

Film

Hub



**RESEARCH
MATERIAL
ANIME
BFI JAPAN**

Midlands

A QUICK HISTORY OF ANIME

Early 20th century - 1950s



Image from *The Tale of the White Serpent (Hakujaden)*,
Kazuhiko Okabe and Taiji Yabushita, 1958

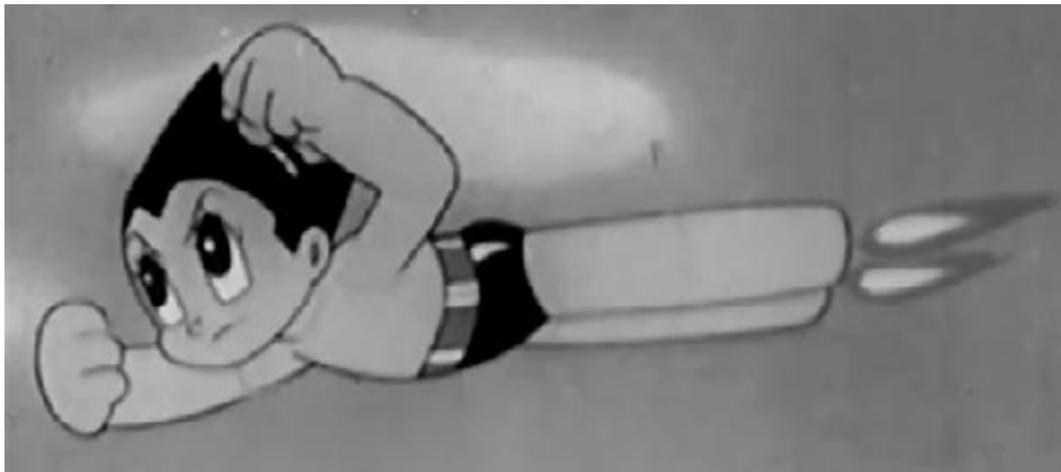
Beginning of animation in Japan and professional animators but most of the works and infrastructures were destroyed by the 1923 earthquake. Today, short animes from the 1930s can still be found. Like most silent Japanese movies, these films made use of a benshi.

In 1958, *The Tale of the White Serpent* (also known as *Panda and the Magic Serpent*) is the first colour anime feature film to be released. Produced by Toei Animation, the film is clearly inspired by the work of Walt Disney: after WWII and the Allied occupation, Japan is exposed to American animation. It will be the beginning of decades of revolutionnary Japanese anime. A restored version has been screened this year at the Cannes Film Festival.

Films:

- *Namakura Gatana (Blunt Sword)*, 1917: oldest surviving example of Japanese animation
- *Ugokie Kori no Tatehiki, Ikuo Oishi*, 1931
- *The Tale of the White Serpent, (Hakujaden)*, Kazuhiko Okabe and Taiji Yabushita, 1958

The 1960s



Astro Boy, created by Osamu Tezuka, 1963

The 1960s brought anime to television and in America. In 1963, the first episode of *Astro Boy* is released on Japanese television. The show created by Osamu Tezuka (called “the god of Manga”) is a hit and change the anime industry: *Astro Boy* was highly influential to other anime in the 1960s, and was followed by a large number of anime about robots or space.

Films and TV Shows:

- *Astro Boy*, directed by Osamu Tezuka and produced by Mushi Production, 1963
- *Sally the Witch*, produced by Toei Animation, 1966: first anime magical girls, one of the first Shōjo (manga for young girls)

Important names:

- Mushi Production
- Toei Animation
- Osamu Tezuka

The 1970s



Heidi created by Isao Takahata, 1974

The Mangas (comic books) grew in popularity, many of which were animated later. But Japanese animation market shrank due to competition from television. Older studios struggled or went bankrupt and young animators founded new studios where they were allowed to experiment (such as Madhouse).

Isao Takahata created *Heidi* in 1974, a simple realistic drama, which became an international success. This success allowed Hayao Miyazaki and Takahata to collaborate on a new genre of anime. Miyazaki's first feature film, *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro* was released in 1979 and critically acclaimed.

In the same time, Japanese animation reached Europe with cult series like *Heidi* or *Barbapapa*. Another genre, the *mecha* (featuring giant robots or machines), became very popular, with shows such as *Space Battleship Yamato*. By 1978, over 50 shows were aired on television.

Films and TV Shows:

- *Heidi, Girl of the Alps*, Isao Takahata, Nippon Animation, 1974
- *Space Battleship Yamato*, Leiji Yamamoto, Group TAC, 1974
- *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro*, Hayao Miyazaki, 1979

Important names: Madhouse Production | Nippon Animation | Isao Takahata | Hayao Miyazaki

The 1980s



Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, Hayao Miyazaki, 1984

The success of space themed films and animes at the end of the 70s allowed the TV shows *Space Battleship Yamato* (1974) and *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979) to be revived as theatrical films in early 80s. It's the beginning of the anime boom of the 80's and "Japanese Cinema's Second Golden age". A new subculture appears in Japan: *otaku* (people obsessed with anime and manga). The successes of anime TV Shows introduced new genres: martial arts genre (with *Dragon Ball*, 1986), sports anime...

Hayao Miyazaki directed one of the most-influential anime of all time, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984). The film gave extra prestige to anime allowing for many experimental and ambitious projects to be funded shortly after its release, and Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata to create their own studio with Toshio Suzuki. This studio would become known as Studio Ghibli.

Films and TV Shows:

- *Urusei Yatsura*, Mamoru Oshii, 1981
- *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, Hayao Miyazaki, 1984
- *Dragon Ball*, Toei Animation, 1986
- *Grave of the Fireflies*, Isao Takahata, 1988
- *Akira*, Katsuhiro Otomo, 1988

Important names: Studio Ghibli | Isao Takahata | Hayao Miyazaki | Mamoru Oshii | Katsuhiro Otomo

The 1990s



Ghost in the shell, Mamoru Oshii, 1995

After the boom of the 80s, the anime industry started to decline in early 90s. Hideaki Anno wrote and directed the controversial anime *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995) to try to revive the anime industry. The cyberpunk anime *Ghost in the Shell*, directed by Mamoru Oshii in 1995, became cult and helped increase the awareness of anime in international markets.

In 1997, Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* became the most-expensive anime film up until that time. Many anime series gained international success through the decade: *Pokemon* (1997), *Dragon Ball Z*, *Sailor Moon*, *Digimon*, *One Piece*....

Films and TV Shows:

- *Ghost in the shell*, Mamoru Oshii, 1995
- *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, Hideaki Anno, 1995
- *The End of Evangelion*, Hideaki Anno, 1997
- *Princess Mononoke*, Hayao Miyazaki, 1997
- *Cowboy Bebop*, Shinichirō Watanabe, 1998

Important names:

- Mamoru Oshii
- Hideaki Anno

The 21st century



Samurai Champloo, Shinichirō Watanabe, 2005

Early 2000s, the boom of anime series from the 90s is still on. Japanese animation is internationally recognised and praised. This success allows the emergence of many genres: the real robot and super robot genres are revived from the 70s, new genres such as romance, harem and slice of life appear, manga's adaptations are building strong fanbases (such as *Fullmetal Alchemist*, *Naruto* or *Death Note*) and more experimental trends are flourishing (*Samurai Champloo*, 2005).

The decade also dawned a revival of high-budget feature-length anime films, such as *Steamboy* (2004), one of the most expensive anime ever being produced. His creator Katsuhiro Otomo established himself alongside Oshii as one of the premier directors of anime film. Other younger film directors, such as Satoshi Kon, Mamoru Hosoda or Makoto Shinkai, also began to reach prominence.

During this decade, anime feature films were nominated for and won major international film awards for the first time in the industry's history. In 2002, *Spirited Away*, a Studio Ghibli production directed by Hayao Miyazaki, won the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival and in 2003 it won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature (first non- American film to win the award). It has also become the highest grossing anime film.

At the 2004 Cannes Film Festival, *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, directed by Mamoru Oshii, was in competition for the Palme d'Or and in 2006, *Howl's Moving Castle*, another Studio Ghibli-produced film directed by Hayao Miyazaki, was nominated for Best Animated Feature.

In 2013, Hayao Miyazaki announced that *The Wind Rises* (2013) would be his last film and Studio Ghibli was "temporarily halting production". Several prominent staffers, including producer Yoshiaki Nishimura and director Hiromasa Yonebayashi, left Studio Ghibli to form their own Studio Ponoc, premiering with *Mary and the Witch's Flower* (2017). Both Ghibli and Miyazaki subsequently went back into production for the up-coming film *How Do You Live?*, while Takahata died in 2018.

Meanwhile Mamoru Hosoda and Makoto Shinkai both confirmed their status of new premier directors of anime film. Makoto Shinkai's *Your Name* (2016) is one of the highest-grossing anime film and Japanese film of all time.

Western streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime are increasingly becoming involved in the production and licensing of anime.

Films and TV Shows:

- Spirited Way, Hayao Miyazaki, 2002
- Steamboy, Katsuhiro Otomo, 2004
- *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, Mamoru Oshii, 2004
- 5 Centimeters per Second, Makoto Shinkai, 2007
- Wolf Children, Mamoru Hosoda, 2012
- The Tale of Princess Kaguya, Isao Takahata, 2013
- Your Name, Makoto Shinkai, 2016

Important names: Hayao Miyazaki | Mamoru Oshii | Katsuhiro Otomo | Mamoru Hosoda | Satoshi Kon | Makoto Shinkai



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DIRECTORS AND FILMS

- **Oten Shimokawa (1892-1973), Jun'ichi Kōuchi (1886-1970) and Seitaro Kitayama (1888-1975):** The three pioneers of Japanese animation, their works included the first examples of commercial production of anime in 1917.
- **Kenzō Masaoka (1898-1988):** pre-war director and early anime creator and pioneer, he's famous for creating the earliest anime to use cel animation and recorded sound.
Titles: *Chikara to Onna no Yo no Naka* (1933, first anime to feature voiceovers, but now considered a lost film), *Kumo to Tulip* (short film, 1943)
- **Mitsuyo Seo (1911-2010):** director who played a central role in the development of Japanese anime. He worked with Kenzō Masaoka on *Chikara to Onna no Yo no Naka*.
Titles: *Sacred Sailors, Momotaro* (1945, first Japanese feature-length animated film)
- **Noburo Ofuji (1900-1961):** very important auteur of anime of the first half of the 20th century. His teacher was Jun'ichi Kōuchi. He experimented different techniques: cutout and silhouette animation, traditional animation, cel animation, live action/animated film.
- **Yasuo Otsuka (1931-) and Yasuji Mori (1925-1992):** they both worked with Toei Animation on *The Tale of The White Serpent* (1958)
- **Osamu Tezuka (1928-1989):** manga artist, animator and film producer, he was known as the "father of manga" or "god of manga". Tezuka also headed the animation production studio Mushi Production.
Titles: *Astro boy* (TV Show, 1963)



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- **Isao Takahata (1935-2018):** *Heidi, Girl of the Alps*, (TV Show 1974), *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), *My Neighbors the Yamadas* (1999), *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* (2013)
- **Hayao Miyazaki (1941-):** *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Princess Mononoke* (1997), *Spirited Away* (2001), *The Wind Rises* (2013)
- **Mamoru Oshii (1951):** *Urusei Yatsura* (TV Show 1981-1986), *Dallos* (OVA, 1983-1984), *Angel's Egg* (OVA, 1985), *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), *The Sky Crawlers* (2008)
- **Katsuhiro Otomo (1954-):** *Akira* (1988), *Steamboy* (2004)
- **Keiichi Hara (1959-):** *Miss Hokusai* (2015)
- **Hideaki Anno (1960-):** *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (TV Show 1995–1996), *The End of Evangelion* (1997)
- **Mamoru Hosoda (1967-):** *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* (2006), *Summer Wars* (2009), *Wolf Children* (2012), *The Boy and the Beast* (2015), *Mirai* (2018)
- **Makoto Shinkai (1973-):** *5 centimeters per Second* (2007), *The Garden of Words* (2013), *Your Name* (2016)
- **Hiromasa Yonebayashi (1973-):** *When Marnie Was There* (2014), *Mary and the Witch's Flower* (2017)
- **Naoko Yamada (F) (1984-):** *A Silent Voice: The Movie* (2016), *Liz and the Blue Bird* (2018)



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MAIN AWARDS FOR ANIME

- **Mainichi Award for Best Animation Film:** award given at the Mainichi Film Award since 1989. Award for big budget studio productions.
- **Ofuji Noburo Award:** award given at the Mainichi Film Award since 1962. It was created in honour of Noburo Ofuji to recognise animation excellence. Since 1989 and the creation of the Mainichi Award for Best Animation Film, this award is reserved for the work of independent animators and shorter pieces with a wider variety of animation than big productions.
- **Japan Academy Film Prize for Animation of the year**
- **Tokyo Anime Awards:** different categories of awards, including Animation of the Year.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

- ***The Anime Encyclopedia***, 2001, Dr. Helen McCarthy
- ***The Art of Osamu Tezuka: God of Manga***, 2009, Dr. Helen McCarthy
- ***Hayao Miyazaki: Master of Japanese Animation***, 1999, Dr. Helen McCarthy
- [100 years of Japanese animation: One great film per decade](#)
- [Anime, Japanese Cinema's Second Golden Age](#)
- [The Evolution of the Japanese Anime Industry](#)



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CONTACT US

To discuss any aspect of your project pitch, your ideas, or to ask a question about our seasons, please feel free to contact us at:

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**Our office hours are
Monday - Friday 0900-1730**

About Major Programmes

Major Programmes is a 'cross FAN' project, led by Film Hub Midlands, to deliver two UK wide audience facing programme of creative, accessible, and culturally ambitious screenings and events annually.

Our two seasons for 2020 are BFI Blockbuster Japan 2020 in May - August and Film Feels Journey in Autumn.

What is the Film Audience Network?

The Film Audience Network (FAN) was set up in 2012, using funds from the National Lottery to support a stronger and more connected approach to growing audiences for British and international film on the big screen.

FAN is made up of eight regional and national Film Hub Lead Organisations (FHLO) providing a comprehensive geographic reach across the UK with the aim of increasing the breadth and depth of film available to audiences.

FAN is central to the BFI's commitment in BFI2022, its current five year plan, to giving everyone, everywhere in the UK the opportunity to enjoy and learn from the richest and most diverse range of great British and international filmmaking, past, present and future.

The priorities for Film Audience Network under BFI2022 are as follows:

Engaging audiences - maximising the number of audiences engaging with FAN activity and increasing the quality and cultural depth of their experience

Broadening film choice - increasing access to a wide range of independent British and international film for audiences – especially those outside London

Diversity - increasing the diversity of audiences engaging with FAN activity

Young audiences - boosting participation of 16-30 year olds in FAN activity

Screen heritage - facilitating greater access to archive content with a particular focus on national and regional collections



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