

Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli

Studio Ghibli is a Japanese animation studio founded in 1985 and based in Tokyo, Japan. The mastermind behind the studio is Hayao Miyazaki, who co-founded the studio with the late Isao Takahata. The name "Ghibli" came from the Libyan-Arabic word that referred to a hot desert wind. Miyazaki chose the name because he believed that his studio would "blow a new wind through the anime industry", which he felt had been lacking in recent years. It is also the name of an Italian aircraft.

Hayao Miyazaki was born in 1941 in Tokyo. His father was the director of a company that manufactured fighter planes during World War II. His mother was diagnosed with spinal tuberculosis and spent several years in the hospital before moving back home and eventually recovering. She was an intellectual and strict woman, who often questioned the societal roles placed on women during that period in Japan. Miyazaki's childhood inspired a lot of the elements of his films: most of his protagonists are strong women or girls and feature flying as a main theme.

Miyazaki often criticized Japan's anime industry, saying that the animators created unrealistic characters, that anime is "produced by humans who can't stand looking at other humans". At the time the standard was serialized manga series, but Miyazaki felt that this format was limiting in terms of storytelling and led to a lower quality of animation. Studio Ghibli worked on full length animation feature films, spending over a year on each one. The studio was small and Miyazaki oversaw all elements of the production. His films feature beautifully detailed renditions of landscapes which are a combination of the views he saw on his travels through Europe. Miyazaki's films portray complex themes of environmentalism, pacifism, feminism and the complexity of people. None of his characters are portrayed as purely evil; instead, the motivations of the characters are explored showing their actions in shades of grey.

The reception of Miyazaki's work in the West is a complicated matter. Since 1996 Disney has been the sole international distributor for Studio Ghibli animated films. The first movie to be dubbed by Disney was Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind, released in the US as Warriors of the Wind. The movie was heavily edited to appeal to Western audiences. Miyazaki was very unhappy with this, and going forth employed a strict "no cuts" policy when licensing his films abroad. This policy was tested during the US release of Princess Mononoke. This movie, set in rural medieval Japan, deals with the complex nature of ecology, technology and war. It is the longest of studio Ghibli's films. The producer in charge of the film's distribution wanted to cut some of the slower contemplative scenes from the film to make it more marketable. In response to this studio Ghibli sent him a letter saying "No cuts." Attached to the letter was an authentic medieval Japanese samurai sword.

Hayao Miyazaki is extremely controlling about all aspects of his studio and the productions of his films. His high level of perfectionism ensures that all his films are of the highest standards. Studio Ghibli is one of the few major studios in the world that still employs a hand drawn animation technique. Because of Miyazaki's high level of involvement in the production of studio Ghibli's films, it is unclear who will take over the studio when he retires. He has announced his retirement six times, the latest in 2013, each time returning to the studio in some capacity.

According to the article, in the 1940s, Japanese women...

1. ...often suffered from tuberculosis.
2. ...replaced men in factories and plants.
3. ...had to fulfil traditional family roles.
4. ...were allowed to be fighter pilots.