



ANIME

Millennium Actress

Satoshi Kon and screenwriter Sadayuki Murai on 'Millennium Actress'

Who is Chiyoko and how did you come up with this idea that the heroine's desperately determined wish makes her transcend time and space? Is there an actual actress who inspired you to write this story?

Kon: It was not something I had thought about for a long time. I came up with this story when we reached the planning phase for the film. I didn't have the image of the heroine with a desperately determined wish from the beginning. I just wanted to make a movie like a *trompe l'oeil*. Then I realised that the concept of an actress fit this project perfectly. A heroine with a desperately determined wish became necessary to consummate the episodes with the consistency to be intricately entangled.

There is no specific actress as the foundation of Chiyoko; however, Setsuko Hara is somewhat similar to this concept as an actress who abruptly retires and disappears from the screen. I also had the image of Hideko Takamine, who had offered bright hopes to the nation in post-war Japan.

The film changes from present day to different historical periods such as the Edo Period and the Meiji Period, even going far back to the Warring States period. Did this create a challenge for you?

Kon: Most modern Japanese have specific images of the Edo Period, which are not necessarily the actual Edo Period. Television and movies have created those particular images. For instance, when Akoh Roushi, a group of 47 samurais staged a revenge attack for their lord in January 1703, it was a requisite that the scene be snowy, regardless of historical verification. What we included is our image of history. I wanted Chiyoko to run through such images. Historical accuracy doesn't really matter in this case.

We created this film with our own vision of Japanese history. Obviously, I was very careful in the scenes where historical events took place. Otherwise, we might end up exposing our ignorance of history to the public. The most challenging part was determining which historical periods and scenes to adopt for the film. We repeatedly had discussions before reaching the final decision on the screenplay.

Murai: We adopted many historical events which were interpreted into movies. The reason why we adopted Manchuria in the film is not simply because movies about Manchuria were produced back then, but, also, we wanted to express how vibrant the cinema industry was even during the gloomy pre-war days.

Kon: Chiyoko is an innocent girl whose first love is the most important thing to her despite the fact that Japan was in a politically sensitive time of rightwing bias in those days. Chiyoko never loses her innocence even after she gets older. Yet she matures. Since the length of this film is limited, I couldn't take time to describe the process of her maturity from a girl to a woman, so I attempted to express it with symbols.

For example, Snow White had a coffin made of glass; Rapunzel was confined to a tower and rescued; Chiyoko is confined to a jail and then escapes.

This image is of death and rebirth. Chiyoko is held responsible for being a member of society after escaping from the jail. In terms of a fairy tale or old folk tale, I had an image of Kaguya Hime (Princess Moon), who travels far beyond the moon.

It seems that numerous images overlap. Describe how you used images to underscore the symbolic messages in Millennium Actress.

Kon: We consider rubble as very significant in terms of symbolic expression. The film studio turns into rubble, and this symbolises old Chiyoko. There are piles of rubble from the Great Tokyo Earthquake when Chiyoko was born. The town is filled with rubble in the post-war, and then rubble from the studio appears again at the end of the film. Rubble is a symbol expressing death and rebirth or something like that. I didn't clearly intend it from the beginning. I was not aware of seeking it. While I was drawing the storyboard to embody such images, I realised, 'Oh, I just drew rubble again, I see that's what it means.'

This way, I discovered the meaning of the symbols and developed the story while drawing them. This applies to the action of running. At the beginning, a body movement called running is done simply by two legs. As time elapses, the movement shifts to a horse, a bicycle, a car, a train, a boat and a rocket. This is also the history of modern Western science. However, her ultimate destination is somewhere she cannot reach with the help of modern science. The first rocket you see is a symbol of science, but the one that appears at the end of is not. The audience can enjoy it more this way. We have incorporated different layers of events in the film apart from the superficial story. So, I want each audience to find its own viewpoint on this film.

This is your first original film based on your original story. How challenging was it?

Kon: I didn't find the process of creating the story and drawings particularly difficult just because it was my original. But it seemed challenging to be accepted. Everyone in the industry responded very low-key without exception when they heard the story of Chiyoko. After its completion, I heard such comments as 'it has the true essence of animation,' and 'its free-spirited ideas are pleasant.' No one says it's extravagant. Since everyone kept asking me, 'why are you making a film which is not even close to animation?' I had this perverse idea that I don't like something if I feel it is like animation'. The response to this film is very encouraging. I feel somewhat like, 'See, I did it!'

Production notes

MILLENNIUM ACTRESS (SENNEN JOYŪ)

Director: Satoshi Kon
©/Production Company: Chiyoko Committee
Production Companies: WoW, Kadokawa Shoten, Bandai Visual, Genco
Production Company/Presented by: Klockworx
International Sales: Bavaria Film International
Executive Producer: Taro Maki
Co-producers: Yasuaki Iwase, Masao Morosawa
Planning: Masao Maruyama
Production Manager: Satoki Toyoda
Production Co-ordinator: Takayuki Hirao
Direction [Assistant Director]: Ko Matsuo
Screenplay: Sadayuki Murai, Satoshi Kon
Original story: Satoshi Kon
Director of Photography: Hisao Shirai
Camera: Studio Cosmos, Anime Room
Assistant Directors of Photography: Takafumi Hirata, Katsunori Maehara
Special Effects: Kumiko Taniguchi, Sachiko Suzuki
Character Designers: Takeshi Honda, Satoshi Kon
Animation Directors: Takeshi Honda, Toshiyuki Inoue, Kenichi Konishi, Hideki Hamasu, Shōgo Furuya
Animation Production: Genco
Animation Studio: Mad House
Colour Stylist: Satoshi Hashimoto
Key Animation: Michiyo Suzuki, Yasunori Miyazawa, Tetsuya Nishio, Katsuichi Nakayama, Tetsuya Kumagai, Masahiro Kurio, Hiroyuki Horiuchi, Hiroshi Shimizu, Hitoshi Haga, Minoru Murao, Hirotaka Kinoshita, Masaharu Tada, Michio Mihara, Kohichi Arai, Shinji Otsuka, Masahiro Emoto, Mitsunori Murata, Masahiko Kubo, Jun Takagi, Kumiko Kawana, Yasuhiro Seo, Toshihiro Kikuchi, Yoshimitsu Ohashi, Tatsuhiro Itano, Junko Abe
In-between Animation: Mad House, DR Movie
Co-in-between Animation: Shaft
Ink/Paint: DR Movie, Kyung Kang Animation
Animation Check: Cheko Ichimanda
Background: Kaoru Inoda, Shigeyo Kiriya, Junko Ina, Masatoshi Kai, Yuko Sugiyama, Takashi Ichikura, Hisashi Ikeda, Masaki Yoshizaki, Kiyomi Ota, Shinichi Uehara, Masako Okada, Nao Karino

Editor: Satoshi Terauchi
Art Director: Nobutaka Ike
Co-art Designer: Yasumitsu Suetake
Title Design: Kyoko Yamashita
Title Production: Maki Production
Negative Film Editors: Yukiko Ito, Kashiko Kimura, Yurika Tsuchiya
Music by: Susumu Hirasawa
Music Production Co-ordinator: Rihito Yumoto
Sound Director: Masafumi Mima
Recording Studio: Aoi Studio
Sound Recording Production: Techno Sound
Sound Engineer: Masanori Chinzei
Recording/Sound Mixing: Fujio Yamada
Sound Effects: Shizuo Kurahashi
Dolby Sound Consultants: Tsutomu Kawahigashi, Mikio Mori, Noboru Nishio

Voice Cast:

Miyoko Shoji, Mami Koyama, Fumiko Orikasa (*Chiyoko Fujiwara*)
Shōzō Ōzuka (*Genya Tachibana*)
Syouko Tsuda (*Eiko Shimaō*)
Hirotaka Suzuoki (*Otaki*)
Hisako Kyoda (*Chiyoko's mother*)
Kan Tokumaru (*senior manager of Ginei*)
Tomie Kataoka (*Mino*)
Takkoh Ishimori (*head clerk*)
Masamichi Sato (*Genya*)
Masaya Onosaka (*Kyouji Ida*)
Mitsuru Ogata, Kohji Yusa, Kohichi Sakaguchi, Akiko Kimura, Hirofumi Nojima, Hiroko Ohnaka, Tomohisa Asoh, Makoto Higo, Tomoyuki Shimura, Tomo Saeki, Ruri Asano, Yoshinori Sonobe, Yumiko Daikoku (*additional voices*)
Kohichi Yamadera (*the man with the key*)
Masane Tsukayama (*the scar-faced man*)

Japan 2001©
88 mins

CONTEMPORARY ANIME AUTEURS

Your Name (Kimi no Na wa)

Sun 1 May 12:30, 18:00 (BFI IMAX)

The Girl Who Leapt through Time (Toki o Kakeru Shōjo)

Sun 1 May 14:45; Sat 28 May 14:50

Weathering with You (Tenki no Ko)

Sun 1 May 15:15, 20:30 (BFI IMAX)

Tokyo Godfathers (Tōkyō Goddofāzū)

Sun 1 May 18:00; Sat 28 May 12:30

Perfect Blue (Pāfekuto Burū)

Mon 2 May 18:40; Sat 14 May 20:45

The Place Promised in our Early Days (Kumo no Mukō, Yakusoku no Basho)

Tue 3 May 18:00; Sun 22 May 15:00

5 Centimeters per Second (Byōsoku 5 Senchimētoru)

+ The Garden of Words (Kotonoha no Niwa)

Tue 3 May 20:45; Sat 21 May 17:50

Millennium Actress (Sennen Joyū)

Wed 4 May 20:55; Sat 7 May 11:50;

Mon 23 May 18:15 (BFI IMAX)

Summer Wars (Samā Uōzu)

Sat 7 May 20:45; Sat 28 May 18:00

Paprika (Papurika)

Fri 13 May 20:40; Wed 18 May 20:45

Wolf Children (Ōkami kodomo no Ame to Yuki)

Sat 14 May 17:40; Sat 28 May 20:40

ANIME CLASSICS PART 1

Tekkonkinkreet (Tekkon kinkurīto)

Sun 1 May 12:10; Thu 5 May 20:50

The Tale of the Princess Kaguya (Kaguya-hime no Monogatari)

Tue 3 May 14:00; Tue 3 May 17:30 (all BFI IMAX)

Akira

Tue 3 May 20:30; Mon 23 May 15:00; Mon 23 May 20:30 (all BFI IMAX)

Lupin the 3rd: The Castle of Cagliostro (Kariosutoro no Shiro)

Wed 4 May 14:30; Tue 31 May 20:45

Fullmetal Alchemist the Movie: Conqueror of Shamballa

(Gekijō-ban Hagane no Renkinjutsushi: Shanbara o Yuku Mono)

Fri 6 May 21:00; Mon 9 May 20:40

Memories (Memorīzu)

Sun 15 May 12:00; Tue 24 May 20:40

Grave of the Fireflies (Hotaru no Haka)

Thu 19 May 18:00 + intro by Alex Dudok de Wit, author of BFI Film Classics: Grave of the Fireflies; Fri 27 May 20:45

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



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