



POMPO^{THE} CINEPHILE

STORY BY SHOGO SUGITANI / PLANNINGMAN PRODUCTION GOOD BOOK "POMPO THE CINEPHILE" (MFC) GENE PIVOT SERIES / KADOKAWA DIRECTOR TAKAYUKI HIRAO PRODUCTION CLAP ANIMATION KADOKAWA ANIMATION "POMPO THE CINEPHILE" PRODUCTION COMMITTEE
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POMPO^{THE} CINEPHILE

SYNOPSIS

Pompo is a talented and gutsy producer in “Nyallywood,” the movie-making capital of the world. Although she’s known for B-movies, one day Pompo tells her movie-loving but apprehensive assistant Gene that he will direct her next script: a delicate drama about a tormented artistic genius, starring the legendary and Brando-esque actor Martin Braddock, and a young actress seeking her first break. But when the production heads towards chaos, can Gene rise to Pompo’s challenge, and succeed as a first-time director?

Pompo the Cinephile is a rollicking, exuberant ode to the power of the movies, and the joys and heartbreak of the creative process, as a new director and his team devote their lives to the pursuit of a “masterpiece.”



CREW

Director and Screenplay: Takayuki Hirao

Character Design: Shingo Adachi

Direction: Kenji Imura

Assistant Director: Kanji Miyake

Animation Director:

Yasuhisa Kato

Shinpei Tomooka

Naohiro Osugi

Art Director:

Takafumi Nishima

Miu Miyamoto

Color Setting: Emi Chiba

Shooting Director:

Takumi Hoshina

Shinji Uoyama

CG Director: Masoto Takahashi

Editing: Tsuyoshi Imai

Music: Kenta Matsukuma

Opening Song: Seiko Niizuma

Production Producer: Ryoichiro Matsuo

Runtime: 90 Min

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ENGLISH CAST

Pompo: Brianna Gentilella

Gene: Christopher Trindade

Natalie / Lily: Jackie Lastra

Martin / D'Albert: Kenneth Cavett

Mystia / Marina: Anne Yatco

JAPANESE CAST

Pompo: Konami Kohara

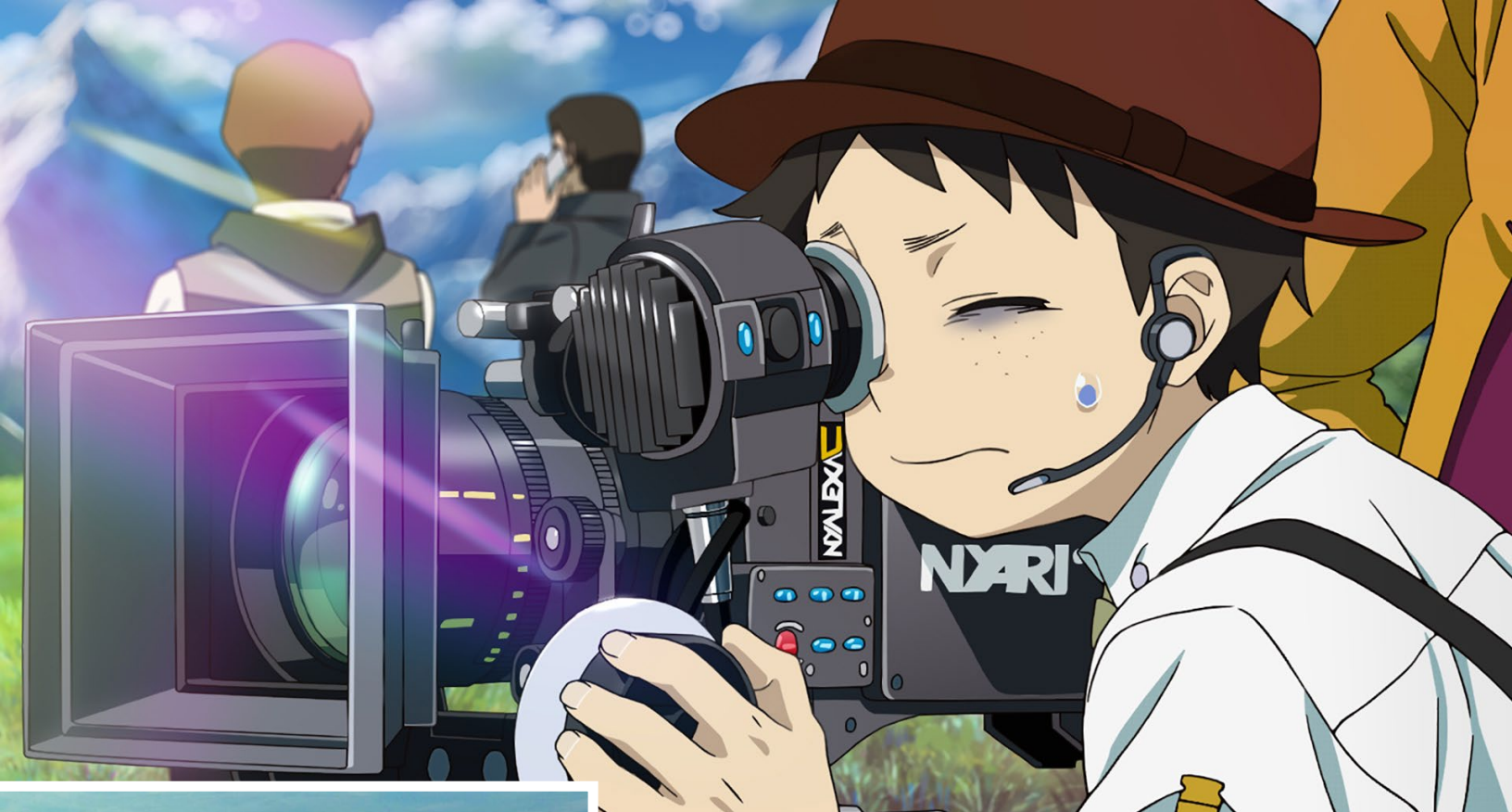
Gene: Hiroya Shimizu

Natalie / Lily: Rinka Ōtani

Martin / D'Albert: Akio Ohtsuka

Mystia / Marina: Ai Kakuma





DIRECTOR | TAKAYUKI HIRAO BIO

Takayuki Hirao is an animation director and novelist, born in Kagawa Prefecture, Japan.

After working at Madhouse and ufotable, he is currently working as a freelance director for various works. His major works so far include the TV animation *GOD EATER* (as director, sound director, scriptwriter, storyboard), theatrical animation *The Garden of Sinners* (as director), *Sakura no Ondo* (as director, original story, screenplay, storyboard, direction), *Magical Sisters Yoyo & Nene* (as director, scriptwriter, storyboard, direction, sound director) etc. In 2019, he published the novel “*Nokemono Oji to Bakemono Hime*”.

Favorite Films

Goodfellas

127 Hours

Whiplash



DIRECTOR | TAKAYUKI HIRAO

INTERVIEW

Can you please share how you first became acquainted with Pompo the Cinephile?

Bandai Namco Entertainment's Tomizawa-san (producer Yusuke Tomizawa) sent me the pixiv URL and told me, "Perhaps you should be the director for this one." After reading the manga, I found it contained a lot of sentiments I resonated with and had a theme I really wanted to depict if I was going to go on being a director. It's the kind of story where the minority strikes back against the majority. *Pompo the Cinephile* is a story in which Gene, who belongs to the minority within society, goes on to shine within the film world. It felt fresh to me that it was depicted not in a grueling way but in a happy manner with Pompo at the center. At the same time, he is able to shine while still remaining part of the minority. I was charmed by that and told Tomizawa-san, "If possible, I would like to direct this."

When making the film, was the active role played by these people who are minorities in society something you wanted to focus on?

Yes, that's right. I made a proposal that summarized my plans for the work in which I wrote that I wanted to feature Gene more. Rather than just putting a spotlight on filmmaking, I wanted to create a work that could act as a fight song for young people with dreams and those who have something they want to do but are unable to take the first step. When I first showed the proposal directly to Shogo Sugitani-san, the creator of the manga, I consulted him about my desire to include an original character named Alan who works outside the film industry. While supporting someone else's dream, he discovers what he wants to do. I said I wanted to include that sort of subplot. About a week after that,





Sugitani-san sent me an original character design for Alan. I understand it was a character he had originally drawn with the intention of having him appear in the manga, but he suggested that it suited Alan's form, and based on that character designer Adachi-san (Shingo Adachi) began his drawing work.

So, it seems he readily consented to your request for an original character.

Sugitani-san is someone who believes that manga and anime are fundamentally different things, so he told me, "I entrust this work to you." As I was making the film, there were a variety of matters I wanted to check with him on (laughs), but he stuck to his "I'll leave it to you" stance through the very end. I made the film thinking "As someone who has been entrusted with *Pompo the Cinephile*, I want to have contributed something positive to it when it comes time to return it."

You fit the film itself into a runtime of 90 minutes, which is a topic touched upon in the story. From the outset, had it been decided the film would be that length?

My thinking was that a 90-minute runtime was a must-have, so I wrote that in my initial proposal. It's something that Pompo says within the film, so I thought there would probably be some viewers who would care whether the film itself was 90 minutes or not. (Laughs)

After it was announced there would be a film adaptation, there were in fact a considerable number of people who were paying particular attention to whether it would be 90 minutes.

(Laughs) It was hard work to make it exactly 90 minutes. Cutting down the script, cutting down the storyboards... In particular, around the shot in Part C where Gene is at his wit's end with his head in his hands, I was also at my wit's end.

Was there any scene in particular that you fretted over?

The biggest thing was the part that explained filmmaking. I struggled with how to smoothly explain what exactly goes into the editing process. Nowadays, there are an increasing number of people who upload to video sites, and I think there are many people who comprehend editing. However, for those who don't know, the kind of work being done is totally unclear. In order to have viewers grasp what kind of work editing is, we had to first show the flow of the video when it was left untouched and then show how it changes when swaps have been made through editing. It took a lot of time to explain that.

However, it was intuitive and very easy to understand.

Thank you. It was something we absolutely had to depict, so if it aided in your understanding even a little, then our efforts were worthwhile.





At the end of the film, a timecode is displayed that indicates the film finished in exactly 90 minutes. I thought that was an interesting idea.

Actually, there were many twists and turns in that respect. Put simply, the issue is when exactly does a film start and when does it end? Films have a logo from the distributor, the main feature, end credits, and copyright information in that order. Ultimately, we put in that timecode to signify that 90 minutes had passed from the start of the main feature until the end... But we were conflicted about whether to include it. However, without it, no one would know the film was actually 90 minutes long. Though, there was the supposition that some fans would use a stopwatch to time whether it was 90 minutes. (Laughs) Whether or not it is 90 minutes is of course important, but in order to have viewers focus on the film itself, there was the thought it would be best to put something in that clearly showed it was indeed 90 minutes. So, with that in mind, we decided to include the timecode.

Tell me, Director Hirao, what were your thoughts on how to portray Gene?

Compared to Pompo, I didn't have much trouble with Gene. That said, with him not making eye contact, I did exercise thoughtfulness to how to give off a sense of him being a social misfit. However, I had at first wanted to include a bit more about this past. In the scripting stage, there were quite a number of flashback scenes about his past, but Tomizawa-san said that rather than look back at the past it was better to show him moving forward via his filmmaking. In the stage before storyboarding I decided to make drastic cuts.

Was depicting Pompo difficult?

It was a question of how to understand her character. Realistically speaking, a girl who is early in her second decade of being a film producer is beyond the realm of possibility. Her actual actions are things one would probably need to be around 40 years of age to pull off. All the animators working on the film worried about this aspect, as well. Her speech and conduct are adult-like but she is clearly a child in appearance. They wondered about how to animate her movements. When we talked about the topic, we landed on "Pompo is a concept."

A concept?

When speaking about interpretations of Pompo, Unit Director Imura-san's (Kenji Imura) idea was the most intriguing. In short, Pompo is Porco Rosso in *Porco Rosso*. She received special education for the gifted from Mr. Peterzen when she was a child and has been hit by a curse that has stopped her growth. Imura-san further said that, through being moved for the very first time after watching Gene's film, her growth began at the end of the movie. While that is just one interpretation, I think it is indeed compelling.





Are you saying that in a sense Gene's filmmaking became a rite of passage for Pompo?

Yes, that's right. However, in the source manga it is revealed that Pompo is attending school, so please just consider it an interpretation for the film adaptation. (Laughs)

For the characters of Gene and Natalie, two first-time voice actors, Hiroya Shimizu-san and Rinka Otani, were cast.

Initially, we talked about using live-action actors rather than voice actors. You see, Gene and Natalie are young people who are just starting out and will shine going forward, so we wanted a kind of innocence. And, if possible, we wanted them to develop via their work on the project. I believe viewers will see for themselves if they watch the film, but both of them really did evolve. That's the realism we were after. Additionally, speaking on Gene, there were many people who did great in the auditions. Among them, Shimizu-san gave an air of darkness in his heart and a little "accent" in his performance. When that accent was pointed out to him, he said, "I'll fix it before next time." I was surprised and thought, "So he came in already thinking he'd get the part!"

That's so cool of him!

It was then that I thought I would ask Shimizu-san to take on the role of Gene. Don't you think he has a kind of Gene-quality about him? I think he is like Gene in that, at a glance, it seems as though he doesn't have self-confidence, but he has this unconscious self-confidence. When I asked him about it, he was like, "Did I really say that?" But I let him know that he did in fact say it. (Laughs)

What were your thoughts on how to depict the original character of Alan?

At first, I saw him as a character who quits his job and searches for a place where he can shine, but Tomizawa-san's idea was that it would be better for him to find something he wanted to do in the place he already found himself, so he became the character of a banker who gets wrapped up in the crisis Gene and co are struggling with. The difficult thing was how to depict his cheery personality. We wanted him to be satisfied in life but didn't want to cheapen him. So, to depict him as an appealing character, we placed importance on giving the impression of life being easy for Alan as seen when he does things like pick up Gene's notebook for him.

This guy who is a "cheery person" that has it easy in life goes out into society and he's having trouble discovering his worth. I found that realistic and really empathized with it.

At both the advance screening and sound mixing sessions, there were many people who empathized with Alan. In particular, I think that really resonated with the people who underpin anime production. I had wanted that aspect to reach even the general public that is not engaged



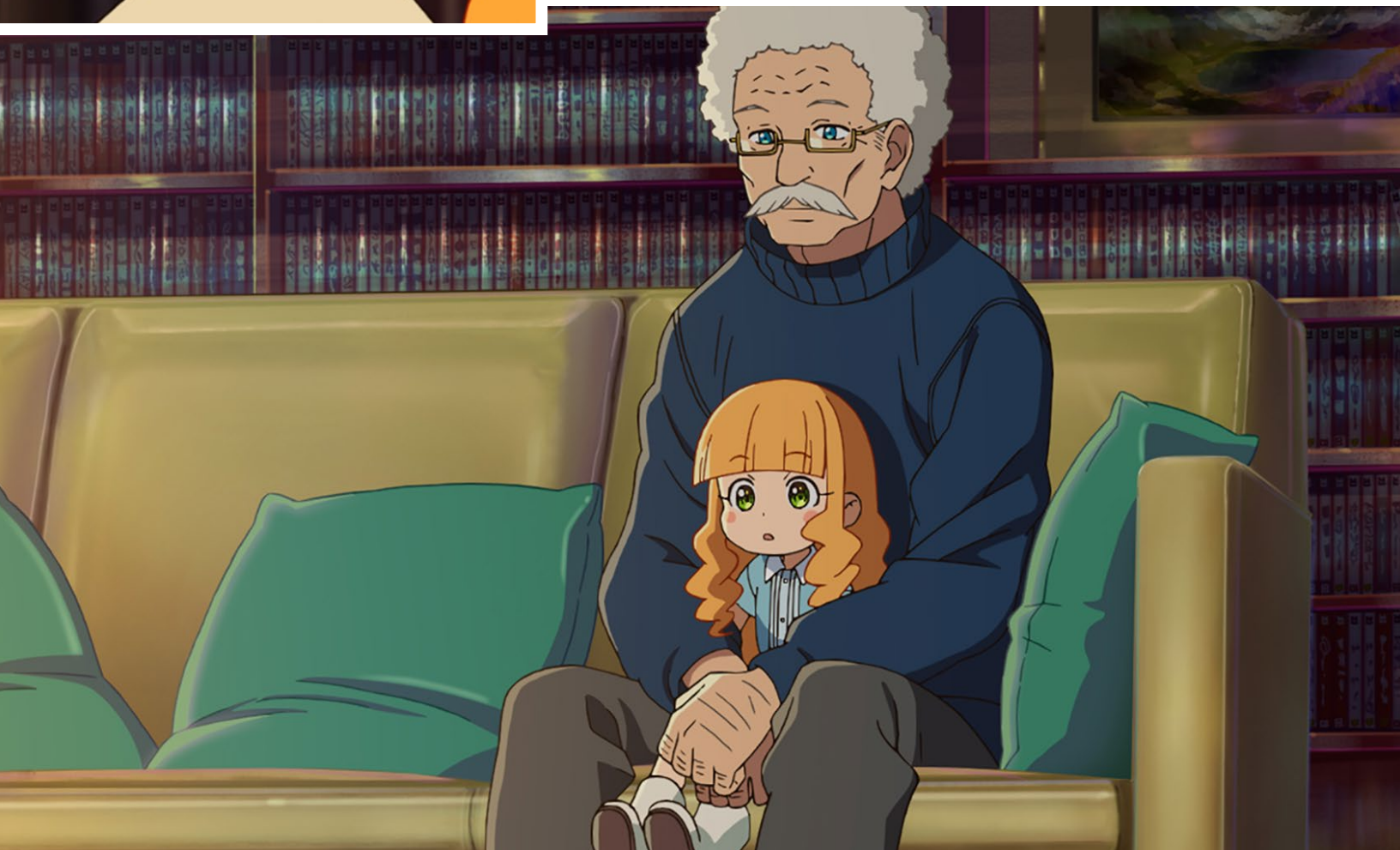


in creative work, but it was a pleasant surprise that it did. It hit home that people place their own dreams and the things they hope to do into our work, and, in wanting to respond to the feelings of those people, I had a sense of tension and determination.

Lastly, can I ask you about the three films you listed?

The three films I mentioned all had a big influence on my work on *Pompo the Cinephile*. In *Goodfellas*, Director Scorsese's forte of "directing in which a film opens with a scene from midway through" shines, and I paid homage to that directing in *Pompo the Cinephile*. In *127 Hours*, the opening sequence uses the methods of split-screen and wipes, and the wipes in *Pompo the Cinephile* are based on that film. *Whiplash* is such a big influence that I even wrote "I want to make the filmmaking version of *Whiplash*" in my initial proposal. It's also a film that Pompo mentions she likes in the source manga. In terms of "dreams and madness," the film served as a guide.

GKIDS





CHARACTER DESIGN

SHINGO ADACHI | BIO

Animator, character designer. Now actively engaged as a freelancer after working at Xebec. Notable works he has been involved in include *Mega Man Star Force* (character design, animation director), *Wagnaria!!* (character design, chief animation director, animation director, OP & ED animation director), *Sword Art Online* (character design, chief animation director, assistant animation director, OP & ED animation director), *Galilei Donna* (character design, chief animation director, animation director, OP & ED animation director), *Minarai Diva* [a live anime] (character design), etc.

Favorite Films

Gattaca

Bajrangi Bhaijaan

The Cherry Orchard



CHARACTER DESIGN SHINGO ADACHI | INTERVIEW

Adachi-san, how did you come to work on Pompo the Cinephile?

I ended up grabbing a drink with Wit Studio's Nakatake-kun (Producer Tetsuya Nakatake), and Director (Takayuki) Hirao was also there. It was my first time meeting him, but the three of us had a good, lively time. (Laughs) Afterward, I was contacted by Nakatake-kun again. He said that Director Hirao wanted to show me something. When we met again, he passed me a copy of the source manga and asked me to do the character designs.

What was your impression of the source manga?

From the beginning, I read what had been posted to pixiv. I studied film in college, so I very much understood the feeling toward filmmaking that was being depicted. I thought it was a good work that people could empathize with. When I then went back and read it again, I was charmed by the oddly proportioned characters. Lately, I haven't had much opportunity to draw small children like Pompo, so I thought it would be a fun project. That said, I thought that maybe my work would be different than what the team was expecting, so I wanted them to first take a look at my drawings and so I proposed a kind of design competition. I first submitted drawings of Gene and Pompo and received the response of "Please join us," so I came to participate on the project.



When it came to doing the character design, did the director give you an explanation of the concept he wanted?

From the beginning, I submitted my impressions of the characters, so there wasn't something like a new explanation offered to me afterward. The process was that each time I finished a design I would then receive an order for what to work on next. That said, the director had a document that outlined all his plans for this film, and that was really great. It contained details on what kind of story the film would tell, what kind of film the director wanted to make, how he wanted it to be understood by the audience, etc. As it was an overall guide, it even included details on how to create the specific look the film was aiming for. I was struck by the extraordinariness of the director.

Did you yourself have any particular theme or the like in mind?

For a film adaptation, it's more fun when the characters move around, so I aimed for character designs that are easy to animate, reducing the lines as much as I could. I also took care to not insert too many highlights, and I kept the treatment of eyes basically in line with the source manga.

Did you have any requests from Shogo Sugitani-san, the creator of the source manga?

No, not at all. According to Producer Matsuo (Ryoichiro Matsuo), Sugitani-san believes anime and manga are different things, and his policy is to wait until the film is finished and not look at the work in progress. I am a bit curious what his impression of my work will be, though. (Laughs)

Well then, please allow me to ask about the design of each character. First, how was designing Gene?

Just like Pompo mentioned in the line "Your eyes didn't sparkle," his main characteristic is that he appears unfortunate and unsatisfied in life, so I gave him an air of being unhealthy with dark rings under his eyes, a bent back, etc. I recall that the director was also quite particular about the dark circles.

Though he is the protagonist, at a glance he has an aura of being unapproachable.

Most likely, he wouldn't be able to assemble a team all by himself. He has talent, and if one understands that then working with him would probably be fun, but if one doesn't know that then the prospect would not seem very appealing. (Laughs) So, without someone like Pompo who is able to assemble people, I feel his work wouldn't go well. In that sense, he's someone whose talent bloomed for the first time after he formed a partnership with Pompo.

Next, please share your thoughts on Pompo's character design.

With Pompo, I tried to really bring out her cuteness. No matter the





viewer, it is clear to see that Pompo is a small, pretty, straight-forward anime-style character. It's like what Pompo said about Mystia: "As long as the lead actress looks attractive, it's a good movie." This film is right in line with that. If, by drawing Pompo in a cute manner, people think "Oh, this is a movie that features a cute girl" and become interested in the film, that would be a success.

She is also positioned to stand out the most in the key art, isn't she?

I think I was probably asked to join this project for the purpose of drawing Pompo in a cute manner. After all, I am "tried-and-trusted with lolis Adachi." (Laughs)

Hahaha. (Laughs) What are your thoughts on Natalie's design?

Though she is not a character at the center of the story, she is actually my favorite character. It's fun to draw female characters in this age range with this head-to-body ratio, you know? She has a childlike quality - though not to the extent of Pompo - and at the same time it's possible to bring out her appeal as an adult woman, which makes her an interesting character. I drew versions with both long hair and short hair, but ideally this is a character for which I would have liked to draw a number of variations.

In the film she plays a boyish role. Was that something you were conscious of?

It was fun to think about how to portray her as having a country-girl-like and immature quality to her. One thing that surprised me was how she has highlights right in the middle of her eyes. It ended up that I only put in unusual highlights for Natalie, and I had never drawn eyes like this before, so it felt fresh to me.

Indeed, in the part that is normally the pupil, she has highlights instead.

That's how it is in the source manga, so I conformed to it, but someday I would like to ask Sugitani-san what his intentions were with making Natalie's eyes that way.

Moving on, what about Mystia?

What I placed importance on was drawing her to be the most beautiful woman in the film.

She has a gorgeous quality about her.

That's right. She's a popular actress whose blonde hair stands out, so, in order to give her alone a kind of special quality, I added brush-like streaks to her bangs and the tips of her hair. That said - and this is not just limited to Mystia - it is difficult to depict blond hair beautifully.

Is that right?

I tried a lot of different techniques. For example, even if you put in highlights, you can't actually see them. They get blown out in the composition process, and the amount of animation work just ends up





increasing. So, for the sake of decreasing the number of lines, I drew only a single line and made it show up as streaks in the composition process.

Regarding Martin, he's drawn in a markedly more realistic style, isn't he?

He may have been the most difficult. He's a middle-aged guy with a realistic head-to-body ratio, so if you just place him next to Gene or Pompo there's a feeling of being out of place. So, the principal question was how much to distort his proportions and harmonize him with the other characters. I definitely couldn't put in shadows and if I were to put in too many wrinkles to depict him as old then he ends up looking too realistic. He was a character in which I had to think "Where should I put a single wrinkle in?"

What's more, his character is that of a cool actor.

That's right. If you distort the proportions too much he ends up stumpy which means he is no longer Martin, so I kept on searching for that fine line.

Then there is Alan, a character original to the film.

Alan kind of forms a pair with Gene, and the setup of him being like another Gene was intriguing. The character actually had an original character design drawn by Sugitani-san, so I referenced that. I took care with balancing his unruly hair, which had a tendency of taking many lines to depict.



Is there a character that left an especially strong impression on you?

I tried bringing out the feel of the material of Mr. Peterzen's knitted sweater with a technique I have not used much before. Normally, it's just not possible to draw each line for a knitted garment. If you put in all of the lines, the animators are going to get angry with you. (Laughs) Therefore, I put knitted lines into the shadowed edge parts - the parts where there is a darkening gradient - and tried to bring out the feel of the knitted material with a limited number of lines. But, at the time of this interview, I have yet to view the screener, so I am curious to see how it ended up looking... Producer Matsuo said that there wasn't really any talk of it being difficult for the production studio, so that was a bit of a relief.

So, how do you feel about having been part of the Pompo the Cinephile project?

I would like people who are aiming to be producers within the anime industry to watch the movie.

Aspiring producers?

When the anime *Shirobako* aired, the number of people who wanted to become production assistants increased. It was a truly great show and I loved it too, and I think *Pompo the Cinephile* has that same kind of potential. As a matter of fact, I have previously recommended the source manga to someone who works in production, and I said if you're aiming

to be a producer you should read this. That's because, as a work-themed manga, lots of good stuff is depicted.

Gene's zeal goes without saying, but Pompo's maneuvering is also great, isn't it?

And you can include Alan in there as well, but everyone involved with creating things has amazing zeal. At the same time, when one is engaged in creating things there is something they must sacrifice, and depending on the person they may not obtain worldly happiness... I felt that the director wanted to depict that aspect via Gene and co. I believe that is the distinctive essence that Director Hirao brings to this film adaptation. I think the film's tagline is especially good, too. Though, Pompo does also say it in the source manga.

"Happiness destroys creativity," right?

That resonated with me. In one view, it might be an unfortunate, sad story, but perhaps that is the extent to which creating something is worth devoting one's life to. In the sense that negative emotions can be of assistance, I think those words are capable of giving one courage.

Lastly, can you please share three films you like?

When asked what films I like, *Gattaca* is always an answer I give. It was a lot harder to think of the other two. In terms of a comparatively recent film, I liked the Indian film *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*. It depicts the interaction between a Pakistani girl who gets lost in India and the Indian man Bajrangi. It's a fun film, and you will definitely cry at the end.





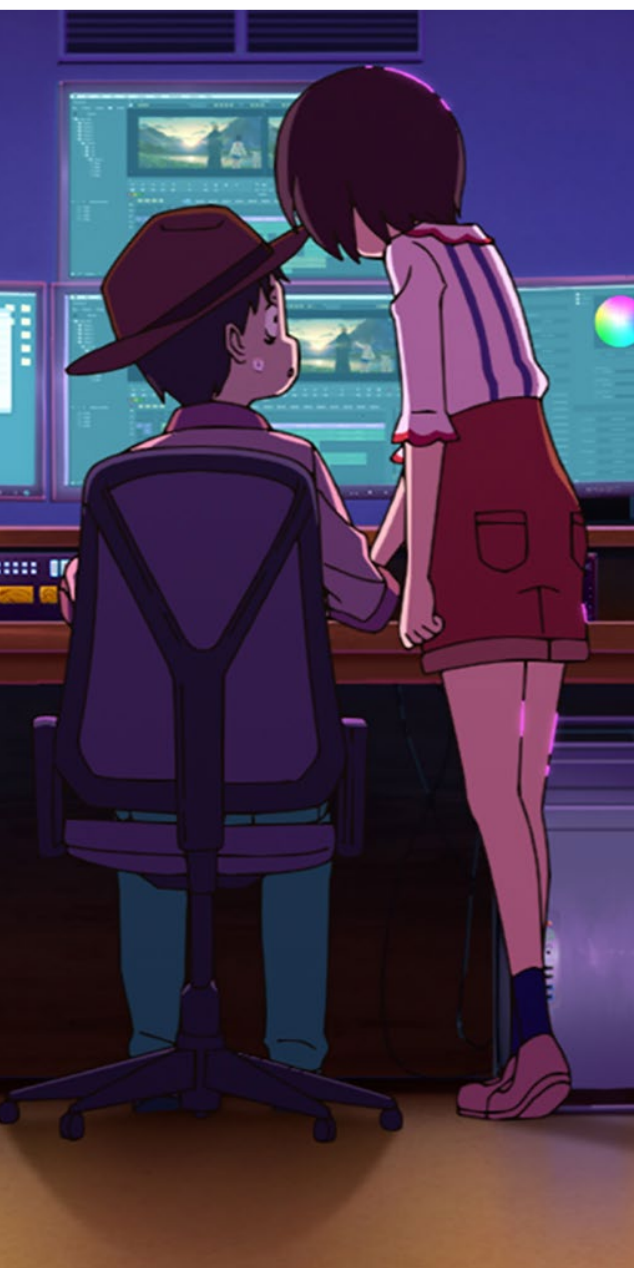
MUSIC

CIEL | BIO

A cross-border female singer who goes back and forth between the virtual world and the real one. Her talent was discovered at the “Kamitsubaki City Foreign Settlement Beast Division” audition held by KAMITSUBAKI STUDIO in 2019. Though she is very much a newcomer, she was selected by Director Takayuki Hirao to be the artist for the film’s theme song. On June 4, the same date as the film’s Japanese opening, the theme song “Mado o Akete” was released as a single.

Official Twitter account: twitter.com/CIEL_VanillaSky

Favorite Film: *The Secret World of Arrietty*



MUSIC CIEL | INTERVIEW

How did it feel when it was simultaneously decided that you were going to make your professional debut and also sing the theme song for a film?

I didn't know what was going on and mentally I was panicking. For a while, I had it in my head that "this must be a dream!" and it took some time for me to accept it was really happening... Starting with Director Hirao, who appointed me—an unknown without experience—to sing the film's theme song, I have nothing but gratitude for everyone involved.

Please share your impressions upon first reading the project proposal and story for Pompo the Cinephile.

I was first shown the film poster, and at that moment I felt it was a sweet film that had a pop-art feel to it. When I finished watching the film, that first impression was—in a positive sense—turned on its head.

Please tell us about your debut song, "Mado o Akete." What were your thoughts when you first heard the music and read the lyrics by Iori Kanzaki-san? Also, what memories do you have from your time recording the song?

In "Mado o Akete," the melody comes across as very straightforward, but there are parts here and there where you feel conflict and negative aspects are impactful. When I read the lyrics, I thought, "I can't stand still. I've gotta move forward." It felt like I had been given a supportive push.

Even if you're worried or feel like you've come to a standstill, I think it's a song that can give you courage as it says "it will be okay" and pulls you forward.

At the end of the song, there are some shouts of "hey, hey," but during recording I was having a hard time getting a good take... I started feeling a bit down and thought, "am I really that bad with saying 'hey!'" (laughs)

What were your thoughts after seeing the advanced screening?

There's this scene where Natalie and Gene are talking and Gene says, "Only two choices: make a movie or die." It's hard for me to put into words, but I had a variety of complicated feelings, and that scene really stands out in my memory.

Also, when Gene is told "Don't just look down, look ahead" back during his school days, it was really like I was seeing myself, so I couldn't think of Gene's life as just "someone else's problem." And I ended up identifying with Natalie just as strongly. When Natalie, who had been a nobody, is selected by Pompo to play the heroine, there is a sense that the flavor of her days suddenly becomes more brilliant and begins to sparkle. I felt I personally understood that. Having long lived my life in a dark room all on my own, I found music, met many people, and now I've been selected by Director Hirao. So it felt like this moment, where I'm standing on a stage I never expected I'd reach, was made into the movie I was watching... It might be presumptuous, but I felt like that as I watched the film.

In this series of interviews we've been asking everyone to share a favorite film. Can you please tell us a favorite film or yours, CIEL-san?

I love *The Secret World of Arrietty* and I have watched it about 100 times! More than there being a specific part I like, the appearance of the world, the music and sounds that are played, the scenery, and a whole bunch of other stuff is perfectly in tune with my tastes. I never get tired of it no matter how many times I watch it, and each time I watch it I find myself liking it all over again. That's how much I love the film.

Can you please share a short message with all those who watched the film?

Whether it's for work or as a hobby, when you make something, when you create, when you take a step forward from the place you're at now, it would please me if Pompo and the music in the film give all of you courage.

This film afforded me the opportunity to be reborn as CIEL ("sky" in French). In receiving this name, it was my aspiration that I, someone who had always just looked down, would one day come to be able to look up at the sky.

"Don't just look down, look ahead."

It is my wish that this film and message reach as many people as possible, including that someone just like me who is surely out there somewhere.





MUSIC

EMA | BIO

Vocalist for the musical duo DUSTCELL. She became active in the industry starting in October 2019 together with composer Misumi. Her latest release “Fate of Life” has been selected as a major TV-commercial song, and she is someone to keep an eye on going forward.

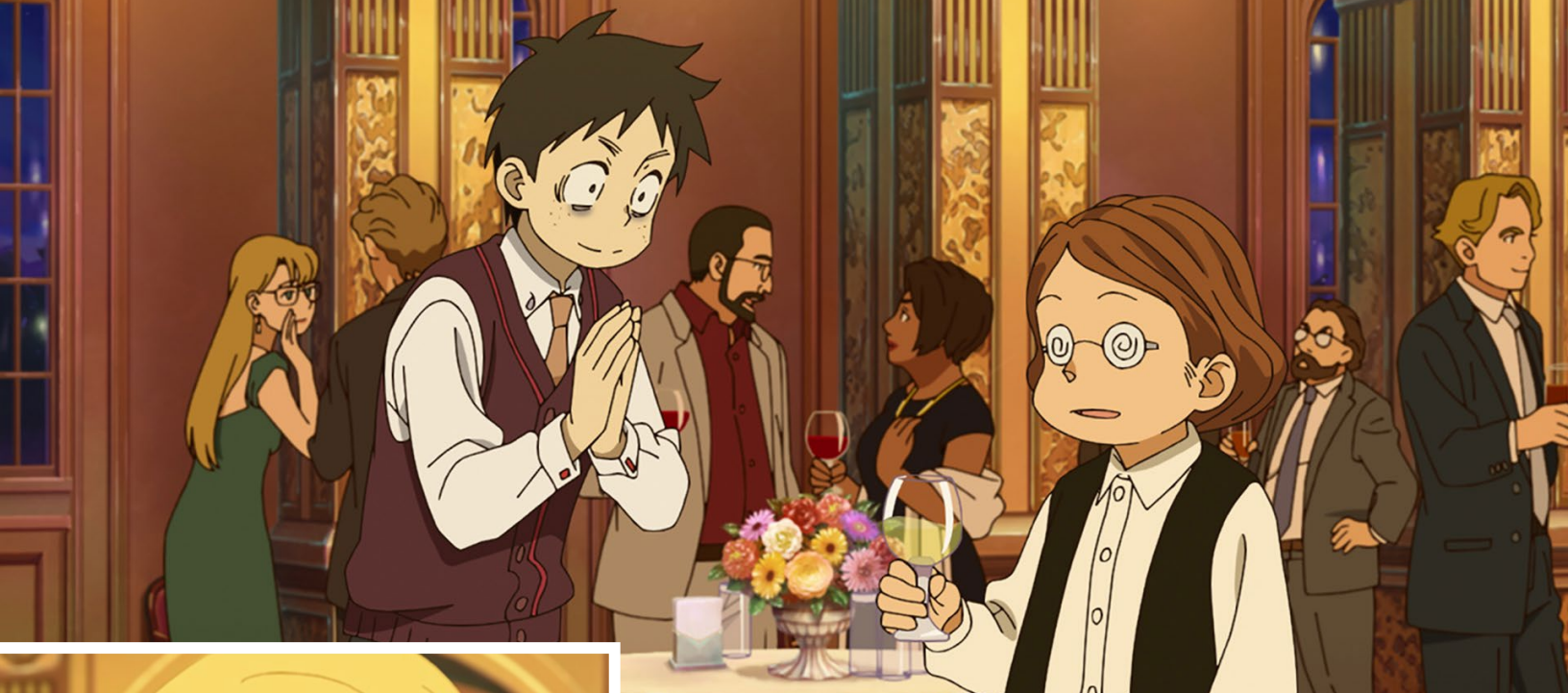
Official website: <https://kamitsubaki.jp/artist/ema/>

Favorite Films:

The Harry Potter series

Studio Ghibli films (Princess Mononoke in particular)

Léon: The Professional



MUSIC EMA | INTERVIEW

Seeing as you sang the insert song “Hangyakusha no Bokura” for the film, can you please share your memories from the time you spent recording it and your feelings about the song?

I am very grateful to have been involved with such a wonderful film. I had the privilege of singing for “Hangyakusha no Bokura,” for which Iori Kanzaki-san was the songwriter. As someone who values constantly working to create something, each of the lines in the song largely applied to me as well, and I believe I succeeded in singing each musical phrase with care. I hope you go to the theater and enjoy the song together with the film.

Can you please share your thoughts about when you first heard about the project and the impressions you had after reading the story?

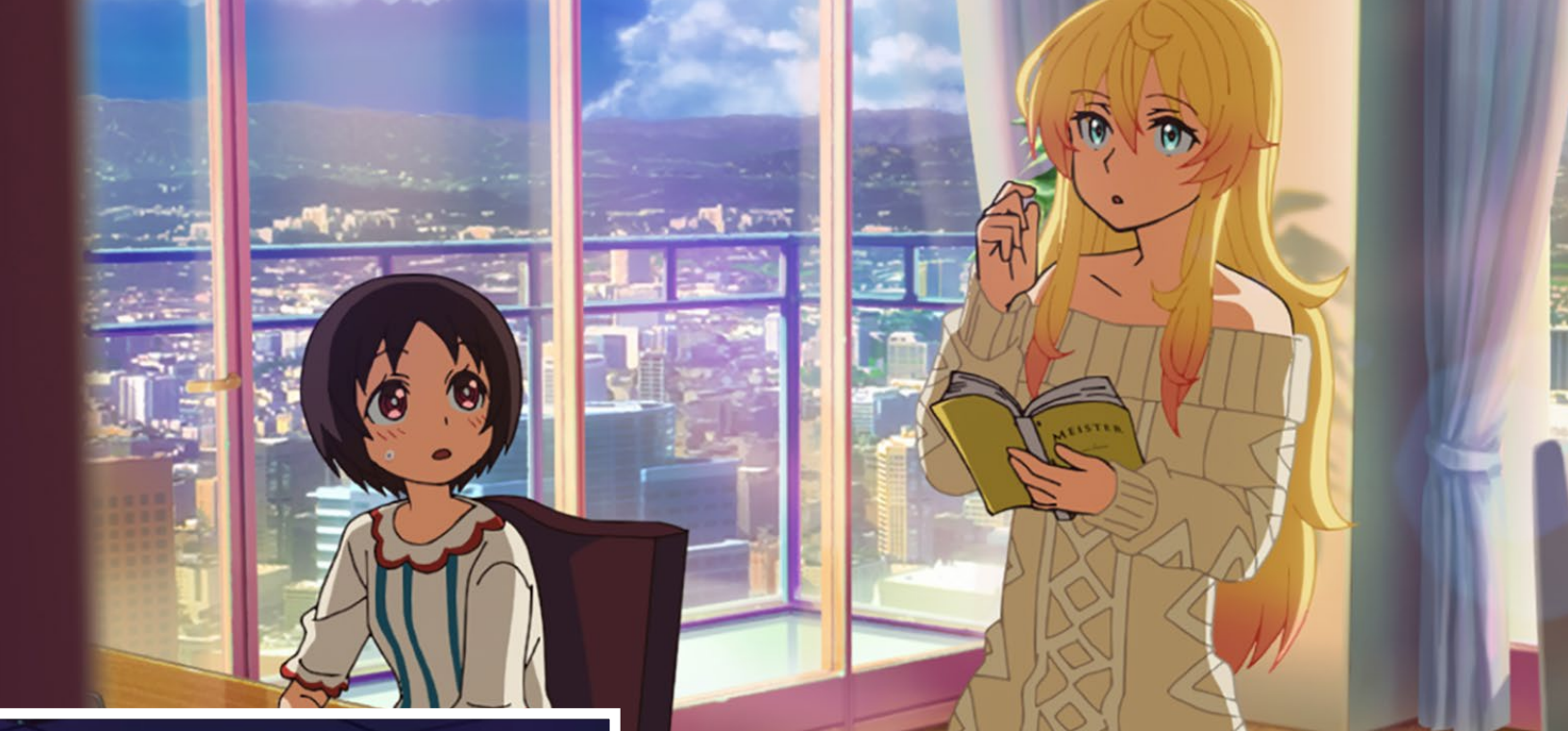
I believed that the act of creating something was the theme of the film, and, as I am regularly creating something myself, I suspected that many parts would resonate with me emotionally.

Can you please share a scene you are looking forward to seeing in the finished film?

I have yet to watch the film, but my manager who saw the advance screening told me, “I suddenly realized I was crying,” so I’m looking forward to the whole thing. (I’m also kind of looking forward to the part where my song is played.)

Can you please share a short message with all those who watched the film?

Let’s do our best and keep on living.



MUSIC

KAF | BIO

A next-generation virtual singer. In October 2018, while being primarily based in the virtual world, she began full-scale activities in the real world. Her singing and her music videos, which fuse the real and the virtual and are uploaded to social media sites, attracted public attention, giving her more than 500,000 subscribers to her YouTube channel and more than 100 million total views. In March of this year, she held her second ONE-MAN LIVE “Fukakai Two Q2,” which was streamed in full free of charge on YouTube Live. The number of simultaneous viewers exceeded 40,000 and on Twitter #不可解式Q2 (#FukakaiTwoQ2) became the number one trending hashtag worldwide.

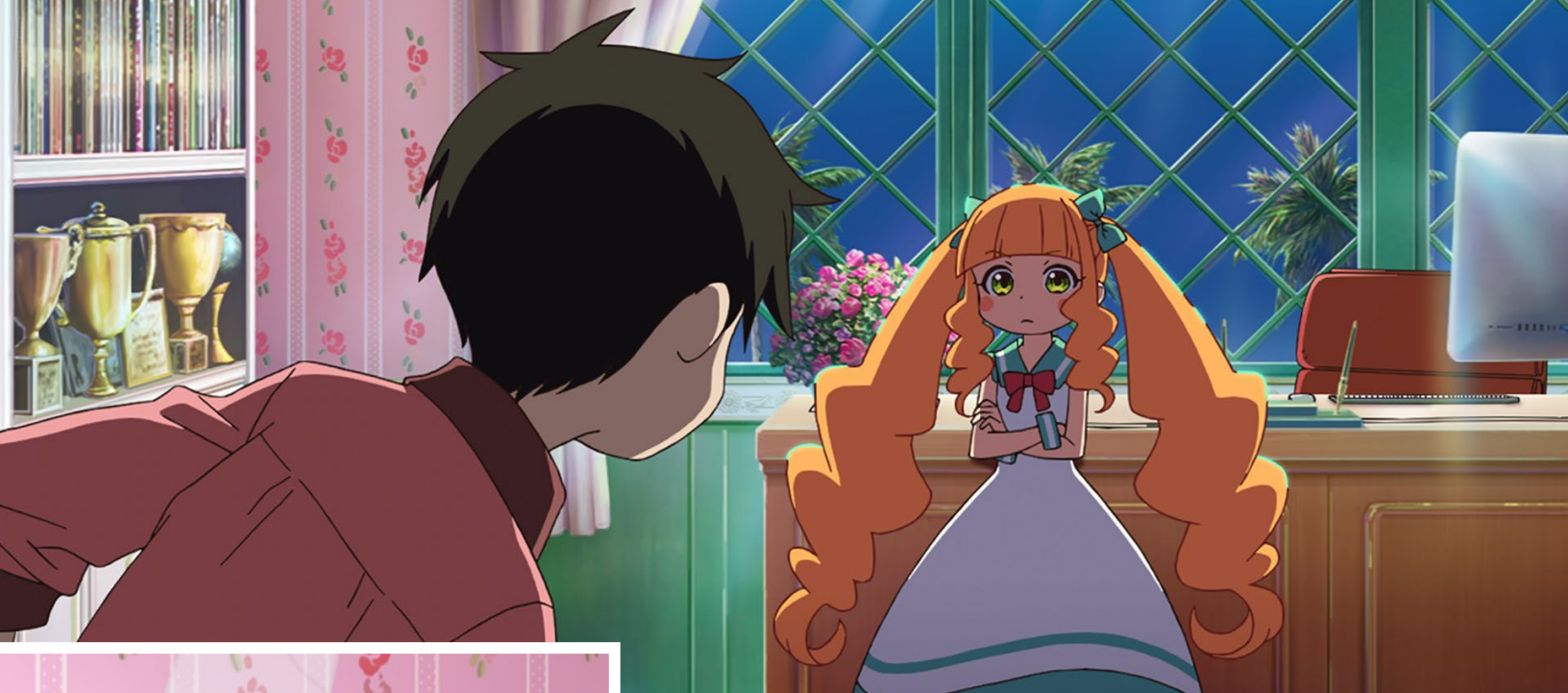
Official website: <https://kamitsubaki.jp/artist/kaf/>

Favorite Films:

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Your Name

Sasaki in My Mind



MUSIC | KAF INTERVIEW

Seeing as you sang the insert song “Tatoeba” for the film, can you please share your initial feelings about the song and experiences from the time you spent recording it?

When I first heard “Tatoeba,” the image of the song playing inside a movie theater rushed into my mind, and that really thrilled me. But inside that fantasy it wasn’t my own voice that I heard, so I wanted to be able to somehow imagine it as my own song! I thought, “I want to do it!” and went into the recording session with that frame of mind.

There is a line in the song that goes “For example, so long as that light is there, I’d be okay giving up everything: my shaking pupils, the color of my nails, the warmth of that person’s hand,” and though the lives of many people are condensed into the film’s 90 minutes, it doesn’t feel like it’s tightly packed in, or rather it feels like there is a gap where time flows there (sorry for not being able to express that well). And it seems like the characters are truly in this world alive and breathing just the same as us—it is easy to picture them living their lives outside of the specific periods of time featured in the film!

As that one scene has so much meaning packed into it, it’s not necessary to explain each and every thing. And so, in that reality, in that momentary light—which can only be felt once in a blue moon, the shaking pupils, the color of the nails, the warmth of that person’s hand... all of that piles up, and we end up seeing that as beautiful.

How did you feel upon first hearing about the project proposal?

I had the thought of “My own song is going to be a part of the movie!” and was very happy.

What were your thoughts after seeing the advanced screening?

I thought that... with any creative work, it is through a lot of “for examples” piling up that it exists in this world.

Each and every one of those, of course, can't be seen by the viewers, and perhaps it would end up being a story no one could see in a whole lifetime. Even so, a warmth flowed through my whole body at the sight of Gene who, without fixating on the time he already spent, is absorbed in the passionate pursuit of improving the film—to the point he puts everything else second—as he struggles while repeatedly cutting up and pasting multitudinous “for examples,” literally risking his life to make the film.

There is also a scene in which Pompo tells Gene that she selected him to be her assistant because his eyes didn't sparkle, and I thought that there are many people out there who will be saved by those words.

Things that I thought would be absolutely nothing but fuel for self-hatred: negative emotions and jealousy, days where one can't get on in the world... Those things that have led to the development of a gloomy self are not things that must be erased and that cannot be shown to others. For Gene, such things were indispensable for the sake of working with Pompo. Besides, I wouldn't go as far as saying one can carry those things with pride, but I think far more than ever before one will become able to view them squarely as bright spots.

Can you please tell us about your favorite films, KAF-san?

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory - I've loved the film ever since I was little and first saw it when it was featured as the Friday-night movie of the week on TV. It's colorful, stylish, and fun, but there's also eeriness about it. You lose yourself in it and get increasingly sucked in. It's scary and you cover your eyes, but you want to see the rest of the story and end up watching it all. It's just so interesting. Also, the sweets that appear in the film are really cute and delicious looking, so I end up wanting to try them myself.

Your Name - I love this film so much that I watched it in theaters five times. For my first viewing, I won tickets to an advanced screening and was able to see it before it opened, and the tears just wouldn't stop - I thought, “Is crying this much in a movie theater really a thing?” I of course love the story, but I also love the visuals and songs. It was like every single thing exceeded the maximum range of excellence to the point I couldn't even comprehend it. It was through *Your Name* that I learned of RADWIMPS. I came to like them and began listening to lots of Japanese rock, so it ended up having a huge influence on my own musical history!

Sasaki in My Mind - The figure of speech “It's like you're there” is something one uses when stating their impressions of a creative work, but in this case I was really there. It became an experience that was within my reach. It was the first film where I was unable to think of it as “other people's affairs.” Like, I wasn't living vicariously, but I was really there! Me! I can't express it well! (Laughs) The smell of Sasaki's house, the humidity inside that karaoke room... I can't help feeling that I personally know all of that stuff. Also, I simply couldn't take my eyes off the screen—right through the very, very end of the closing credits it felt like I had become one with the film. And even after the film finished, I couldn't get Sasaki's face out of my head. It's a film in which I love every single one of the characters without exception.

Lastly, is there a short message you would like to share?

Being involved with the wonderful film that is *Pompo the Cinephile* in the form of getting to sing, something I love, was truly an incredible honor. When all of you recall the film in your minds, I hope that “Tatoeba” plays in your heads, too.



ABOUT GKIDS

GKIDS is the producer and distributor of award-winning feature animation for both adult and family audiences. Since 2010, the company has scored an astounding 12 Best Animated Feature Oscar nominations with *The Secret of Kells* in 2010, *A Cat in Paris* and *Chico & Rita* in 2012, *Ernest & Celestine* in 2014, *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* and *Song of the Sea* in 2015, *Boy and the World* and *When Marnie Was There* in 2016, *My Life as a Zucchini* in 2017, *The Breadwinner* in 2018, *Mirai* in 2019, and *Wolfwalkers* in 2021. GKIDS handles North American distribution for the famed Studio Ghibli library of films, one of the world's most coveted animation collections with titles *Spirited Away*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke* and others; as well as the critically acclaimed television series, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Also, GKIDS is the founder and host of ANIMATION IS FILM, the annual LA-based film festival which embraces the highest aspirations of animation as a cinematic art form, and is a vocal advocate for filmmakers who push the boundaries of the medium to its fullest range of artistic expressions.

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