



ANIME

Steamboy

A retro science-fiction epic set in Victorian England, *Steamboy* features an inventor prodigy named Ray Steam who receives a mysterious metal ball containing a new form of energy capable of powering an entire nation. This young boy must use it to fight evil, redeem his family, and save London from destruction. The lush Victorian interiors and the elegance of the era's mechanical design allows Otomo to create dazzling visual backgrounds and machines for this film. With more than 180,000 drawings and 400 CG cuts, *Steamboy* is sure to be one of the most elaborate animated features of 2004.

Director Katsuhiro Otomo can name among his fans such acclaimed filmmakers as James Cameron and the Wachowski brothers. Born in Miyagi prefecture, Japan, in 1954, Otomo made his debut as a comic illustrator and writer in 1973 when *A Gun Report (Mateo Falcone)*, was published in a special edition of *Manga Action*. His popularity grew rapidly with his next projects: *Fireball*, *Domu*, *a Child's Dream*, *Kibun wa mo senso* and other titles in *Manga Action Deluxe*. In 1983, *Domu, a Child's Dream* was awarded the fourth Japan Science Fiction Prize. *Akira*, which was serialised in *Young Magazine* in 1982, became extremely popular and was awarded the eighth Kodansha Manga Prize in 1984. Otomo's unique style has heavily influenced the world of comic books, and he has established a position as one of the leading figures in the world of Japanese manga. In addition to manga, Otomo began his career in anime when he worked on the character design for the cinematic version of *Harmagedon*.

In 1987, he scripted, designed the characters and directed *The Order to Stop Construction* in an omnibus edition of *Labyrinth Tales*. In 1988, he released the anime *Akira*, which he scripted and directed from his own original manga creation. *Akira* was also highly regarded outside of Japan, becoming the first film to help consolidate the status of the genre in the overseas market. Otomo was the Supervising Producer and Supervising Director for the cinematic release of the omnibus version of *Memories*. He also directed, scripted and created the characters and artwork for *Cannon Fodder*, one of the films in the omnibus, which was based on his original manga.

In 2004, an obsession of his became a reality. Otomo's epic animation – a fusion of two-dimensional and three-dimensional graphics, produced with full digital technology was finally completed. Ten years in the making, with a total budget of 2.4 billion yen (US\$22 million), *Steamboy* is one of the most expensive Japanese anime productions ever. Otomo's complete dedication to every detail of the project is evident throughout the film. To make *Steamboy* a reality, Otomo assembled a dedicated and talented team to create, as he puts it: 'an adventurous world of dreams and imagination.' Extensive and in-depth research was undertaken to study the machinery, architecture, art, and costumes of the period, to enable the director to accurately recreate the actual sights and sounds of Nineteenth Century Britain, which sets the stage for the *Steamboy* story.

The idea for *Steamboy* originated in June 1994, when Otomo was making the *Memories*; he began to entertain the thought of expanding the creative idea of a world of mechanical steam machines. This idea was first introduced in

Cannon Fodder. However, Otomo realised that in order to bring the project to fruition, it was essential to revolutionise the way animation was made – to introduce a new, fully digital production system, unlike anything in use at the time. Otomo opted not for a futuristic setting, as with *Astro Boy*, but instead chose to portray the power of steam through the backdrop of Nineteenth Century Britain. ‘I thought we could show the technology to its best effect, not in a futuristic world of science fiction, but by going back in time to the past. *Cannon Fodder* was written based on images of Europe at the time of World War I, and I wanted to expand on the theme of the past in a dramatic way. The keywords of The Great Exhibition and Steam Engine came to be the essential elements of the story. And so Britain, which has continued to pioneer inventions since the development of the steam engine, came to be the setting for the story.’

Otomo recognised the fascination that that era holds, and he chose to concentrate particularly on recreating the feel and ‘texture’ of the Nineteenth Century down to the very greasiness of the oil, the heat and dampness of the steam, and the coarse rustiness of the iron. To achieve this realism, everything was hand-drawn first and then combined with digital technology to startling effect, enabling the director to build up a gritty, intense and authentic world to form the background to the story.

Steamboy recreates Nineteenth Century Britain, capturing the feel of the towns, the factories, the pollution as well as the Victorian architecture and the idyllic atmosphere of the English countryside. As part of the pre-production on the film, Otomo and the principal members of his team spent ten days in Britain, to experience first-hand some of the locations that would be used in the film. They started their location-scouting trip in London, a city where traces of Victorian England and the Industrial Revolution are still visible, before travelling to Manchester and York, to visit some of the famous museums and cotton mills. They studied original steam locomotives and carriages, early submarines and engines, constantly recording all their discoveries.

The team also visited the Houses of Parliament and the River Thames, where the Great Exhibition was originally held. They saw first-hand the streets of Manchester, Ray Steam’s home town, and the beautiful English countryside with its distinctive rolling hills, even noting the colour of the sky, as the trip fired their creative imaginations. They immersed themselves not only in the history of Britain, but in the look and feel of the country. According to Art Director, Shinji Kimura, ‘As we travelled around Britain, we really looked at how different ranges of colours made up the various towns. We were careful to accent the shades of red and green when making *Steamboy*, as these are typically English colours. When we travelled through the English countryside and saw the way the clouds broke apart, we realised that we had witnessed something we never would have known about if we had not gone on location.’

Production notes

STEAMBOY

Director: Katsuhiro Otomo
Production Companies: Steam Boy Production Committee, Bandai Visual, Sunrise
Presented by: Toho Co., Ltd., Screen Gems
Executive Producer: Shigeru Watanabe
Producers: Shinji Komiori, Hideyuki Tomioka
Screenplay: Katsuhiro Otomo, Sadayuki Murai
Director of Photography: Mitsuhiro Sato
Animation Supervisor: Tatsuya Tomaru
Editor: Takeshi Seyama
Art Director: Shinji Kimura
Music: Steve Jablonsky
Sound: Keiichi Momose

Voice Cast

Anne Suzuki (*James Ray Steam*)
Manami Konishi (*Scarlett O'Hara*)
Katsuo Nakamura (*Dr Loyd Steam*)
Masane Tsukayama (*Dr Eddie Steam*)
Kiyoshi Kodama (*Robert Stephenson*)
Susumu Terajima (*Freddie*)
Ikki Sawamura (*David*)

Japan/USA 2004
126 mins

ANIME CLASSICS PART 1

Steamboy (Suchimubô)

Sat 9 Apr 20:20; Fri 15 Apr 20:30; Wed 20 Apr 18:10

Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honneamise (Ôritsu Uchūgun: Oneamisu no Tsubasa)

Tue 12 Apr 18:00; Sat 23 Apr 20:40

Patlabor: The Movie (Kidô keisatsu patorebâ: Gekijô-ban)

Wed 13 Apr 20:40; Sun 17 Apr 18:20; Thu 28 Apr 18:15

Cowboy Bebop: The Movie (Cowboy Bebop: Tengoku no tobira)

Thu 14 Apr 20:45; Sat 16 Apr 20:30; Fri 22 Apr 20:40

Patlabor 2: The Movie (Kidô keisatsu patorebâ: The Movie 2)

Fri 15 Apr 18:15; Thu 21 Apr 20:30; Thu 28 Apr 20:45

The Case of Hana & Alice (Hana to Arisu Satsujin Jiken)

Sat 16 Apr 18:35; Tue 26 Apr 20:55

THE HISTORY OF ANIME

Early Days of Anime Shorts Programme 1917-1946

Tue 29 Mar 18:00; Mon 11 Apr 20:40

Momotaro's Divine Sea Warriors (Momotarô: Umi no Shinpei)

Wed 30 Mar 21:00; Wed 13 Apr 18:30

Astroboy

Fri 1 Apr 18:15; Sun 17 Apr 12:10

Kimba the White Lion (Jangaru Taitei)

Fri 1 Apr 20:45; Sat 9 Apr 12:40

Belladonna of Sadness (Kanashimi no Belladonna)

Mon 4 Apr 20:30 (+ intro by Helen McCarthy); Mon 18 Apr 15:30

ANIME AT THE IMAX

Ghost in the Shell (Kôkaku Kidôtai)

Mon 25 Apr 15:00, 21:00

Belle (Ryû to sobakasu no hime)

Thu 31 Mar 20:40 (NFT1); Mon 25 Apr 18:15

STUDIO GHIBLI

Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi)

Mon 28 Mar 20:35; Fri 29 Apr 18:00

When Marnie Was There (Omoide No Mani)

Tue 29 Mar 20:40

My Neighbour Totoro (Tonari no Totoro)

Tue 5 Apr 18:20; Fri 8 Apr 20:50

EMERGING FEMALE VOICES

A Silent Voice (Koe no Katachi)

Wed 6 Apr 20:30; Mon 18 Apr 18:10 (+ intro by Dr Rayna Denison, Professor in Film and Digital Arts, University of Bristol)

The Anthem of the Heart (Kokoro ga Sakebitagatterunda)

Thu 7 Apr 20:30; Fri 22 Apr 18:10

Maquia: When the Promised Flower Blooms (Sayonara no Asa ni)

Fri 8 Apr 18:00; Sat 23 Apr 17:45

Liz and the Blue Bird (Rizu to aoi tori)

Thu 21 Apr 18:15; Sat 30 Apr 17:45

This season was co-programmed by writer and academic Hanako Miyata



Japan Nakama is an online community for Japanese culture enthusiasts and a marketplace for Japan-made and inspired products.

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at [bfi.org.uk/join](https://www.bfi.org.uk/join)

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on [player.bfi.org.uk](https://www.player.bfi.org.uk)

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop.

We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

Join the **BFI mailing list** for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup