



ANIME

Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honneamise

Contains explicit imagery of sexual violence.

In an alternative world we follow a would-be astronaut as he joins a small, disenfranchised group, the Royal Space Force. Known as much for its troublesome genesis as for the completed film itself, *RSF* is nevertheless an impressive work that, despite some troubling positioning in relation to gender and sexual violence, is extremely rewarding as a pre-digital anime that builds imaginative and visually complex worlds. It also marks the debut of Studio Gainax, in partnership with games giant Bandai, and boasts a score with input from Ryuichi Sakamoto.

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The singular feature debut of Studio Gainax, formed by a university collective of sci-fi anime fans in the early 1980s and now internationally famous for series from *Gunbuster* (1988-89) and *Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water* (1990-91) to *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-96), this alternative-world space-race drama follows the odyssey of slacker space pilot Shirotsugh, taken under the wing of an evangelical young woman called Riquinni, to become his world's first astronaut, overcoming doubt, disorganisation and political skulduggery on the way.

A manifesto for Gainax's future-progressive ideology, the film boldly asserts the power and potential of the human spirit. Stylistically, too, it highlights all the qualities that its ragtag group of creators have become famous for: writer-director Yamaga Hiroyuki's story is brought to life by Sadamoto Yoshiyuki's beautiful character animation and Anno Hideaki's immersive mechanical designs, while Sakamoto Ryuichi's soaring, inspirational soundtrack provides polish and cohesion. From the epic panning vistas to the intense spectacle of a shuttle launch, every element is remarkable.

Samantha Ferreira, *Sight & Sound*, Summer 2020

Set on some other Earth where unrecognisable but archetypal nations go through familiar power politics and space remains unconquered, *The Wings of Honneamise* is most successful as an entry in one of the trickiest science fiction sub-genres, convincingly creating a world neither of the past nor the future and yet divorced from the actual present. Without the intrusion of any fantasy elements or even much in the way of scientific invention, the film nevertheless manages remarkably to envision a consistent, varied world in which almost every object – aircraft, trains, uniforms, windows, drinking vessels, television broadcasts, newspapers, books, money, spoons – is recognisable but somehow different from designs that actually exist. This extends to the Kingdom of Honneamano itself, as well as the less-seen Republic, which has elements of Imperial Japan and the United States but can truly stand in for neither, serving rather as an amalgam of any society with a tendency towards the dystopian.

Like downbeat futuristic science fiction, from *Brave New World* through *Fahrenheit 451* to *1984*, the plot follows a fairly privileged member of an

unjust society as he comes to realise how extensive are the problems of the masses he has barely seen. However, Shiro does not react by joining the oft-mentioned but barely-seen 'radicals', but by throwing himself into the dream of space flight, embracing the enthusiasm of the naive boffins who have stuck by the programme through years of neglect. He finally rallies his comrades to defy the cynical purpose of their masters and turns the space flight into a plea for international peace, telling the world there are no borders visible from orbit. It is disappointing that the film's visual and political sophistication should be diluted by the most banal religious message imaginable, as Shiro and his almost interestingly-characterised girlfriend exhort passers-by and the entire planet to have faith in God. (The message is hardly vitiated by the film's invention of a non-specific religion, complete with creation myth, to go with its non-specific politics.)

As with many anime, there's a jarring foreignness to the drama, even odder since much of the film adopts Western models like *The Right Stuff* or *Destination Moon* – as in the hard-to-follow sub-plot which finds the sympathetic hero impelled almost to rape the heroine, who promptly brains him with a printing press, then sincerely solicits his forgiveness for her provoking his lusts.

On a technical level, *Honneamise* rates with the best Japanese animation, inclining towards the romanticisation of the mechanical seen in *Porco Rosso* rather than the cyberpunk nightmare of *Akira*. With subtle character work, individuality is bestowed upon a large cast mainly conceived as stereotypes, and there is a rare restraint in holding back the big effects for the finale. Unlike a lot of anime, this takes its time to tell its story, allowing detail to register, adopting a rhythm between exciting moments like Shiro's escape from several assassins and more contemplative character sequences as he is prodded by his relationship with the girl and an orphan in her charge to ask what his mission is all about.

Kim Newman, *Sight & Sound*, December 1994

ROYAL SPACE FORCE: THE WINGS OF HONNEAMISE

Director: Hiroyuki Yamaga
Production Companies: Manga Entertainment, Heolo, Animaze
Executive Producers: Toshio Okada, Shigeru Watanabe
Producers: Hirohiko Sueyoshi, Hiroaki Inoue
General Producer: Makoto Yamashina
Screenplay: Hiroyuki Yamaga
Photography: Hiroshi Isagawa
Animators: Hideaki Anno, Fumio Iida, Yuji Moriyama
Editor: Harutoshi Ogata
Music: Ryuichi Sakamoto

Voice Cast

Leo Morimoto (*Shirotsugh Lhadatt*)
Mitsuki Yayoi (*Riquinni Nonderaiko*)
Aya Murata (*Manna Nonderaiko*)
Kazuyuki Sogabe (*Marty Tohn*)
Minoru Uchida (*General Khaidenn*)
Chikao Ōtsuka (*Doctor Gnomm*)
Masato Hirano (*Kharock*)
Bin Shimada (*Yanalan*)
Hiroshi Izawa (*Darigan*)
Hirotaka Suzuoki (*Domorhot*)
Kouji Totani (*Tchallichammi*)
Masahiro Anzai (*Majaho*)
Yoshito Yasuhara (*Nekkerout*)
Ryūji Saikachi (*Professor Ronta*)

Japan 1987
121 mins

THE HISTORY OF ANIME

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

Wed 13 Apr 18:30

Astroboy Sun 17 Apr 12:10

Belladonna of Sadness (Kanashimi no Belladonna) Mon 18 Apr 15:30

EMERGING FEMALE VOICES

A Silent Voice (Koe no Katachi) Mon 18 Apr 18:10 (+ intro by Dr Rayna Denison, Professor in Film and Digital Arts, University of Bristol)

Liz and the Blue Bird (Rizu to aoi tori)

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

The Anthem of the Heart (Kokoro ga Sakebitagatterunda)

Fri 22 Apr 18:10

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

Yakusoku no Hana o Kazarō) Sat 23 Apr 17:45

ANIME CLASSICS PART 1

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

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

Patlabor: The Movie (Kidō keisatsu patorebâ: Gekijō-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 (Kidō keisatsu patorebâ: The Movie 2)

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

Steamboy (Suchimubōi)

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

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

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

ANIME AT THE IMAX

Ghost in the Shell (Kōkaku Kidōtai)

Mon 25 Apr 15:00, 21:00

Belle (Ryū to sobakasu no hime)

Mon 25 Apr 18:15

STUDIO GHIBLI

Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi)

Fri 29 Apr 18:00

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



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