteady** steal a car at Shredder's request, but unfortunately for them it's a police car. However, it's hard to feel too scornful towards them later in the episode when Bebop tells Rocksteady that he tried to visit his "mommy" but she ran away screaming. Bebop doesn't seem too upset though. Could an unusual relationship with his mother be the cause of some of his delinquent behaviour?

The **Rat King** isn't keen to share his pizza with his royal subjects (i.e. the rats). When one of them grabs a slice, he snatches it away. Does he starve the rats into submission? His loyal "comrades" don't seem too well treated.

Super Bebop and Mighty Rocksteady

Synopsis

Bebop and Rocksteady are on the top of the Channel 6 building, trying to attach a device called the Mesmerizer to the rooftop transmitter. Watching from the Technodrome, Krang anticipates failure, but Shredder points out that only mutants are immune to the device's effects, so only Bebop and Rocksteady can install it. The device works, as seen in the Channel 6 newsroom, where the staff are transformed into mindless slaves. Seeing this on TV, the Turtles rush off to intervene.

Meanwhile, the henchmutants drop the transmitter and fall through the roof, into the newsroom below. When the Turtles show up, Bebop orders the "slaves" to keep them away, which they succeed by lifting the henchmutants off their feet. When the slaves are commanded to drop them, the Mesmerizer is damaged and stops working. The henchmutants grab it and escape, with the Turtles pursuit prevented by Burne, who accuses the guys in green of messing with their heads.

On their return to the Technodrome, the henchmutants are thoroughly whined at by Krang, who attaches them to a device creating robot versions of Bebop and Rocksteady – imaginatively titled Super Bebop and Mighty Rocksteady. The shiny new henchmutants are sent to the surface to reinstall the Mesmerizer. Shredder goes along, kitted out with an amulet which will make him immune to the Mesmerizer's effects. Bebop and Rocksteady decide it better not to mention that they broke the Mesmerizer just now.

The Turtles, meanwhile, have decided to stake out the Channel 6 building from a convenient pizzeria nearby. Shredder arrives and leaves the super mutants to guard the lobby, before installing the Mesmerizer and switching it on. Rather than turning people into slaves, however, this time the Mezmeriser makes them act like children. Shredder is predictably frustrated when the staff at Channel 6 refuse to carry out his orders in preference for playing tag and watching cartoons.

Although the Turtles somehow managed to miss Shredder going through the front door with two robots, they do notice people at the pizzeria acting strangely and arrive at Channel 6 just in time to get their asses kicked by the super mutants. They try to get around them by climbing up the side of the building, but the supermutants scupper this plan by banging on the side of the building.

At the Technodrome, Krang has worked out that the Mesmerizer is broken and instructs Bebop and Rocksteady to take a disc from his desk and deliver it to Shredder on the surface, so the device can be fixed. Confused by Krang's instructions ("get the yellow disc from the red drawer in the blue desk"), the henchmutants grab the wrong disc and head to Channel 6. The Turtles intercept them and grab the disc, which Donatello learns contains the schematics for the super mutants. Don can use this to counter-program them.

Bebop and Rocksteady reach the Mesmerizer on the roof of Channel 6, but are unable to fix it without the disc and resort to hitting it with a wrench. This causes the people of New York to start immitating dogs. When the Mesmerizer is hit again, they start acting like monkeys.

Meanwhile, Don has been able to reprogram the super mutants so they dance around rather than try to stomp all over the Turtles. The heroes then turn their attention to

Shredder, realising his amulet makes him immune from the Mesmerizer's effects. They grab it off him, causing Shredder to behave like a monkey. He climbs the tower to the transmitter and causes it to fall. The Mesmerizer is permanently trashed and Shredder and the henchmutants fall onto a pizza stand below, from where they make their escape.

Themes

The Mesmerizer is a device intended to transform people into mindless zombies and the Channel 6 news transmitter is integral to this plan – by attaching the Mesmerizer to it, the beams can be transmitted all over the city. So the plan is to turn people into zombies and the plan is to do this using TV. Coincidence or social comment?

Channel 6 certainly is doing it's job to keep New York's citizens educated today. It's lead story on the news broadcast Bebop and Rocksteady interrupt? A crippling shortage of rutebegers in Ruritania. Wouldn't the raging storm outside the Channel 6 building – it is hit by lighting at the beginning of the episode – qualify as a better news story? Or are they only interested in stories that won't panic New Yorkers?

Later on in the episode, the anchorman announces a short break from the news so the audience can admire his hair. Clearly journalistic integrity wasn't a big deal to the guy who employed him.

Speaking of TV, there's no chance of viewers this episode getting so absorbed in the action that they forget they're watching a cartoon. Early in the episode, Shredder explains to Krang why Bebop and Rocksteady were the only people who could install the Mesmerizer. Krang tells Shredder he already knows this as he invented the device. Shredder's response? "I wasn't explaining it to you, I was explaining it to them." And he points at the screen just in case we were in any doubt as to who he was referring to.

The Turtles get in on the act too. When someone asks how the Turtles are going to get past the supermutants and enter Channel 6, Don replies "How should I know, I'm a turtle, not a cartoon writer." Later, Mike turns to the camera in a moment of tension and says "is this ever suspenseful or what?"

The Turtles partake in two particularly weird pizza topping combinations today: pickled herring and caramel fudge to begin with, then marshmallow and asparagus topping at the end of the episode. Makes you wanna dig out that Pizza Hut flyer right now, doesn't it?

Characters

Shredder wastes no time this episode – chastising **Bebop** and **Rocksteady** for messing up before they've even got round to it. "I'll give you more than the willies if you drop that Mesmerizer" he threatens as they climb the tower. Is it no wonder they're always messing up with so much pressure on them constantly?

The Mesmerizer is actually one of **Krang**'s niftier devices – it may not work as expected after being dropped by the henchmutants, but does it really matter whether the device turns New Yorkers into slaves, children, monkeys or dogs? You'd think Shredder would be glad that New York's citizens are completely helpless. Instead, he whines because things aren't going exactly as expected. That guy has no imagination.

Or perhaps Shredder's frustration tells us something about the nature of the power he's

seeking. Perhaps it's not enough for Shredder to rule New York unless he has slaves acknowledging his authority. Which tells us it's less about power for him than it is an **ego** thing.

Irma has an important question after she reawakens from her zombification this episode. When **April** tells her they were just "out" she responds "Where did we go…and did we meet any cute guys?" With Irma's knack for asking the right questions, you have to wonder why she's never risen to the ranks of reporter herself.

At the end of the episode, when everyone else is back to normal, **Vernon** is inexplicably still behaving like a monkey. Why? Well, we know Vernon finds it difficult to deal with the **pressures of his job** and the competition it entails. Perhaps he remains in denial for a while after being returned to normal because he finds it entirely easier to live as a monkey. There's no pressure on him and no demands made of him that way. No wonder the lifestyle appeals. In any case, his continued monkeying around is never explained and he's back to normal when we see him again next episode.

Blast From the Past

Synopsis

Sick of being defeated by the Turtles, Shredder intends to transform Bebop and Rocksteady martial arts experts and takes them to the Asian American Cultural Center. In the sewers, the Turtles are watching April's report on a new exhibition at the aforementioned museum - the burial urn of Shibana-Sama, founder of the Foot Clan. Splinter insists that he and the Turtles head to the Cultural Center immediately, fearing that Shredder will be on his way.

Shredder arrives first and delays the Turtles with knockout gas. He then summons the spirit of Shibana-Sama, requesting that he make Bebop and Rocksteady into invincible ninjas. The Turtles tell Shibana-Sama that Splinter, not Shredder, is the true leader of the Foot Clan, but Splinter has been given amnesia by the knockout gas and cannot verify this. Since Shredder has the ancient scrolls belonging to the leader of the Foot Clan, Shibana-Sama believes his claim to be leader and grants Shredder's request, before commanding Bebop and Rocksteady to destroy the Turtles and Splinter. Raphael stays to hold them off, whilst the other Turtles take Splinter back to the lair.

In the sewers, the Turtles try to jog Splinter's memory by recounting their origin. Leonardo starts by explaining Oruko Saki's betrayal of Yoshi whilst he was leader of the Foot Clan, Yoshi's life in America and his transformation into Splinter and the Turtles' upbringing. Donatello continues the story, recounting the first time the Turtles met April O'Neil, the transformation of Bebop and Rocksteady into mutants and Shredder's capturing of Splinter, who was subsequently rescued by the Turtles. Finally, Michaelangelo explains Krang's origin and his role in attempting to destroy the Turtles.

Finally regaining his memory, Splinter rushes to the Cultural Center with the Turtles and performs the Kur-li manoeuvre, proving himself to be the legitimate leader of the Foot Clan. Shredder, Bebop and Rocksteady quickly escape and Shibana-Sama returns to his burial urn.

Themes

This is a clip show. The real theme is saving money.

If you doubted that the "battle" between the Turtles and Shredder has become nothing more than a game, compare the fighting abilities of the Turtles in their earliest adventures to their performance more recently. In the flashback scenes, the TMNT do all kinds of groovy ninja stuff. For one thing, they appear to have the ability to keep to the shadows and work in darkness, like real ninjas. They're also more agile and faster. Rocksteady and Bebop also seem a lot better at their job in these flashbacks, posing a genuine threat rather than just showing up to get their asses kicked.

There are two potential explanations for these discrepancies. Firstly, it's possible that the Turtles are romanticising or exaggerating the battle in their retelling of their origin. The second, more likely, explanation is that the skills of both sides have deteriorated since their first confrontation. Almost as if they're not trying as hard.

Characters

The main points of interest in this episode come from the Turtles' retelling of their origin, but before we get to that...

The excuse for this shameless recycling of old footage is **Splinter**'s amnesia, caused by knockout gas. Now, I'm not disputing that knockout gas could probably cause brain damage, but if cartoons have taught me anything, it's that amnesia is generally caused by a blow to the head (and reversed in a similar fashion). Indeed, it happened to Leonardo in "The Four Musketurtles." Why was no one else given amnesia by the knockout gas? And why is it that Splinter needs to hear the entire story of the Turtles' origin (including irrelevant details such as Krang's involvement in Shredder's schemes) before his memory can recover? How does this help him remember the Kur-li manoeuvre? Surely a summary of Splinter's life specifically regarding his martial arts prowess would be more useful in jogging his memory?

Indeed, Splinter appears to be stalling at several points. He remembers that Oruko Saki and Shredder were "linked" but appears not to remember how. When asked if his memory is recovering, Splinter claims he's not sure and urges the Turtles to continue with the story. He prompts them at various points. And meanwhile, whilst they're reminiscing, Raphael's life is in danger.

Just what is Splinter trying to pull here? He seems very keen in making the Turtles tell the whole story. Maybe he's not so much trying to remember for his own sake, but trying to make sure the Turtles remember his official version of "the truth." After all, repetition is a valuable tool in brainwashing. But why now? Maybe because Shredder was so easily able to convince Shibano-Sama that he was the rightful leader of the Foot Clan. Aren't ghosts supposed to be a little wiser than that? Maybe Splinter saw the need to reinforce his doctrine in the wake of this.

There are certain elements in the story which don't add up. In Japan, we see Saki (Shredder) preventing Yoshi (Splinter) from bowing to an important sensei by attaching his robe to a wall with a knife. When Yoshi pulls out the knife, he is accused of plotting to murder the sensei. As a result, Yoshi is expelled from the Foot Clan. This makes little sense.

If Yoshi was the leader of the Foot Clan, there wouldn't have been any more important sensei or higher authority who could expel him from the Foot Clan. Saki's actions could be explained by his ambition and megalomania, but once he became leader of the Foot Clan, why turn the respected institution into a despised army of crime?

After moving to America, Yoshi is "forced to live in the sewers." Why? Things are tough for penniless immigrants in the USA, but even so this seems a little extreme.

Remember, the Turtles' version of history is no more than what Splinter has told them. They only have his word that this is the way things happened...

Notice that one of **Donatello**'s more useful inventions, the Turtleblimp, doesn't have a huge TMNT logo on the side on its debut outing. So why does Don decide to place this target-like symbol on the blimp later on? Maybe he was thinking of the Turtles image in a commercial context, but the fact that the original blimp bore no such logo goes to show that Don wasn't always so money-orientated in his concerns.

Leatherhead: Terror of the Swamp

Synopsis

In the Florida swamps, the Turtles' friends the Punk Frogs are captured by the a huge mutated alligator named Leatherhead, who makes them his slaves. They use their Turtlecomm to contact the Turtles for help. Coincidentally, April and Irma are on vacation in Florida, giving the Turtles a place to stay. Meanwhile, *Krang* has seen Leatherhead and the Frogs on his monitor and sends Shredder to enlist Leatherhead's help in dealing with the Turtles.

At the swamp, the Turtles and April walk straight into Leatherhead's trap, and also become enslaved. However, the Frogs come to the rescue and they all agree to turn Leatherhead in to the authorities. However, Leatherhead has soon managed to turn the tables again by luring his captors into quicksand. Shredder, Bebop and Rocksteady arrive at this point and save Leatherhead from sinking himself. The villains head off, leaving the Turtles, April and the Frogs to sink into the quicksand.

Although they manage to escape at the last moment courtesy of Napoleon's whip, they're covered in quicksand. Michaelangelo cleans off in a nearby pond and begins to glow slightly. After testing a theory by jumping in himself, Donatello informs the others that leftover mutagen has transformed the pond into a fountain of youth.

At this point, Leatherhead, Shredder, Bebop and Rocksteady return to face the Turtles and Frogs in battle. During the confrontation, Shredder falls into the fountain of youth and is transformed into a baby before Donatello accidentally destroys the damn and water floods the area, causing Shredder, Bebop and Rocksteady to be carried back down a transport module tunnel to the Technodrome. Leatherhead escapes and the Turtles and Frogs agree that the fountain of youth should remain a secret.

Themes

What's Leatherhead's problem then? Is there a reason why he picks on the frogs or is he just an asshole? The latter seems most likely. Still, that doesn't help the Turtle decide what should be done with him. Whilst he's their captive, they intend to hand him over to the

"authorities". Presumably this means the police, but how are they able to deal witha huge mutated alligator if four Punk Frogs trained by Shredder can't manage? And why don't the Turtles attempt to talk to him about his actions? Okay, so Leatherhead's a dick, but bear in mind that he has no friends, brothers or sensei and has learnt everything in his life the hard way. Since he became capable of higher cognitive functions (ie. human speech and thought), he's been feared or attacked by everyone he's encountered. No wonder he's an asshole. You'd think that, as fellow freaks, the Turtles would have some sympathy for his position.

Characters

So what exactly gives **Donatello** the right to decide that the Fountain of Youth should remain a secret? Okay, so Shredder may not have benefitted from exposure to the regenerative features of the water, but as a scientist Don should know that this doesn't render it completely useless. The Fountain of Youth may still have some application in medical science and even if it doesn't, we've seen the positive effect it has on animals. Even if there's no way the Fountain of Youth could help the injured or dying, keeping it secret is a stupid move. What if a family of helpless tourists fall into the lake and regress to helpless babies? Surely the authorities need to be informed one way or another?

Donatello, of course, knows all of this. So he should also know the commercial value of the Fountain of Youth. Now I'm not saying that Donatello, knowing that his opinion would be respected as the "clever one" of the group, decided to put lives at risk and ignore the potential benefits of the Fountain of Youth just because he wanted to keep any potential profits to himself, BUT...put it this way: I would be very surprised if he hadn't taken a sample of the water with him for "research purposes."

More bad science practise from Don - he decides to test his theory about the Fountain of Youth's effect on Mike by jumping in himself. This is not how scientists should approach empirical research.

It's lucky that **April** and Irma were on vacation in Florida, huh? What a lovely coincidence...or is it? How come mutants tend to appear wherever April goes? Could it have anything to do with her insatiable desire for hot stories? Burne has been known to advise his reporters to go out and make news.

Why do the Turtles take April to the swamp when the know there's danger there? Notice that April has the type of concern for her appearance that you might expect from someone who works on TV. As a "decrepit 28 year old hag" she's dismayed she can't use the Fountain of Youth to "shed a few wrinkles."

Unexplained plot point - **Krang** watches the Punk Frogs and Leatherhead in the Florida swamp on the Technodrome's video monitor. How did he get these pictures? Does Krang have cameras everywhere or does he simply have access to other surveillance systems? Either way, you'd think there were more useful applications of these facilities that watching Florida swamps just in case any interesting mutants happen to walk by. Think of all the dirt on politicians, celebrities and world leaders that Krang must have access to. Not to mention sensitive security information. Why not use this information to his advantage if he's so desperate to take over Earth?

More laziness on **Shredder**'s part this episode....walking off and leaving the Turtles and Punk Frogs to die is, apart from anything else, plain rude. You'd think he could spare five

minutes, out of respect if nothing else, to make sure his nemeses actually die. Another burst of Shredder logic results in the outnumbered villains starting an impromptu fight with the good guys after witnessing two of them become invigorated by the Fountain of Youth. Clever.

Michaelangelo's Birthday

Synopsis

It's Michaelangelo's birthday and, despite all of the hints he's dropping, it appears that the other Turtles have forgot. However, they are in fact secretly planning a surprise party.

Meanwhile, Krang and Shredder are supervising repairs to the Technodrome, when some welding flux mixes with lava and creates some weird chemical goo. Krang decides to runs some tests and learns that the chemical is actually an anti-mutagen that will can turn the Turtles back into normal pet shop turtles - but only if at least three of them are together when they are sprayed with it. Shredder heads to the surface to dispose of his enemies once and for all.

Back in the sewers, Michaelangelo gives up on trying to make the others realise it's his birthday and runs away, leaving a note. In the city, Shredder and the mutants are creating a disturbance in hope of drawing out the Turtles. It works, and Leonardo, Donatello and Raphael go to fight Shredder whilst Splinter sets off to look for Michaelangelo.

The Turtles find Shredder easily enough, but he can't get them to stay still together long enough to spray them with the anti-mutagen. The bad guys escape, only to find Michaelangelo and capture him a few minutes later.

Contacting the Turtles using Mike's turtlecomm, Rocksteady tells them to meet to meet Shredder at a specific location or they'll "flush" Mike. Leaving Michaelangelo to die in the Flush-O-Matic torture device, Shredder heads off to meet the Turtles. Michaelangelo manages to escape the device just in time and goes looking for the other Turtles.

Having met Shredder at the rendezvous point, the Turtles agree to take him back to his hideout in the Turtlevan. Michaelangelo arrives moments after they leave and meets Splinter, who has been looking everywhere for him. Together, they head back to Shredder's hideout.

At the hideout, Shredder shows the Turtles what he believes to be Michaelangelo's remains before spraying them with the anti-mutagen. However, instead of turning into pet shop turtles, they blow up like balloons and float up into the air. Michaelangelo and Splinter arrive at this point and chase off Shredder and his mutants. Using "magical spheres", Splinter is able to revert the Turtles to their normal selves. Splinter then reveals that the spheres were actually mothballs, but "if someone believes in something strongly enough, it just might happen." When they arrive home, Michaelangelo's surprise party begins.

Themes

Yet again, the TMNT are shown watching a crappy horror movie. This episode, it's "Attack of the Killer Anchovies."

Rocksteady has an uncanny moment of insight in this episode when he realises it's just a

cartoon. When Don guesses the rendezvous point, Rocksteady concludes "he must have seen this episode before."

Characters

Having your friends forget your birthday is horrible for anyone, so imagine what it's like for a chronic attention seeker like **Michaelangelo**. When hints like "Hey dudes, I've got a truly intense idea - let's throw a humongous party for someone we know" don't work, you can understand why he might feel unloved. Notice that when he leaves in a huff he goes to sulk at Vinnie's Pizzeria...using pizza to drown his sorrows yet again.

Yet again, Mike proves what he's really capable of when he feels like it by tossing Bebop and Rocksteady around like so much crap after seeing his brothers harmed. In the end it's Mike's faith that saves the day. The magic spheres/mothballs revert the other Turtles back to normal because "if someone believes in something strongly enough it just might happen." In other words, Mike's ignorance rescues his brothers.

Which is probably more than they deserve. One question for Leonardo, Donatello and Raphael - what kind of retard thinks that pretending to forget someone's birthday is an amusing practical joke? And what kind of parental figure goes along with it? Coming up with such a dumb idea is bad enough, but continuing with the plan even after seeing Mike clearly upset by it is unforgivable. You have to wonder if they'd find the whole thing so funny if it was Leo they were playing the trick on.

Unsurprisingly, it's **Raphael** who insists they carry on with the prank even after Mike practically begs them to acknowledge his birthday. Not that he takes any personal responsibility for this when Mike goes missing. "Oh no. I guess we carried that 'forgot your birthday' bit too far." Ya think?

So what is **Shredder** thinking allowing the Turtles to decide whether Bebop and Rocksteady can ride in the Turtlevan when Shredder has Michaelangelo held captive? Doesn't he realise the Turtles have to do whatever he tells them? But Shredder decides not to push his luck. There you have it in a nutshell. That is why Shredder will never beat the Turtles.

[2012 notes – I hate the fact that I uused the word “retard” there but I did, there you go, no point airbrushing it from history]

Usagi Yojimbo

Synopsis

The Turtles are returning a video to the local store when they come into contact with what appears to be the ghost of General Traag, one of Krang’s rock soldiers. When the intangible image disappears, Donatello realises that Krang must be experimenting with his dimensional portal. Donatello decides to contact the Neutrinos in Dimension X using his own pan dimensional portal, in order to see what Krang is up to. In the Technodrome, we learn that Shredder is messing with Krang’s teleporter in order to get his hands on something he wants in Little Tokyo.

When both Donatello and Shredder activate their machines at the same time, something

strange happens and the signals are knocked off track. The Turtles make contact with an alternate dimension where animals are the dominant species and witness a samurai rabbit named Usagi Yojimbo defeat three shogun pig guards. After the battle, Usagi leaps through the portal into the Turtles' world and battle ensues when he assumes the Turtles are enemies. His martial art prowess cannot be beaten, but he is eventually disarmed after Michaelangelo throws a pizza at him, temporarily blinding him.

Usagi tells the Turtles that he is a ronin – a masterless samurai. Splinter suggests that Usagi be returned to his own world, but Donatello insists that finding Usagi's dimension was a total fluke. It may take weeks to find it again. The Turtles decide to take Usagi with them whilst they go to Channel 6 to see if there is any news of the power shortages that should have been created by Shredder's portal experiments.

Over in midtown, April is having power problems. She directs the Turtles there, where they find Foot Soldiers waiting for them. Usagi makes short work of them, then runs off in pursuit of a biker who he mistakes for another evil robot. Meanwhile, Donatello finds one of the Foot Soldier's power packs and realises he can use it to locate the other Foot Soldiers and see what they're up to. He goes back to the lair to reconfigure it whilst the other Turtles look for Usagi.

Whilst Shredder floods the city with Foot Soldiers, inducing widespread panic, Donatello learns that the Foot Soldiers are converging on the Far Eastern Animal Museum, which is run by Obento, a friend of Splinter's. Over at the museum, Obento is abducted by Foot Soldiers, who also steal a giant egg. The egg is then lowered into a giant smoke stack at a nearby power station.

Meanwhile, Usagi has abandoned his quest to kill the evil motorcyclist and is causing havoc in a rabbit-themed restaurant. The staff there are dressed as rabbits, which prompts Usagi to "liberate" them from their slavery by throwing food at everyone. Michaelangelo intervenes and takes Usagi back to the other Turtles. They follow a group of Foot Soldiers to the power station. Donatello and Splinter also arrive just in time to see the smoke stack explode, revealing a giant dragon. Splinter, Donatello and Usagi try to track down Obento, whilst the other Turtles keep the dragon distracted. First they try feeding him, which just makes him bigger, then they lead him towards an oven, which leaves him breathing fire.

Donatello, Splinter and Usagi have more luck in tracking down Obento, who is about to be catapulted into the river by Foot Soldiers when he is rescued. Obento explains that the only thing that can stop the dragon is the "Blue Flame of Osaka" and they stop off at the Animal Museum to retrieve it. Meanwhile, the army goes in after the dragon. Before they can destroy him, Usagi places the Blue Flame of Osaka in its mouth, and the dragon turns back into a harmless egg.

Down in the sewers, Obento offers a place for Usagi to stay until he can be returned to his own world. After sampling some pizza, Usagi decides being stuck in this world may not be so bad after all.

Themes

Yet again, the Turtles have been watching movies where monsters terrorise humanity. "The Radioactive Salamander that Nibbled New York" is the title of the video they take back to the store at the episode's start.

Even in an alternate world ruled by animals resembling feudal Japan, the **authorities** are pigs. In this case, literally. The shogun's guards are a trio of pigs who pick on Usagi for no good reason. Not too dissimilar to the Earth authorities then.

What is behind the totally shitty disguises our heroes use this episode? Usagi looks totally out of place dressed as a monk, whilst the Turtles wear street punk outfits that expose their amphibian forms from the waist down. Do they really want to maintain their secret identities, or is it possible that they want the acclaim of being heroes? Even they can't think that a leather jacket and a pair of sunglasses makes them look human.

When Obento says that he wants to save the dragon – Baby-san – from the city, Donatello suggests it should be the other way round. Obento disagrees and when the army goes in, Donatello understands why. The dragon is just a baby with no real intention of harming anyone, whilst the army chooses to use their most lethal weapons rather than try to simply capture the dragon. The dragon hurts people because it can't help doing so, whereas humans do it for kicks or convenience. **Sucky humans**.

Characters

Usagi Yojimbo is a ronin, a masterless samurai. Yet Usagi tells the Turtles that his name means "rabbit bodyguard." How can a rabbit bodyguard have no master? And what did he do to upset the shogun in his home world? Usagi's ninja skills are top notch, but even he can't defend himself against a pizza to the face. He begs the Turtles to "spare my life and teach me this slapstick." Which indicates Usagi's usual attitude to those he defeats in battle… if they want to keep their lives, they must beg. These fairly suspect ethics become apparent once again when Usagi starts chopping up the Foot Soldiers. Sure, they're only robots, but he didn't know that until after the battle.

When **Michaelangelo** finds Usagi "liberating" the workers at the Rabbit Hutch restaurant, he initially tries to calm him down. But when the owner sees Mike and tells him "you're supposed to be at my turtle soup restaurant down the road. Now get to work!" Mike's point of view changes. He throws a cake at the owner and tells Usagi he did good by trashing the restaurant. How irresponsible is it for Mike to approve when people could have been hurt? Maybe this attitude resents a deeper resentment on Mike's part over **human exploitation** of his species. You can't blame him – if someone was serving up your brethren in a restaurant down the road, you probably wouldn't respect their property much either.

Upon meeting Usagi, **Irma** is initially thrilled to meet an eligible male – until she finds out he's a rabbit, that is. "First shells, now fur," she laments. "When did skin go out of fashion?" Isn't that a bit racist for someone who **once dated a robot**?

Why would **Shredder** waste time and manpower on kidnapping Obento only to have his Foot Soldiers try to kill him? It's true that Obento is the only one who knew how to stop the dragon, but if Shredder knew there was a way to stop the dragon, why didn't he take the Blue Flame of Osaka and have it destroyed? As usual, it looks as though Shredder's initiated a plan **without even bothering to think it through**.

When the Turtles feed grain to the dragon, causing him to double in size, Raphael sarcastically congratulates Michaelangelo on a "great idea." But it was **Leonardo** who pointed out that the dragon looked hungry and Leonardo who opened up the grain elevator. Mike only *pointed* to the grain elevator. So it was Leo's idea, not Mike's. But then,

it wouldn't be like Raphael to pass up a chance to criticise Michaelangelo, whether the criticism is valid or not.

Donatello is understandably unimpressed when he visits the local "ecological waste centre" and discovers that they're actually catapulting trash and waste into the local river. No wonder Don has such a **low opinion of humans**.

The Making of Metalhead

Synopsis

The Turtles are suffering from "turtlepox" and April has taken time off work to look after them. Meanwhile in the Technodrome, Krang is planning to programme a robot with the Turtles' fighting skills, so he asks Shredder to use a portable "Brainalyzer" to get the Turtles' brainwaves. Shredder tries to lure the Turtles to the surface by having Bebop and Rocksteady break into Megatech (presumably a science lab or something), but since the Turtles are fast asleep and April isn't watching TV, the plan fails. The police arrive and the henchmutants retreat.

It's only when April goes out to buy more chicken soup for the Turtles that she witnesses Rocksteady and Bebop having another go, this time at a bank. She tells the Turtles and they show up to put a stop to it. Shredder zaps them with the Brainalyzer and grabs their brainwaves before making his escape with the henchmutants.

At the Technodrome, Krang programmes the robot with the Turtles' fighting skills. He introduces his new creation, a ninja-turtle resembling robot named Metalhead, to the henchmutants. A demonstration proves that Bebop and Rocksteady are no match for Metalhead, so Krang sends the robot after the Turtles.

In the sewers, the Turtles are still whining about their illness when Metalhead arrives, having drilled its way to the lair. With the Turtles weak, Metalhead easily defeats them. Whilst Metalhead is taking the Turtles to the Technodrome, Donatello manages to short circuit the robot's memory banks using his Turtlecomm to produce "high frequency memory oscillations." The Turtles drag the robot back to the lair, where Donatello reprogrammes him. This leaves Metalhead with multiple personality disorder, speaking like Michaelangelo one minute, then Raphael the next.

Meanwhile, Shredder and the henchmutants are following a trail of oil from the robot to the Turtles' lair. Metalhead senses their impending arrival and warns the Turtles.

The Turtles intercept the villains on their sewer quad bike thingies, with the aid of Metalhead. After drawing them away from the lair, the Turtles head to the surface. But when Bebop's laser gun shoots Metalhead, he goes haywire and has trouble deciding where his loyalties lie. So he decides to make things simple by blasting everyone. Whilst Donatello and April go to Channel 6 in the hope of using the broadcasting equipment to deactivate Metalhead, the other Turtles try to keep Metalhead distracted on a construction site.

Donatello zaps Metalhead just in time so that Metalhead can stop the Turtles from being zapped by the henchmutants. They fall from high scaffolding and land on top of Shredder. At that point, the villains decide to retreat. The Turtles head back to the lair, where they hope April will continue to nurse them through their illness. Unfortunately, April has to go

back to work, so Metalhead will look after them instead. The Turtles are unimpressed.

Themes

So what exactly is the nature of this "turtlepox" that the Turtles suffer from this episode? According to Splinter, it only affects mutant turtles. Well isn't that convenient? The symptoms of turtlepox appear to be incompetence in battle, laziness, lots of whining and expecting to be waited on hand and foot. They're totally faking it, presumably because it's a break from their normal routine of fighting, eating pizza, practising fighting, eating more pizza and fighting some more. It's a break from the game Splinter has them playing with the villains.

As usual, the human authorities prove their total uselessness this episode. When Bebop and Rocksteady attack Megatech, the security guard is frustrated when his attempts to stop them by *shouting* fail, so he runs off shouting "they don't pay me to take this abuse." What *do* they pay you for exactly, you moron? And why didn't you just use your gun instead of trying to stop armed mutants with shouting?

At the end of this episode's big battle, the villains are covered in concrete. The Turtles don't try to stop them escaping though. Pure laziness or deliberate incompetence?

Characters

At first glance, you may think **April** is behaving with unusual selflessness this episode, taking time off work to look afer the Turtles through their (fake) illness. But she may have ulterior motives for doing so. Most of April's big scoops for Channel 6 revolve around the Turtles, so she has an inherent interest in helping them get back on fighting form. Without them, there are no hot stories, so why bother going to work? Like most things April does, this apparent act of heroism is actually a calculated career move.

Speaking of careers, **Rocksteady** and **Bebop** are concerned about the health of theirs when the Turtles initially fail to show up and stop them from causing ruckus at Megatech. "Maybe the Turtles don't think we're important enough to beat up anymore," Rocksteady laments. "That wounds me deeply," Bebop responds. You think they'd be glad to avoid another beating from the Turtles, but when you think about it, what do Rocksteady and Bebop really have in their lives beyond their rivalry with the Turtles. It's like realising your ex-girlfriend isn't even dissing you behind your back anymore.

Krang's crazy plan: programme Metalhead with the Turtles' brainwaves, so Metalhead knows where the Turtles' lair is and can take them in a fight. So far, so good. But instead of immediately sending Metalhead off to fight the Turtles, why not ask Metalhead where the secret lair is beforehand, then at least if something goes wrong, you know the location of the Turtles' home? And why have Metalhead bring the defeated Turtles back to the Technodrome, rather than letting Metalhead finish them off? Krang claims he wants to "fricasee them with solantro." Yeah, right, we all know Krang's just stalling so the Turtles have a chance to escape, enabling Krang to play again next week.

I have to say I'm very disappointed in Donatello. When Metalhead reappears at the episode's end in his guise as the Turtles' new nurse, Donatello exclaims "I've created a Frankenstein!" No no no no NO! Frankenstein, is the creator, not the monster, you glorified terrapin. Try reading a book occasionally "genius."

Leatherhead Meets the Rat King

Synopsis

The Turtles are training in a garbage dump, fighting off cardboard cut-outs of their enemies. Raphael and Michaelangelo aren't taking it very seriously and Splinter offers them a better challenge, setting them against Donatello and Leonardo. Each team is to defend a trash mountain from the other.

Meanwhile, mutated alligator Leatherhead has come to New York, looking for revenge on the Turtles. He heads into the sewers to find them.

At Channel 6, April finishes showing Burne her report on a stolen tanker of rat poison. Burne is unsatisfied with April's investigation and tells her to take Vernon and Irma with her and get to the bottom of the story. In the sewers, Leatherhead falls into one of the Rat King's traps. The Rat King captures him and explains his plan to rule the world with Leatherhead as his slave. He stole the missing tanker of poison in order to create a hypnotic gas to turn humans into zombies.

By now, April, Irma and Vernon have found a passage into the sewers and are heading for the Rat King's lair. The Rat King finds them and captures Irma and Vernon, whilst April escapes. However, she's soon captured too, by the now-escaped Leatherhead.

At the garbage dump, the Turtles are still defending their trash mountains. Mike is making no effort at all and is perfectly content to let Don's garbage launching invention ruin their chances - until his pizza gets trashed. Mike storms the Don and Leo's mountain and proclaims their mountain captured. At this point, April contacts the Turtles via her Turtlecomm. Leatherhead explains the Rat King's plan to her and his intention to finish off the Turtles.

Leatherhead comes across the Rat King again and the two fight whilst the TMNT rescue April, Vernon and Irma. Don takes a look at the Rat King's "zombie gas" and realises it is highly unstable. The Turtles lure the Rat King and Leatherhead back to their lair and taunt Leatherhead into shooting the stolen tanker. The gas explodes, despatching both of the villains. Vernon boasts that he recorded the confrontation using his camera and intends to steal April's story, but unfortunately he left the lens cap on throughout the whole thing.

Themes

For the Rat King, it's poetic justice to use the same chemical designed to kill rats in order to secure humanity's downfall. Can't fault his logic. Rats might be a pain in the arse, but at the end of the day they're just doing what they need to in order to survive. Do they deserve to be poisoned? Maybe we have it coming to us.

The Turtles are pretty unsubtle this episode. Surely they must have realised that baiting Leatherhead into shooting a tanker of explosive chemicals would more likely than not kill him and the Rat King. This is bolder than anything they've tried to do to Shredder or Krang. Maybe it's because Shredder and Krang are part of the game they're playing and like to abide by the rules, whilst the Rat King and Leatherhead are genuine enemies who are much more likely to do them some real damage? Just a thought.

Characters

Why do **Raphael** and **Michaelangelo** have so little interest in the training session at the beginning of this episode? Raphael says it's because the cardboard cut-outs aren't a challenging opponent. Michaelangelo just wants to enjoy the sun and sit back with a pizza. Or maybe both of them are just a little weary of the attempts of the others to keep up this ridiculous charade*?* It's clear that Shredder and Krang pose no real threat, maybe they're getting bored of pretending otherwise? Whatever it is, **Donatello** and **Leonardo** have no such complaints.

It's interesting to see the way different turtles go about trying to take over each other's trash mountains. Raphael clearly has no real ideas himself and initially tries to rally Michaelangelo using the mighty power of positive thinking ("we can beat those losers with both hands tied behind our shell!"). Mike still doesn't see the point of the whole thing, and who can blame him? However crappy their fighting skills become, the Turtles can't lose to idiots like Shredder and Krang. Why pretend otherwise? Later on, Raphael decides to use cardboard cut-outs to distract Leo and Don, which says a lot about what he thinks of their abilities.

Leo adopts a more traditional approach, opting for strategy and traditional weapons. He's leader of the group so he might know what he's talking about, but Don couldn't give a fig about strategy, convinced that the unassailable force of technology will save the day. He constructs what he arrogantly describes as an "incredibly clever" garbage launcher to fight off their rivals.

All of these plans amount to jack when Mike gets angry about the garbage on his pizza and pushes Leo aside with a single move. A well placed hit destroys Don's "incredibly clever" garbage launcher. If this is what Mike can do when he puts his mind to it, why does he let the others boast and insult him all the time? Maybe he just finds it easier to play dumb or maybe he knows that the others need someone to look down on to make them feel better than themselves. That's why the only thing that motivates him to get going is the demise of his pizza. What a great opportunity to draw attention to his habit.

Leatherhead can't have much to do all day in the Florida swamps. Let's face it, anyone who can converse on his level is going to run screaming from him. So he comes to New York for revenge on the Turtles for not letting him turn them into slaves. And gets his ass kicked. Serves him right. Delinquency isn't the way to deal with boredom, kids.

Burne has clearly figured out that playing April and Vernon off against each other results in them both trying harder to get good stories. Clever Burne. But why all the fuss over April getting the goods regarding the stolen tanker of rat poison? Investigating the crime is the police's job, not hers. Maybe Burne's trying to distract both of his top reporters from other events going on today.

The **Rat King**'s downfall is his racism. He deems Leatherhead an "inferior non-rodent" and, after underestimating him, tells him his plan. If he'd kept the plan to himself, chances are it might have stood a better chance of succeeding, but his own arrogance about the superiority of his "people" forces him to open his big mouth.

April demonstrates her awesome bravery by running away when the Rat King catches her friends. And why should she get all the credit for the story on the confrontation anyway?

Vernon was the one with the presence of mind to film what was happening, even if he was

dumb enough to leave the lens cap on. Vernon has a better eyewitness account of the Rat King's behaviour and went through just as much to get that story as she did. April needs to get used to the fact that finding a story is not enough to ensure she gets all the credit. It's about time she was willing to share the spotlight or else do all the work herself.

The Turtle Terminator

Synopsis

Irma is preparing for a date with a Channel 6 anchorman when Rocksteady and Bebop crash through the wall and kidnap her as part of "Operation Turtle Terminator." Meanwhile, the TMNT are training. They sneak up on Splinter in order to ambush him and find themselves attacking a mirror. Splinter warns them against taking things at face value.

April arrives at Irma's appartment and contacts the Turtles, who go out to investigate. At Shredder's hideout, the Turtle Terminator, a robot programmed to destroy the TMNT, is activated. It looks exactly like Irma.

At Channel 6, the Turtle Terminator, posing as Irma, insists that nothing happened at her appartment. April contacts the Turtles to tell them this, but they continue their inquiries. April realises that Irma has been replaced when she sees the robot zap a telephone, in reaction to hearing the word "turtle." She warns the TMNT, who are tracking down Shredder in order to save the real Irma.

When they come upon the hideout, the villains escape. Having rescued Irma, they take her home, encountering the Turtle Terminator on the way. After an unsuccessful confrontation, they lure her to an amusement park and overload her circuits in a house of mirrors. The robot is reprogrammed and sent back to the Technodrome to zap the living daylights out of Shredder and Krang.

Themes

"Turtles fight with honour!" our heroes shout.
"And women fight with handbags!" robot Irma replies.
Enough said.

Characters

Splinter's giving out crappy advice again. "Things are not always as they appear. Learn to trust your instincts." So basically, leap before you look? Of course ninjas have to trust their instincts, but Splinter should have pointed out that sometimes things are exactly as they look and sometimes our instincts may lead us to do things that are stupid and wrong.

Sigh...poor **Irma**. For one thing, she appears to have a picture of British daytime TV couple Richard and Judy on her wall. Maybe she's their elicit lovechild. Probably not, but in any case having a picture of them on her wall is nothing to be proud of.

She's in typical man-mad mood this episode. Channel 6's anchorman may be vain and arrogant, but she doesn't care about that, so long as he's available. Not only does she agree to date him in the first place, but she runs after the idiot and throws herself at him at the end of the episode, although it's probably best to just give up when a robot version of yourself has beaten the guy up.

Oh and she's a clumsy cow too. She steps on everybody's feet. She burns the food, squirts soy sauce at Shredder and knocks over a bunch of paint tins, alerting the bad guys to the Turtles' presence. Burne comments on how she lost some important files at work. It would seem she isn't much use at anything and getting a man really IS her only hope. Great rolemodel for any young girls watching.

Another half-arsed effort by **Shredder** and **Krang** this episode. Their stupid robot zaps ALL turtles, plus anything that mentions turtles. It isn't even obedient enough to do as it's told when Krang instructs it not to go into the house of mirrors. If he's clever enough to guess the Turtles plan, surely he's clever enough to come up with a better robot than that.

April's in her usual self-absorbed mood. She forgets that the Turtles are still out looking for Irma and doesn't bother to tell them she's turned up until they contact her. And despite the change in Irma's voice and some seriously weird behaviour, it takes laser beams shooting from her eyes to make April realise she's not really Irma.

Leo's shitty advice for the episode goes as follows: Always tell the truth. Why? "The truth never hurts." Umm....is that strictly true? If Leonardo had to tell some poor family that the Turtles failed to save their kid, for example, would the fact that he was telling the truth prevent it from hurting? Of course not. Leo's trying to encourage decent behaviour by falsely representing it as the easiest thing to do. Telling the truth isn't always easy, but Leonardo doesn't trust others enough to do it unless they think otherwise.

The Great Boldini

Synopsis

The episode begins with Michaelangelo attempting (and failing) to perform some magic in front of an audience consisting of the other Turtles and their friends Zach and Caitlin. The gang then head off to the museum to see another magician - the Great Boldini - perform some tricks. Boldini intends to make the valuable Tortellini Emerald disappear. When the lights are switched off during the performance, Boldini is tied up and when the lights come back on, it becomes apparent that the emerald has been stolen. The police search everyone present and the Turtles are exposed and forced to make an escape.

Noticing suspicious behaviour, Zach and Caitlin follow Boldini and learn that he did steal the Tortellini Emerald, and is working with his cousin, the gangster Don Turtelli. Realising that the kids are missing, the Turtles break back into the museum to find them.

When the Rat King shows up in the museum basement, demanding to know why a tunnel has been built through his home, Zach and Caitlin take advantage of the confusion and run off with the emerald, which they manage to hide before they are captured. The Rat King, Turtelli and Boldini elect to work together to recover the gem.

Whilst the Rat King's rat minions take over the museum via the computer room, the Turtles arrive to find that the climate control system giving them serious problems. The Turtles find Zach and Caitlin in a snowstorm and Donatello and Caitlin go to fix the computer system whilst Zach and the other Turtles go to fight the bad guys.

Using snowballs and Boldini's magic equipment, the Turtles defeat Boldini and Turtelli and hand them over to the police. The Rat King escapes, but the emerald is returned to the

museum.

Themes

Notice that the Turtles make no effort to co-operate with the police when they're exposed at the museum. They just run. Didn't it ever occur to them that if they ever followed the rules and tried to prove their innocence in an orderly fashion that they could make valuable allies of the police force? Who put them above the law?

Once again, we're treated to a laughable authority figure in the form of the chief of police, who turns out to be a stereotypical (i.e. stupid) Irish person. How did a man who confuses turtles with leprechauns manage to become chief of police? Only in America. What's more, he allows the Turtles (who ran away rather than prove their innocence on their first encounter) to escape, giving them an hour to capture the real criminals, just because April flutters her eyelashes at him. Stupid, deluded AND corrupt. Nice role model.

Characters

Yet again **Michaelangelo** thrusts himself into the limelight in a blatant attempt to impress his fellow turtles. His "Michaelangelo the Magnificent" act may be unimpressive, but surely the Turtles should appreciate that he made the effort and tried to break up the monotony of their empty, barren lives for a few minutes? You'd think so, wouldn't you? But no. Even when Mike's skill with Boldini's magic equipment captures the crooks, it's too much for the others to pay him a compliment. And Mike never learns. By the end of the episode, he's performing again, doing some stupid Irish jig on a table.

Donatello and **Raphael** are particularly harsh in their criticism of Mike's magic act, insulting his intelligence despite the fact that they must realise he's got self-esteem issues. Raph keeps it up all episode and Mike is noticeably slighted at one point, unimpressed by Raphael's joke that April is about to be "promoted ahead" of him. Yet again, the guys make themselves feel better by using Mike as a punchbag.

You have to wonder if the Turtles are a good influence on kids. After just a short while hanging out with them, **Zach** and **Caitlin** are already turning into disobedient little brats. After being told to leave the museum, they sneak off after a potentially dangerous criminal. Their motivation? "We'll be heroes." Would you let your kids hang out with the TMNT?

April shows us once more that she's not above using her femininity to get her own way when she flirts with the police of chief and gives him a peck on the cheek in order to convince him to give the Turtles a chance. Makes you wonder if she ever uses similar weapons in her attempts to get information from police sources for work purposes...

The Missing Map

Synopsis

Zack (the kid from "The Fifth Turtle") and his brother Walt are visiting the Turtles' lair, where they are shown the Turtles' scrapbook, which features Michaelangelo's first pizza crust as well as a document pouch containing proof that Splinter is the rightful leader of the Foot Clan and a map to the Turtles' lair. Jealous of the high esteem in which the Turtles hold his brother, Walt decides to take his own souvenir of the Turtles' lair - the document pouch. After Zack and Walt leave the lair, Walt reveals what he has done, and is overheard

by Bebop and Rocksteady.

Shredder and the henchmutants decide they need that map and go after Zack and Walt, who realise they are being followed and run. The villains pursue them through a science fair. Whilst Walt looks for a place to hide the map, Zack is captured by Shredder and taken to the Technodrome. Walt decides to head back to the Turtles' lair and seek their help.

Meanwhile, April has heard about the boys being chased by Shredder at the science fair. She notifies the Turtles, who head out to rescue them and are intercepted by Walt, who got lost in the sewers. In the Technodrome, Zack manages to avoid Krang's attempts to find out where the Turtles' lair is by using the Technodrome's controls against him, launching eyeball missiles and messing with the gravity.

The Turtles rescue Zack from the Technodrome and head back to the science fair to find the missing map. Shredder and the henchmutants follow them there and a battle ensues. Shredder manages to retrieve the map, but once the Turtles are home, it is revealed that the real map was switched with a fake. Shredder and the henchmutants believe they are about to burst into the Turtles' lair, but actually find themselves rushing head first into a mucky reservoir.

Themes

The army is thoroughly shown up in this episode. At the beginning of the programme, the army guy being interviewed by April makes a fool of himself by being unable to explain by the army is bringing back zeppelins ("classified information"). If the information is classified, why agree to an interview? Later, in another interview at the science fair, April asks about the army's new weaponry and is told "we're certain that citizens will sleep better just knowing that it costs millions of dollars."

As if this isn't enough, April asks about security and is told "we've got this place locked up like a drum, little lady." Cue the Turtles bursting in on the scene of a live broadcast via a manhole. Just as the same interviewee is telling onlookers that "the army is in control, there is no need for panic", Shredder's transport module bursts on scene. Despite the army presence, no one intervenes in the ensuing battle between Shredder and the Turtles and the armed forces are shown to be utterly useless.

They're not the only public figures ridiculed in the episode either. When Shredder is chasing Zack through the crowd at the science fair, a policeman looking on responds not by giving chase or requesting help, but by shouting "hey you, stop chasing that kid." And that's all.

And it says a lot about humanity that no one else at the crowded science fair helps Zack and Walt when they're trying to escape from Shredder either.

Characters

What do the contents of the Turtles' scrapbook say about the Turtles? Not much actually, but they say a lot about Splinter. For one thing, the book contains a picture of the Turtles BEFORE their mutation. If the story Splinter told the Turtles about their origins (as recounted in "Blast From the Past") is true, how did he come across this? Something doesn't add up.

In addition, why would Splinter keep Michaelangelo's first pizza crust unless he somehow knew that pizza would become particularly important to Mike in later life? And how would he know something like that unless he somehow influenced events so they would turn out that way? We know that Mike's pizza habit contributes to the team dynamic, because Mike is a figure of ridicule. And we know that Splinter approves of this set-up. It's not inconceivable that Splinter could have played a part in things turning out this way.

Other questions arise from the contents of the scrapbook…why would Splinter allow the Turtles to keep a map to the lair when the Turtles all know their way around the sewers by now? Surely it's just a security risk. And what of this "evidence" that Shredder conspired to steal the leadership of the Foot Clan. If Splinter has evidence, why hasn't he attempted to reclaim leadership? It would cripple Shredder's ability to commit crimes. Perhaps this "evidence" is fake or unconvincing and is only being kept in order the convince the Turtles that Splinter really is who he claims to be.

You really have to wonder about Splinter this episode. His reaction to Walt stealing the map is bizarre. Although Splinter describes what Walt did as "wrong", he decides it's okay because everything turned out well and Walt was given an opportunity to show his "true courage." Eh? So it's okay to do something wrong so long as you think you can put it right later? As a reward for his bravery, Walt is made the honorary sixth turtle. Am I missing something? He steals valuable documents, risks his brothers' safety and nearly reveals the location of the Turtles' lair to Shredder and yet he gets a reward? Bizarre discipline technique.

Speaking of **Walt**…in "The Fifth Turtle", we learnt that **Zack** was fourteen and Walt is his older brother. So he's at least fifteen, right? Yet this episode he steals the document pouch because he is jealous that the Turtles think Zack is brave. What is wrong with this family? Are these teenagers retarded?

When Donatello is reminiscing over old events at beginning of the episode, he exaggerates his own achievements and gets so excited he breaks a lamp. Is this the beginning of the vanity we might see in potential evil megalomaniacs?

Whilst Krang is trying to use a Thought Extractor machine on Zack, he accidentally uses it on Rocksteady and Bebop. The machine attempts to read their brains but concludes that there is "no data to extract." That seems a bit harsh. Surely it's not possible that their brains are *completely* empty. If even machinery is giving them a hard time, no wonder they have such low perceptions of their own abilities.

The Gang's All Here

Synopsis

The Turtles are investigating a reported Shredder-sighting when they save an old lady (who is actually Bebop) from being mugged by a young hooligan (who is actually Rocksteady). The "old woman" gives them some cookies as a reward, but Donatello is suspicious and wants to do some tests on them. At the lair, he discovers that the cookies contain anti-mutagen and are designed to turn the Turtles into ordinary humans. Michaelangelo isn't adverse to the idea of becoming human, but Don tosses the cookies into the trash.

Meanwhile, at Channel 6, Burne wants suggestions to increase the ratings and April

suggests an expose on inner city gangs. Burne loves the idea and April disguises herself as a gang member in order to infiltrate their ranks.

At the Turtles' lair, having decided that he wants to be human, Michaelangelo samples one of the cookies in secret and becomes a human teenager. After making a fool of himself on a local skateboard course, he begins to think being human wasn't such a great idea. At this point, he sees April being chased by gang members. April tells them that she was watching the gang to see if they were tough enough for her to join. April is told she can join if she can beat gang member Jersey Red in a fight. Whilst the other gang members leave, Mike finds himself turning back into a turtle and is able to help April beat her opponent. Afterwards, Mike turns back into a human again.

Back home, the Turtles' hear a noise in the laboratory and find that the anti-mutagen has exploded. Finding the note that Mike left, they realise that he is in danger and Donatello creates an antidote.

Meanwhile, the gang tell April that her second test will be to rob an appartment. April hopes to fool the gang by "robbing" her own home but Mike gets there before her and tries to persuade her to stay away from the gang. The anti-mutagen becomes unstable again and he reverts back into a turtle. April realises he's really Michaelangelo, but ignores his warning anyway and continues after her story.

Whilst the Turtles try to find Michaelangelo, Bebop and Rocksteady arrive at the surface in a transport module and attempt to recruit their old gang to help them steal electronic parts for the Technodrome. On board the tanker they intend to steal from, Rocksteady recognises April and all hell breaks loose. Michaelangelo rescues April once again but turns back into a human, rendering him helpess. At this point, the other Turtles arrive. After chasing off Rocksteady, Bebop and the gang, the Turtles use the antidote on Michaelangelo, reverting him back to human permanently.

Themes

Once again, the whole humanity gig is portrayed as an unfortunate affliction. Leaving aside character observations and comments on being human, the basic plot of the episode is as follows: Michaelangelo becomes human and bad things happen. Mike reverts back to Turtle. Everyone is happy. Even leaving aside remarks like "being human is totally bogus", the message is clear. Still, it may be an affliction, but at least it doesn't render the sufferer helpless. "You're just a puny human now!" Rocksteady tells Mike. "That doesn't stop me," April replies, freeing herself without the aid of any ninjitsu, blaster guns or mutant strength. Human power!

Why don't the other Turtles give more consideration to the idea of becoming human? Until the cookies explode later in the episode, there's no indication that it would turn out badly. After all, as humans, they would still be ninjas, they would still be capable of fighting evil, their lives would be easier and they wouldn't be freaks and outcasts. So why do all the Turtles bar Michaelangelo dismiss the idea so quickly? The answer could be that their identities as outcasts and their anti-human racism have become vital parts of who the Turtles are. They choose to define themselves partly in terms of what they are not and after clinging onto the consoling idea of humans being crappy, they aren't prepared to let go of this ideal for anything.

Is Michaelangelo's adventure as a human a metaphor for adolescence? It seems like it

could be when Mike declares "I'm changing again. I just wish my body would make up its mind." Like adolescence, the episode begins with a teenager being unhappy with who they are and thinking the grass is greener on the other side. Like during adolescence, the teenager feels like his body is doing things beyond his control. Literally becoming another person. After switching to human and back three times, Mike finally seems happier with who he is, which is what is supposed (and I emphasise the word "supposed" here) to come out of adolescence. So it's more like a metaphor for what adolescence is supposed to be like than anything people are actually likely to experience.

Characters

Need proof that **Michaelangelo**'s not happy with who he is? How about the fact that he lunges for the cookies after Don reveals what they can do, without even stopping for a few seconds to consider the options? How about the fact that he retrieves them from the trash, after all the other Turtles have rejected the idea, and eats one anyway? However, it doesn't take much to persuade Mike that being human isn't such a big deal - after a few seconds of humiliation at the skatepark, he's already beginning to regret his decision. (Incidentally, I must have ranked up many minutes of humiliation in various skateparks and have never seen this as an indictment of being a human being - just in case you were wondering).

His experiences as a human convince him that being human is "totally bogus." Let's take a closer look at this analysis, shall we? If Michaelangelo hadn't turned into a human, would this have prevented all the nasty goings on with April joining the gang, the gang being employed by Rocksteady and Bebop and the attempted robbery of the abandoned tanker? No. In fact, if Michaelangelo hadn't been human, he wouldn't have been in the skatepark and chances are that April would have been smashed to bits by Jersey Red. Apart from the incident in the skatepark, nothing bad really happens to Mike as a human. So is he really convinced that humanity is "bogus"? Perhaps he's just accepted that the Turtles will inevitably catch up to him and turn him back into his former self? Perhaps he's just trying to make the best of a bad situation? Perhaps he knew all along that this little adventure would end sooner or later and was just a way to kill some time? Or...perhaps he's trying to convince himself...

There's also some further evidence this episode that Mike isn't as dumb as he looks. The instant he reverts back to a Turtle for the first time, he realises what's going on. "It must be the adrenaline in my bloodstream."

It's testament to **Donatello**'s scientific nature that he insists on running some tests on the cookies before there's any reason to suspect there's anything wrong with them. Or maybe he's just the only turtle who noticed that the "old woman" was blatantly Bebop in drag? Does Donatello have any experience recognising men in drag? Just wondering...

After testing the cookies, Don declares that they are designed to degenerate the Turtles into "*lower* forms of life." What does he mean, the others wonder. Is he talking about slugs? Worms? Amoebas? "Worse," Donatello answers. "Human beings." Y'know, it's one thing dissing a species because you've been oppressed by them, even if you are making a huge generalisation, but comparing us unfavourably to slugs, worms and amoebas is another thing altogether. Do we live a trail of slime everywhere we go? No. Do we crawl about in the ground getting eaten by birds all the time? No. Do we replicate mindlessly and endlessly, living simply to reproduce? Well....he might have a point there. In any case, it's just the latest in a long line of nasty comments Don's made about humanity.

Note that Don is easily (and quickly) able to make an antidote to revert Mike back into a Turtle permanently. This would suggest that maybe he's investigated such things in the past. Not to jump to conclusions or anything, but is it possible that Donatello's been looking into the possibility of turning humans into mutant turtles for a while now? 'Cause if he were to embark on any evil schemes...that would be a good one.

My god, **Leonardo** is a killjoy. Before Donatello even tests the cookies, he declares to be against eating them...because the Turtles need to stay in fighting shape. They're chocolate chip, not cocaine flavoured. Despite his killjoy tendencies, he at least gives the idea of becoming human more consideration than Donatello does, admitting thats he's "always dreamed of riding in a Western rodeo." So what's to stop him doing it then?

Whilst we're asking stupid questions....if **Shredder** was so sure that the Turtles would eat the cookies delivered to them by Rocksteady and Bebop, why didn't he just put poison in them? That way he wouldn't have to deal with human versions of the TMNT, who could potentially still revert to being Turtles or even defeat him in human form. And couldn't he have persuaded some actors to pose as the old lady and mugger rather than putting clearly non-human mutants in those roles? Stupid, stupid plan.

Splinter's reasoning for telling the Turtles not to eat the cookies and become human is a little dubious. Splinter argues that, as humans, they would be weak and unable to fight Shredder and Krang. But there's no reason to believe that the Turtles would lose their ninja abilities as humans. Some of the best ninjas I know are humans. So why is Splinter so adamant that the Turtles remain turtles? Maybe because, as humans, they would have no reason not to have relatively normal lives, outside of a sewer? Lives which might not revolve around Splinter so much? The real question is: Is Splinter just a father frightened of losing his children or is he more concerned about losing his agents of vengeance against Shredder? Either way, he's still manipulating them.

Burne's got a pretty cynical view of what the public want. His reason for liking April's idea of an inner city gang expose so much? "Violence! Crime! Brutality! All the elements of great family viewing!"

April finally shows us what her real priorities are this episode. After putting herself in danger by spying on the gang members in the first place, she finds out what has happened to Michaelangelo but chooses to carry on working on her story rather than help him out. And she ignores his warning about hanging around with the gang she's joined.

Talking of stupid people....when **Rocksteady** and **Bebop** go to greet their old gang, the gang have difficulty believing that they are who they say they are. Rocksteady proves his identity by headbutting a wall. This convinces them. Even their old gang, it would appear, had low opinions of them, believing them to be "ugly" and "stupid." No wonder they went along with Shredder when he employed their services. It's just a shame he treats them no better.

The Grybyx

Synopsis

Michaelangelo and Donatello are playing a video came when April calls via her Turtlecom and tells the gang to switch on Channel 6. The news shows a huge whirlwind effect in the

sky over the city, which Donatello speculates to be a tear in the space/time fabric. The portal soon closes, but not before something comes through. The Turtles go to look for it and corner it in a shipyard. The creature is small, brown and fury and has telekinetic powers. It initially appears to be attacking the Turtles, until they realise it was "just playing" with them. They take it back to the lair.

Over at the Technodrome, Krang also saw the news report and theorises that the creature that came through the portal was a Grybyx, a telekinetic creature from Dimension X. Krang wants to use it to raise the Technodrome, and sends Shredder to the surface with Bebop, Rocksteady and some foot soldiers in order to capture the creature.

In the sewers, the Turtles see on television that another portal has opened. It closes quickly, but once again, something has come through. The Turtles use the glider to investigate and soon meet the Neutrinos. The Grybyx turns out to be their pet and Kala is really happy they found it before it ate any Earth food. Unbeknownst to the Turtles and the Neutrinos, April is feeding the Grybyx some pizza as they speak!

The pizza causes the small, fluffy little pet to turn into a huge, rampaging monster. Over the Turtlecom, Kala tells April and Splinter to get the creature wet. Splinter bursts open a water pipe and the resultant soaking turns the monster into a cute, fluffy pet again before rushing off. Before long, it runs straight into Shredder and the henchmutants. The Turtles use a tracking device to find the Grybyx and battle ensues. The Grybyx uses its powers to attack the bad guys, but Shredder manages to capture it anyway before making his escape.

At the villains' hideout, Shredder hooks up the Grybyx to a machine that will sap its energy and send it down to the Technodrome. The machine short circuits and Shredder goes out to get a new component, leaving the Grybyx with Bebop and Rocksteady. The creature appears to be hungry, so Rocksteady feeds it a hamburger, causing it to become a huge monster again. Before long, the rampaging beast finds the Turtles and the Neutrinos and attacks them too.

After being trashed by the Grybyx, Shredder and the henchmutants decide to retreat. Only then does it occur to Donatello that they need to get the creature wet. Using a fire hydrant, the Turtles manage to make the creature to revert to its small, fluffy self. The Neutrinos take it home to Dimension X.

Themes

Does the writer of this episode have an axe to grind about people who mistreat or neglect their pets? The Grybyx clearly wasn't a happy bunny in Dimension X or it wouldn't have gone through a dangerous-looking portal in the first place. And it clearly doesn't want to go back when the portal home appears midway through the episode. In fact, it runs off so the Turtles can't return it.

The wrong food (in this case, pizza and hamburgers) turns the Grybyx into a monster, in much the same way as junk food can destroy a pet's temperance in real life. Although the Grybyx isn't exactly harmless when it's small…witness its attempt to use the Turtles' weapons against them early in the episode, as well as it's attack on the villains later on. Kala claims the Grybyx is just playing, but with swords and lasers flying around, you have to wonder if "playing" means the same thing in Dimension X as it does here.

Raph hits the nail on the head with his comment “don’t you just hate it when people can’t control their pets?” The problem here is that the Grybyx may be cute, but it clearly isn’t the kind of animal that makes a good pet. Even when it isn’t huge and rampaging around, the creature is dangerous and unhappy when it mixes with civilisation. Something that applies to pets in the real world too.

Characters

When asked when his last bath was, **Rocksteady** tries to figure out the answer by asking what year it is. But despite his dubious personal hygiene, Rocksteady shows his softer side this episode, when he gets upset about the fact that the power draining procedure will kill the Grybyx and even offers it something to eat. He’s clearly **not all bad**.

Shredder refuses to run away from the Grybyx when it’s flinging laser fire all over the place, claiming that the “world’s greatest” does not run away from anything. World’s greatest what, exactly? Looks like his ego’s acting up again…

It takes **Donatello** long enough to realise that the Grybyx needs hosing down to make it small again. Why did nobody think of that before? It was established that water could have that effect earlier in the episode, so surely someone (Donatello, at least) should have figured it out by then? So were the good guys just hanging around until the Grybyx finished beating up the villains or just **killing time** until they were at risk themselves?

I really feel I should say something about **Michaelangelo**’s romance with Kala, but then there’s nothing much to say. She flirts, he flirts back, Raphael teases him about it… could this *be* a more generic romance subplot? Nothing ever comes of it, so I don’t feel obliged to say any more on the subject.

Oh, and **Kala** talks like Cyndi Lauper.

Mister Ogg Goes to Town

Synopsis

Krang is trying to open a dimensional portal to Dimension Z in order to obtain a formula that can transform crude oil to liquid hydrogen when he accidentally brings Dimension Z citizen Mr Ogg to Earth. Ogg can transform objects into other objects, and after creating all sorts of trouble in the Technodrome, he finds Shredder's collection of antique pottery and eats it. This gives Krang an idea and tells him that there's plenty more porcelain on the Earth's surface - but Krang can't go and get it because he's been banished and persecuted by the Turtles. Mr Ogg restores the Technodrome to it's normal state, hands over the formula to convert oil into liquid hydrogen and heads up to the surface to fight the Turtles and find more porcelain to eat.

Ogg runs into the Turtles in the city and starts battling them. Although Donatello soon figures out that Mr Ogg can't really hurt them - he's transforming objects into ice ccream and candy instead of guns or bombs - the Turtles still can't find a way to fight him, until Michaelangelo throws a porcelain vase at him. Ogg catches the vase and the Turtles discover his unusual eating habits. Meanwhile, Shredder is stealing an oil tanker in order to use the formula on it and power the Technodrome.

With April's help, the Turtles manage to trap Ogg in the museum. Leonardo and April go to

buy cheap imitation porcelain whilst Donatello goes to get his portal generator and Raphael and Michaelangelo go to stop Shredder. Using the porcelain, Leonardo manages to lure Ogg through the portal back to his home dimension, before heading to the oil tanker to rescue Raph and Mike from a bomb onboard. Down in the Technodrome, Shredder and Krang discover that the formula is useless.

Themes

This episode has no themes. It's just stupid.

Characters
Mr. Ogg is an annoying prick. He has amazing powers but he can't make bombs or guns, he only cares about eating porcelain and he has stupid ears. To be quite honest, I can't be bothered talking about him.

Is **Krang** being entirely untruthful when he tells Ogg that the Turtles persecuted the villains and banished them beneath the Earth? Strictly speaking, no. The Turtles have done everything in their power to stop the Technodrome from rising and it could be said that they've hassled them on occasions where it wasn't completely necessary (e.g. stopping them from getting water supplies in "Return of the Fly"). It's no excuse for evildoing, but when Krang and company have no chance of being allowed to adopt relatively normal lives, is it any wonder they feel driven to crime?

Donatello provides the Turtles' disguises this episode. Business suits. My god, that boy loves capitalism.

Bye Bye Fly

Synopsis

April does a news broadcast from an ancient temple which has recently been uncovered by archeologists. Nearby, Baxter "The Fly" Stockman is gathering trash when he comes across the temple and scares away the archeologists. Exploring the temple, Baxter activates a computer and discovers that he is actually on a stranded spaceship. Using the ship's pandimensional warp drive, Baxter decides to set a trap for Krang and Shredder. He locates Bebop and Rocksteady and hands them a component of the warp drive, telling them there's plenty more where that came from. Shredder is suspicious, but goes to find Baxter anyway.

Worried that the archeologists at the temple may be close to their lair, the Turtles go to investigate and meet Shredder on the way. After a confrontation, Shredder hurries on, but the Turtles take a shortcut to arrive at the temple at the same time. Using a special gun provided by the ship's computer, Baxter turns Shredder into a fly and Michaelangelo into a gerbil.

After torturing the computer for information, the Turtles manage to find out Baxter's plan to go to Dimension X. They turn Michaelangelo back to his normal self using the gun. Baxter escapes in the ship, but Donatello has held onto a vital component and the ship falls apart. Baxter falls onto the web of a monstrous space spider.

Rocksteady and Bebop take Shredder (still a fly) back to the Technodrome. Later on, April reports that the temple has disappeared. An archeologist tells the cameras that the area is

cursed and warns others to stay away.

Themes

The obvious theme in this episode is vengeance. Baxter turning Shredder into a fly is perhaps poetic justice, but what's his excuse for pursuing vengeance against the Turtles, who were turned into freaks by Shredder in much the same way that Baxter was? All they ever did to Baxter was defend themselves again him. In another incidence of poetic justice, Baxter appears to meet a sticky end on the web of the space spider.

Waitaminute...Baxter's dead? Eaten alive? Okay, so we don't actually see it on screen but we're led to believe that Baxter's trapped and that's the last we see of him. Which would not only have to be the first villain we've seen die, but the first character at all we've seen die in the cartoon. This is a big deal. Even potentially more dangerous villains like the Rat King and Leatherhead survived their brushes with death. In implying that Baxter pays for this final scheme with his life, the cartoon is sending out a clear message: what Baxter did was worse than what any other villain in this cartoon ever did. And what did Baxter do? Well, when the ship fell apart he was simply trying to escape the Turtles and Shredder forever, by heading off into space. In other words, he was trying to get out of the endless cycle of perpetual fighting that the other characters are embroiled in. And that isn't allowed.

It reflects badly on the scientific community that the archeologists at the dig decide to abandon their investigation at the end of the episode. If all frightening or unusual incidents are chalked up as "curses" by trained scientists, no wonder the sphere of human knowledge is so limited. Maybe this explains why centuries of investigation have failed to shed any light on the origins of the pyramids.

Characters

Well, **Donatello** may be a genius in the realm of science, but commonsense seems to be his downfall. In this episode, he's seen making a TMNT exercise tape in the hope of making a quick buck. This is unbelievably stupid. Firstly, the video tape is not only proof of the Turtles' existence, but it also features their (supposedly secret) lair. Secondly, what kind of market do you think exists for "turtle aerobics"? What kind of human fitness freak is going to attempt shell spinning moves in that workout? What kind of pet turtle can understand or follow a video workout? Nevertheless, the video is a further example of Don's developing capitalist aspirations.

Don also has a couple of dodgy ethics moments this episode, the first of them being when he tortures the spaceship's computer for information. Okay, it's only a bunch of chips and wires, but it's still a sentient being and, judging from it's reaction, capable of feeling pain (which Don knows, or else he wouldn't bother trying to torture it). What's more, the Turtles have, in the past, acknowledged the sentience and right to life of not one, but two robots (see Attack of Big Macc and New York's Shiniest). Conclusion? Don is mean.

More significantly, he's also a murderer. Donatello took that component out of Baxter's spaceship knowing full well what would happen if the ship fell apart in space. Maybe he couldn't predict the presence of the space spider, but he certainly would have known that no living creature can survive in space for more than a few seconds. Yep, Donatello finally crossed the line and killed someone.

Shredder is a bad employer. We all knew this, of course, but just to remind us, Shred

decides to give the henchmutants a day off only to change his mind later. As a fly, Shredder gets a taste of his own medicine, being bossed around and made to feel inferior. Clearly, **Rocksteady** and **Bebop** are oppressed workers, rather than willing slaves to Shredder and Krang.

Stupid Shredder decision #346 - after a confrontation with the Turtles, the guys are all plunged underwater. Shredder leaves them for dead. Fool. They're TURTLES.

As a gerbil, **Mike** has a very annoying, squeaky voice. Nothing to do with anything, just thought I'd mention it.

Nice to see that **Baxter**'s finally gotten assertive and given up on the idea of ever being friends with Shredder. Unfortunately, he achieves this by teaming up with a vengeance-happy super-intelligent computer who seems to team up with Baxter purely out of loneliness. This is something Baxter knows all about - you get the feeling he'd eat worms and join a kamikaze pro-Texan independence movement if he could feel like a valued team member by doing it. It seems his social need for companionship has finally proved fatal, unless of course he found something in common with that huge space spider and they became the best of friends. Maybe not.

The Big Rip Off

Synopsis

The episode begins with Rocksteady and Bebop arriving at a laboratory, where they try to steal some energy modules to fuel the Technodrome. When they get there, the Turtles are already waiting for them – as it's the one laboratory in town they haven't hit yet. The henchmutants are prevented from stealing anything, but they still manage to escape in their transport module.

Having witnessed the Turtles saving the day once again, April heads off to Fort Charles to do a story on a new super-computer called Cyclomp, which is in charge of security there. Her report mentions energy research going on at the site. In their lair, the Turtles note that Shredder's henchmutants have been showing up at any place where energy research has been going on recently – Fort Charles could be a target. It's obvious that the fuel situation at the Technodrome must be more desperate than ever. Down in the Technodrome, we see for ourselves that this is the case – the lights are all out and the giant fortress is perched on a crumbling ledge above a pool of lava, unable to move away and park elsewhere.

Meanwhile, April's report is giving more information about the energy research at Fort Charles – it involves trilithium crystals which would be the perfect power source for the Technodrome. In the Technodrome itself, Shredder comes up with a plan: he wants to make the Turtles *think* that he's after the crystals, whilst he actually plans to steal an energy source from elsewhere. He uses the last of the Technodrome's remaining power to reprogram the super-computer at Fort Charles. The computer uses the military's combat robots to take over the site, capturing the personnel. April is abducted and placed in an airtight vault.

Seeing this occur on TV, the Turtles head off to Fort Charles to save April. As the army attacks Fort Charles, the Turtles get in through the sewer and come up against the robots inside. Whilst this is happening, Bebop and Rocksteady are at Malick Missile Plant, where

they easily manage to steal power packs that can fuel the Technodrome.

The Turtles take out some of the robots by manipulating them into shooting each other. Then they use mirrors to deflect the robots' laser beams back onto them. Disguising themselves as robots, the Turtles make their way to the control room, where Donatello manages to reprogram the main computer and shut down the robots. April is freed from the airtight vault.

Meanwhile, Shredder decides that, with the super-computer down, this is the perfect time to attack Fort Charles and get those power crystals. The Turtles manage to keep them away from him, and he eventually has to escape his foes in his transport module. Arriving back at the Technodrome, he learns that the power crystals weren't needed, because Bebop and Rocksteady actually managed to get the power packs.

Down in the sewer, the Turtles learn the same thing themselves as April's Channel 6 news bulletin reports on the theft at the missile plant. Shredder and Krang now have all the power they need to fuel the Technodrome.

Themes

Once again, this episode sees the military sharing their secrets with the nation via Channel 6. Not only does April's news report from Fort Charles tell the world about Cyclomps, the super-computer in charge of security, it also gives details of the energy research into trilithium crystals going on there. As a result, chaos occurs, just as it did in "The Attack of Big Macc" and "Green with Jealousy." You'd think that, by now, someone in the Pentagon would have realised that it might be a good idea to stop sharing military secrets with April and the rest of the world.

As if the army hadn't already made fools of themselves enough this episode, all of their attempts to break back into their own military base fail, whilst the Turtles break in by simply walking through the unguarded sewer routes nearby. "That's military intelligence for you," Raph observes. Why did no one else think of that and why were they unguarded in the first place? What use is a military super-computer if you can just walk in through the sewers? Security at the Malick Missile Plant is even worse; the workers simply run off upon seeing Bebop and Rocksteady, leaving them to steal the Power Packs for the Technodrome.

The military's reliance on the Cyclomps super-computer is yet another example of over-reliance on technology leading to bad stuff. Shredder takes over the super-computer without even leaving the Technodrome and has robots running amok in a matter of moments. And that's with the Technodrome powered down. What if one of America's powerful enemies had decided to attack Fort Charles? Thank god Shredder is only using the place as a distraction anyway.

Speaking of which…it almost seems as if the villains are taking things seriously at the minute (for a change). Shredder's plan, unusually enough, is actually a very good one – for once he uses all the power and resources at his disposal. Whilst the Turtles are distracted, the henchmutants make a low-key attack on a much easier softer elsewhere. Clearly, the very real risk of the Technodrome frying in lava has stimulated Shredder's brain cells for once. It just goes to show that the villains CAN do the business when their lives really depend on it. The only real incompetence the villains show this episode is in leaving the Technodrome parked on a ledge over a lava pool in the first place.

Whilst the villains are giving it all for once, for the Turtles it's business as usual. They spend the first ten minutes of April's news report speculating that Shredder might attack Fort Charles. "I knew it!" Donatello declares when robots capture April. So why didn't they head up to Fort Charles a little earlier? Clearly, they don't have the same sense of urgency at the moment that is driving Shredder at the moment. It's all still a game to them.

Their plan to get past the robots by disguising themselves as robots is stupid and shouldn't work – robots don't SEE things, they SENSE things and things like body temperature, shape and bloody big shells would give the game away. This plan probably only works because they are ARMY robots and therefore useless (see above).

Similarly, the Turtles strategy to keep the highly unstable power crystals away from Shredder basically consists chucking them around. Good strategy! Mike tells the others he'll eat his comic if the villains ever manage to get their hands on a power source, and at the episode's end when they finally do manage it, Raphael is too busy making Mike live up to his promise to worry about stopping the Technodrome. Apparently they haven't realised yet that this situation is serious, and for once, Shredder and Krang aren't playing.

Perhaps the reason they're not worried is because they realise they're only characters in a cartoon. Mike certainly does. When the Turtles are speculating that Fort Charles may be a target for Shredder, he observes that the villains are "after power for the Technodrome in every episode." And when the Turtles break into a lift shaft to escape the army robots, Donatello feels the need to warn the viewers "Don't you kids at home try this. We're trained professionals."

Characters

It seems that the constant digs at his intelligence are finally getting to **Michaelangelo**. When the henchmutants escape at the start of the episode, Mike consoles everybody that "at least we stopped them from consummating whatever nefarious scheme they were attempting." Raphael blames the educational channel for Mike's newly enlarged vocabulary. Anyway, Mike is the only one of the Turtles who thinks to blind the CCTV cameras at Fort Charles by breaking a steam pipe – so whatever he's doing to improve himself appears to be working.

Shredder is on top form this episode – not only does he come up with a pretty good plan to track down a power source and actually SUCCEED for once, but he also stands up to Krang's whining. When **Krang** expresses doubt that Bebop and Rocksteady can successfully steal the power packs from the missile base, Shredder notes "why is it whenever they make a mistake, they're MY idiotic mutants?" Krang is just as quickly to take credit for successes, as he is to deny responsibility for failures. When Bebop and Rocksteady return to the Technodrome triumphant, he notes "for once, MY mutants did something right."

Is **Vernon** actively trying to sabotage his media career? His big opportunity arrives when April is captured and he's given the job of reporting on the army's attempt to break back into Fort Charles. Instead of making the most of this chance, he wastes camera time telling the viewing public how brave he is, before contradicting himself by fainting. Nice. The Emmy's in the post.

The Big Break In

Synopsis

Down in the sewers, Splinter is teaching the Turtles about the art of drinking tea (I shit you not), when what appears to be an earthquake occurs. Donatello checks his surveillance gear and declares that whatever is causing the vibrations is getting closer. The Turtles realise that it must be the Technodrome getting closer to the surface.

In the Technodrome itself, Krang sends a message to Dimension X using his pan-dimensional portal. He speaks to General Tragg and requests a weapon that will help him conquer the Earth – the Minimizer. Whilst the Technodrome gets closer to the Earth's surface, the Turtles are deep in the Earth's crust hoping to intercept it. They manage to get themselves trapped under some rubble dislodged by the fortress' approach, but just about manage to escape on time before being crushed by it. After grabbing onto the side, Raphael contacts April using his Turtlecom, and warns her about the Technodrome's imminent arrival. April manages to convince her boss Burne to inform his contacts in the military.

Leonardo finds a way into the giant war machine and the Turtles go inside. Leonardo and Raphael take a pair of quad bikes and head to the engine room to try and shut the Technodrome down, whilst Donatello and Michaelangelo avail themselves of a techno rover and head to the relay room, hoping to do the same.

Meanwhile, the Technodrome has reached the surface, where Krang's Minimizer is causing chaos. It has already shrunk one army base and goes on to shrink Fort Macintosh before April's eyes, before shooting at her news van. Whilst trying to escape, April crashes the van… right in the path of the Technodrome. Inside, Leo and Raph run away from eyeball missiles and fight off Foot Soldiers, whilst Don and Mike fight off Bebop, Rocksteady and Krang. Donatello receives a call on his Turtlecom from April, who is trapped in her van and the Turtles go to rescue her.

Leaping from the side of the Technodrome onto the Minimizer, the Turtles manage to redirect it so that its beams hit the Technodrome and cause it to shrink. The Technodrome falls down the hole it created on reaching the surface and rolls all the way back down to the Earth's core, where Krang manages to reverse the effects of the Minimizer. Donatello hands the modified Minimizer to April so the army can reverse its effects.

Themes

At the end of the last episode (The Big Rip Off), the Turtles learnt that Krang now had the power packs needed to run the Technodrome. You think they'd be plotting how to stop him from taking over the Earth, but instead the episode begins with them drinking tea with Splinter and listening to him blether on about how important it is to take your time and admire the bloody cup. Hello?! Future of the world at stake, maybe you guys should be taking it seriously for once?

But then, when you consider the Turtles' usual tactics of doing no more than strictly necessary to hold off the villains, perhaps it's not that surprising. Sitting around drinking tea makes the game more fun for them, because it builds up the anticipation. Otherwise, why wait around?

Actually, the Turtles are pretty impressive inside the Technodrome. Leonardo and Raphael make short work of a whole army of Foot Soldiers and Mike and Don defeat the

henchmutants before successfully taking on Krang. All this in the space of a few minutes. Just when you think they might be taking it seriously for a change, they throw away a chance at permanently stopping the Technodrome so they can go and save April. Which is pretty damn stupid, because stopping the Technodrome would have automatically saved April anyway. But then, this is the only way they can stop Krang whilst allowing him to fight another day. And thus, the game goes on.

With things getting so dramatic this episode, it's good that Raphael takes time out to remind the kiddies it's all just an animation sequence. "Still think you'd like to be a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle?" he asks the audience when faced with the Technodrome heading his way.

Characters

Trust **Splinter** to seize any opportunity to play the wise old rat. During the tea ceremony, he urges his students to take their time and make sure to admire the teacup. What kind of old man wastes time drinking tea when there's evil to be stopped? **Wise old rat my ass**.

Even when heading towards possible death, **Michaelangelo** can't resist a chance to remind everyone of his favourite obsession. As the Turtles descend beneath the Earth's surface, he laments the fact that the term "the Earth's crust" makes him think of pizza.

Despite his attention seeking, we do get one of those rare glimpses at Mike's **true potential** this episode when the urgency of the situation clearly prompts him to step his performance up a gear. As a result, he takes on Bebop and Rocksteady with Don's help and manages to jump over Krang and *flip him over*, allowing Don to scramble his circuits. Impressive when you consider that Krang is twice his size and that it normally takes all four Turtles just to subdue the henchmutants for a few minutes.

When April tells her boss **Burne** about the threat caused by the Technodrome, Burne agrees to get in touch with his military contacts. Hmm…if Burne has close friends in the military, that goes a long way towards explaining why Channel 6 manages to get access to so many **sensitive security secrets**. It also raises questions about **Burne's journalistic impartiality** – or potential lack of it.

The Big Blow Out

Synopsis

The Turtles and April are heading home following their adventure in "The Big Break-In" when the Technodrome rises once again and shoots at April's news van, burying it under a pile of rocks. As the repowered fortress leaves the scene of the crime, the Turtles dig their way out and rush home to seek Splinter's help. On arriving at their lair, they find Splinter has already seen what is happening on the TV news. April is unimpressed that Vernon has stolen "her" story. Splinter assures the Turtles that the Technodrome's size is unimportant: Shredder and Krang's evilness will ensure their downfall.

Meanwhile, the Technodrome is headed west. The Turtles pursue it to Mount Rushmore, where they speculate that Krang intends to carve his own visage next to those of the founding fathers (or whoever it is they have up there – I don't know American history). In fact, the Technndrome is headed towards Rushmore Power Antenna, which will allow Krang to draw energy from all over the planet. The Turtles are unable to prevent it from being

stolen and opt to climb onto the Technodrome in the hopes of stopping it. An eyeball missile being aimed at Mount Rushmore distracts them and they're forced to jump on to throw it off course. After saving the monument, the Turtles get back into the van – only to realise they've left Splinter behind on the Technodrome.

Back in the city, April reaches Channel 6 just as the power goes off. The whole city is without electricity.

In the Technodrome, Krang's plan is revealed. He wants to use the energy from the antenna to power a huge portal to Dimension X. Once the portal is big enough, he intends to take the whole of the Earth through so that his armies can attack. Meanwhile, the American army attempts to stop the Technodrome. They don't even make a dent. Donatello also has a plan: Leonardo and Michaelangelo will rescue Splinter from the Technodrome, whilst Raphael and Don attempt to buy some "army surplus."

Inside the Technodrome, Splinter finds his old enemy Shredder and the two of them set about settling old scores. Leo and Mike find a way into the Technodrome from underneath, whilst Don and Raph approach an army general who is unsympathetic to their attempts to get their hands on some weaponry. They opt to "borrow" a missile launcher without asking instead. Inside the Technodrome, Mike takes on Bebop and Rocksteady and despatches them without any help from Leonardo. The two Turtles find Splinter just in time as Shredder is about to finish him. Shredder is furious at their escape and rushes into the control room to take control of the Technodrome. Krang tells him not to waste his time worrying about the Turtles, but Shredder has clearly lost it by this point.

Thanks to Shredder's insistence on pursuing Leo, Mike and Splinter through streets of the city, the Turtles are able to manipulate him into position so Donatello and Raphael can launch a missile directly under the Technodrome. The Technodrome is launched into Krang's portal and arrives in Dimension X, only to be attacked by Krang's armies, who were expecting the Earth to come through at any second. The Technodrome is trashed, the portal is closed and Krang, Shredder and the henchmutants are stranded in Dimension X.

Back on Earth, the Turtles are heroes for stopping the Technodrome's reign of terror. They celebrate – as always – with pizza.

Themes

The Turtles stop Krang from blowing up Mount Rushmore by jumping onto an eye missile. They throw it off course enough to avoid catastrophe – but the smoke from the missile draws a black line across the presidents' faces so they resemble our heroes. Cool. But think about it – if the Turtles had stayed on the Technodrome and allowed the crummy monument to be destroyed, they could have stopped the Technodrome much sooner and prevented it from ever reaching the city and endangering countless lives. This is a good analogy for how patriotism can endanger a country as well as protect it. (I'm not going to mention Iraq here. Even though it's the exact same thing).

It's not just the armies of Earth that make idiots of themselves on this show – this episode, Krang's army in Dimension X proves itself just as laughable. They're so eager to attack the Earth when it comes through the portal that, in their haste, they fail to realise they're attacking the Technodrome instead. Not to be outdone, the American army shows itself up too. They throw everything they have at the Technodrome but barely make a dent. Then,

when Donatello and Raphael steal a missile launcher (which is unguarded), the army general refuses to pursue them because he doesn't want to tell his superiors that his men are chasing turtles through a sewer. What is it about giving someone a gun and a uniform that makes their brains go out of the window?

When the army general asks Donatello and Raphael "who the blazes are you?", Raph retorts with "Don't you watch TV?" Someone clearly failed to inform the general that it's only a cartoon…

It says a lot about the Turtles' limited imaginations that the best way they can celebrate saving the Earth and becoming heroes is with pizza. And, as usual, their toppings of choice reflect the dual nature of their personalities – Mike's selection is that classic sweet/savoury combination of pepperoni and hot fudge.

Characters

April is seething when she arrives back in the city to find that Vernon has stolen "her" story on the return of the Technodrome. Now hang on a minute…. It's bad enough claiming that you have exclusive rights to report an event purely because you happened to be around when it occurred (even if your colleague was the one who got a camera crew to the right place at the right time)… but it's even worse bitching about it when the fate of the world is at stake. April really needs to find a sense of perspective, and whilst she's looking for it she should keep an eye out for a sense of sportsmanship too.

Splinter is acting the wise old rat once again this episode. He stirs the Turtles with this inspiring advice: "the size of your opponenet does not matter – his own evil will be his undoing." Oh my god, can this be right? Splinter is actually giving pretty good advice for once. It may be unrealistic, but who cares? The important thing is that it motivates the Turtles to get out there and fight the good fight. And it doesn't hurt Splinter's reputation as a know-it-all that Shredder inadvertently proves him right by losing the plot and rampaging through the city, leading to his defeat.

Once again, **Mike** proves he's good for **more than a cheap laugh** this episode when he single-handedly takes on Bebop and Rocksteady. Normally that's a two, three or even four-turtle job. Goes to show what he can do when he's properly motivated and, perhaps more significantly, when **Raphael** isn't around to damage his confidence.

Perhaps "pride comes before a fall" sums up the situation even more accurately. **Shredder** is so pissed off at being humiliated by the Turtles' refusal to let him kill them that he seizes control of the Technodrome from Krang and ruins everything. His mad rampage through the streets allows the Turtles to manipulate the villains into position so Donatello and Raphael can launch the missile at them and send them back to Dimension X. This proves once and for all that Shredder's shennanigans have far more to do with pride and megalomania than any valid reason to be angry at the world. Poser.