

The Robotech/Macross License Has Been Extended (Exclusive)

Harmony Gold's deal with Tatsunoko to continue making Robotech and more will continue for years to come.

THE FUTURE Shamus Kelley Jul 5, 2019



For the past few years the future of the [Robotech](#) franchise seemed to be in question. Back in 2017 a California court [upheld a license agreement](#) between Harmony Gold U.S.A. Inc. and Tatsunoko Production, which affirmed Harmony Gold's license to the three-anime programs from Tatsunoko that were combined to create the unique Robotech anime series.

The big problem? In the upholding of that licensing agreement it also became public knowledge that Harmony Gold's license to the three series that made up **Robotech**, **The Super Dimension Fortress Macross**, **The Super Dimension Cavalry Southern Cross**, and **Genesis Climber Mospeada**, would expire on March 14, 2021.



t this news originally broke many fans assumed that once the 2021 date hit, Tatsunoko simply take their programs back from Harmony Gold. In a sense, the **Robotech** franchise had a ticking clock on it.

However, it has now been officially confirmed by Harmony Gold that their license agreement with Tatsunoko has been extended beyond the 2021 date. Yes, **Robotech** isn't going anywhere anytime soon. Below is the official release.

HOLLYWOOD, CA, July 5 – Harmony Gold USA, Inc. announced today that it has reached an agreement with the Japanese anime studio, Tatsunoko Productions, Co., to extend the worldwide, co-copyright ownership and exclusive management, excluding Japan, for its landmark anime series Robotech (including Macross, Southern Cross and Mospada). This agreement was achieved after a lengthy negotiation and allows Harmony Gold to continue to exploit the animated Robotech franchise well into the future.

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We spoke with the **Robotech** staff at Harmony Gold to discuss all the ins and outs of the extension and what it means for Robotech and the original Japanese series.

The biggest misconception Harmony Gold wants to clear up about the license agreements that were made public in 2017 was that “it wasn't even a [standard] court case” according to Tommy Yune, President of Animation at Harmony Gold. “It was simply both companies agreed to this interpretation of their deal.”

For context, many of these deals originated in the '80s between not just Tatsunoko and Harmony Gold but also advertising agency Big West, a co-producer on the original *Macross* and owner of 41 designs from that series. This has caused many of the problems which plagued *Robotech* and *Macross* over the years such as not being able to use certain *Macross* character designs in *Robotech* sequels and not being able to release *Macross* sequels outside of Japan.

“A lot of the original Japanese agreements, they were almost more or less memos. They were extraordinarily short,” explains Yune.

“I think the original contract was written on someone’s cocktail napkin,” adds Steven Yun, Vice President of New Media at Harmony Gold. “They wrote those contracts back then not knowing what business would be now [and] how much licensing matters [along with] regional rights.”



Despite rumors that Harmony Gold didn’t know the license would expire in 2021, both Tatsunoko and Harmony Gold were aware and that’s what prompted them to iron out the details on their various deals.

“Both companies wanted to figure this out because renewal was coming up,” adds Yune. “This is something you don’t want to do at the last minute. You want to give yourself time to do it right.”

“We have to understand this is the system working,” says Kevin McKeever. Vice President of Marketing at Harmony Gold. “If we have a disagreement we do arbitration. We don’t have disagreements but your disagreements get solved.”



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Since the details had all been worked out in the 2017 license agreement, Harmony Gold and Tatsunoko could work on their renewal in, as Yune describes it, “a straightforward manner. [The details were] just entered into California court so that it was a part of permanent record.”

When the arbitration ruling came down, “Harmony Gold and Tatsunoko started talking immediately about renewal,” says McKeever.

Harmony Gold won’t disclose when the renewal was agreed upon but it happened sometime between 2017 and now. Harmony Gold also can’t disclose how long the renewal is but in their presentation at Anime Expo on July 5th, a slide stated that Harmony Gold’s rights to **Macross**, **Southern Cross**, and **Mospeada** will remain in “full effect well into the future”.

McKeever did confirm that this isn’t a new agreement between Harmony Gold and Tatsunoko. He elaborates:

“It’s an extension of all the current agreements [that were made public in 2017]. It’s a renewal but actually it’s an extension for lack of a better term. We renewed but we decided as part of our renewal to extend the agreement.”

This basically means that Harmony Gold and Tatsunoko have renewed the same agreement they had before and extended it. This is exciting for everyone involved, especially Sony Pictures Entertainment who is currently working on the **Robotech** live-action movie. The new extension, “allows Sony to do what they want to do with the Robotech IP,” explains Yune.

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With the future of the franchise uncertain before this new agreement was worked out, it makes sense that Sony didn’t rush the **Robotech** movie into production. On the off chance the license wasn’t extended Sony wouldn’t have been able to fully utilize the IP.

Now that the license has been renewed, Sony will be able to take full advantage of the **Robotech** franchise and their partnership with Harmony Gold is set to expand over the next eighteen months. With Sony viewing **Robotech** as a possible “Harry Potter style franchise” according to McKeever, they are going to take full advantage of it in all areas. Live-action movies, video games, and more are on the table.

It's not just with the live action movie either. With the renewal secured Harmony Gold can do more with the **Robotech** franchise. Whether it's new product licenses or new animation, having the terms of their agreement fully worked out and renewed with Tatsunoko bodes well for the future.

What about the **Macross** sequels? For many many years fans haven't been able to obtain various sequel series to the original **Macross** outside of Japan. It's been a point of contention, with many people pointing the finger at Harmony Gold. Does this renewal change anything about that?

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Right now it appears nothing has changed. In 2017 the upholding of the license agreement made it clear Big West still owns those 41 characters designs and Tatsunoko owns the commercial rights to the **Macross** series. The way the **Macross** rights pie is divided up will make it difficult to work out who has the rights to various aspects of the IP outside of Japan. While Harmony Gold won't comment on any **Macross** sequels at this time, Tommy Yune does generally say that, "if we can have more Macross and more Robotech everywhere and just let the fans go after what they enjoy we think that would be a wonderful thing."

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In the past Harmony Gold has let existing deals for **Macross** sequels continue, including Manga Entertainment's license of **Macross Plus** and **Macross II** which can still be [legally purchased](#) for streaming on Amazon.

Yune assures that Harmony Gold isn't trying to hide any version of the Japanese series and in fact more credit will be given to Tatsunoko on future products. For the past few years only Harmony Gold was credited on various products released.

...e working this out. Harmony Gold and Tatsunoko [have been] partners in this whole
... For future product that we're working on, the IP is going to be jointly shared by both
... anies."



... that still leaves some rights issues on the table but Harmony Gold has a lot of hope Sony
t... be able to bridge the gap in all the legal issues between the various companies. Yune
... lates, "I don't have a crystal ball but I think that with a company like Sony? [They] can
bring everyone to the table and work the rights out for the future."

Everyone at Harmony Gold is excited for the future, including Jehan Agrama, President & CEO of Harmony Gold. He explained, "In 1985, Robotech introduced an entire generation in the west to the Japanese anime industry. Our fans are loyal and we are excited to be able to extend this franchise for their enjoyment."

Frank Agrama, Chairman of Harmony Gold added, "Over the past 35 years we have been blessed to work with our friends at Tatsunoko on developing one of the world's greatest entertainment franchises. With our extension we look forward to the next 35 years of working with Tatsunoko and world class business partners on Robotech."

*Shamus Kelley is a pop culture/television writer and official Power Rangers expert. [Follow him on Twitter!](#) He also co-hosts a **Robotech** podcast, which covers the original series and the new comics. [Give it a listen!](#) Read more articles by him [here!](#)*