

NATIONAL AMUSEMENTS  
**ANIME**.LTD

# WEATHERING WITH YOU

Directed by Makoto Shinkai

Run Time: 115 Minutes



**OPENS IN UK CINEMAS ON FRIDAY 17th JANUARY 2020**

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## WEATHERING WITH YOU PRESS NOTES

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### Synopsis

Hodaka is a teenage runaway in summertime Tokyo, working as a live-in writer at an occult magazine. Hina is a girl fallen on hard times, struggling to support herself and her young brother. Amid seemingly endless rainfall, she discovers that she has the power to make the sun come out. There are worse ways to make a living...

### Makoto Shinkai: in his own words

“From the moment in 2016 that I released my previous film, *Your Name*, I had my sights set on a new creation. I had the strong desire in my mind to try something again, which was the foundation for building *Weathering with You*.

“I had a sense that *Your Name* might reach heights that none of my previous films had achieved. I had the conviction that it would show me a landscape different from those of my previous works. It was just a hunch without any grounding, but the experiences that resulted from the release were certainly something new to me. To put it in extreme terms: I truly experienced the sheer scale of the media industry and the county of Japan – that’s how it was for me.

“Also, maybe it’s a personal delusion, but I did feel like I have been handed a baton or a ball since working on *Your Name*. I don’t know how, exactly, but I get the sense that this is our turn, now. I don’t know how long that feeling will last, but it’s like: ‘I’ve got the baton, so for the time being I’d better keep running!’

“There are various foundational pillars required for making an animated film. You need a pillar for the story, a pillar for the emotions, a pillar of visual imagery, a pillar for the staffing. The ‘theme’ pillar for this film is: weather. The elements of weather are a motif extremely well suited to animation, and I had the feeling that I could come up with a catchy visual if I approached it seriously. Also, weather is a motif that everybody can relate to. Most people will think about weather, and mention the word, at least once a day. It is a global, cyclic phenomenon, but also simultaneously a

personal experience for humans. The weather on any given day can dictate our moods or deeds. I thought that was an interesting theme for an animated film.

“As for the characters, I think the film reflects the distance between 2014, when I started work on *Your Name*, and 2017, when I commenced production on *Weathering with You*, particularly in terms of how people feel about their lives. For example, the characters in *Your Name* live in rather a nice home, but in this film, Hodaka and Hina are scraping by on very little money – the social premise has shifted a bit in the last three years, and that change in mood is something reflected in the characters. As a film for the audience of our own era, there’s more of an emphasis on the zeitgeist than universal themes.

“From the very outset, one thing I had in mind was that the characters should not be driven by their trauma. Hodaka runs away from home to come to Tokyo, and Hina has a serious family problem. But rather than stopping things and fretting over their situation, they keep rolling on. For good or ill, I wanted to depict a boy and a girl who started running. The lyrics for the song, “Grand Escape (Movie edit), written by RADWIMPS and featuring Toko Miura, precisely evoke how they feel.

*It’s not that we aren’t scared, but we just won’t stop.*

*Even if there’s nothing we can do about trouble ahead.*

*Our love says to us. The voice says to us. It says to us, ‘Go!’*

“Both Hodaka and Hina are like that. They don’t fret about losing battery power. They don’t stop to plug in a charger just because there’s hardly anything left in the battery. I wanted to witness people who single-mindedly run on through.

“I have no idea how the audience will react to the epilogue after all that running. They might accept it or they might not. I have constructed the story very carefully, but I cannot anticipate the reaction of the audience to the ending. However, the most unique point of *Weathering with You* is that it shows, perhaps, something outside of the usual conventions of films released during the Japanese summer vacation. What I felt deeply, last time, was a sense of how such a film should be. Films, particularly Toho summer movies are like a festival involving the audience and various media. It, in itself, has a sense of being topical, and therefore I wanted to make a film that was worth it because I get to show it in that setting and that moment. If it were to be a film to be released in independent cinemas, like some of my earlier works, the story would have been different even though the setting was the same. Regardless of the quality of the film, the story should be different depending on how the piece is released; that’s something I learned from *Your Name*. A film to screen as a sort of festival, that many people experience at the same time – I think that was the true impetus behind this film, right here and now.”

## Cast

### **Hodaka Morishima**

**A 16 year-old high school student who runs away from his home on a remote island to come to Tokyo. He starts to work (and live) at a small publishing company.**

KOTARO DAIGO (Voice: Hodaka)

Born in 2000 in Tokyo. Hoping to become an actor, he applied for the 'A Team Group Audition' in 2015, and joined his current agency. He played Mr. Yamada in *My Brother Loves Me Too Much* (2017) and Mitsuru Umemoto in *My High School Business*. In autumn 2019, he began appearing in the new *Haikyu!!* stage play.

### **Hina Amano**

**A girl working part-time in a burger bar to support herself and her brother. She has the mysterious power to clear cloudy skies through prayer.**

NANA MORI (Voice: Hina)

Born in 2001 in Oita prefecture. Talent-spotted while she was having a meal at a local restaurant with her family in 2016, she started her career in the industry with an online advert for director Isao Yukisada. She launched her acting career with *Tokyo Vampire Hotel* (Amazon Prime Video) in 2017. Her other appearances include: *The Anthem of the Heart* (2017, live action), *My High School Business* (2017 / NTV), *School Lawyer* (2018 / NHK), *Eerie: Invisible Face* (2018 / WoWoW), *Weakest Beast* (2018 / NTV), *3 Class 3A – All of You Are Hostages from Now* (2019/NTV). Her upcoming appearances include *Last Letter* (2020) directed by Shunji Iwai, *Tokyo Ghoul [S]* (2019), and *Hell Girl* (2019).

### **Keisuke Suga**

**A writer who runs a small publishing company. He hires Hodaka after saving him from drowning on the ferry to Tokyo.**

SHUN OGURI (Voice: Keisuke)

Born in 1982 in Tokyo. Since he rose to fame through his performance in *GTO* (1998 / KTV), he has been successful in many dramas, films, and stages. Recent appearance include *Gintama 2 Rules Are Made to be Broken* (2018), *Hibiki* (2018), *Diner* (2019), *No Longer Human* (2019), *The Voice in the Crime* (to be released in 2020), as well as his Hollywood debut *Godzilla vs Kong* (to be released in 2020). His voice roles include *Fullmetal Alchemist the Movie: Conqueror of Shamballa* (2005), *The Life of Gusuco Budori* (2012), *Space Pirate Captain Harlock* (2013), *Doraemon: New Nobita's Great Demon – Peko and the Exploration Party of Five* (2014), and *Yo-kai Watch: Forever Friends* (2018).

### **Natsumi**

**A university student who works at Suga's office. She busies herself with interviews and research with a natural curiosity and inquisitiveness.**

TSUBASA HONDA (Voice: Natsumi)

Born in 1992 in Tokyo. She made her debut as a model when she was a junior high school student. Since 2010, she had been a model for *non-no* magazine. In 2012 she began her acting career playing a leading role in her debut film appearance. Recent film appearances includes: *Color Me True* (2018), *Kubo Ibuki* (2019), and *The Journalist* (2019). Her drama appearance include: *Absolute Zero – Crime Prevention Infiltration Investigation –* (2018 / CX), *Thou Hast Had a Good Night's Sleep* (2019 / MBS), and *Radiation House – Hoshasenka no Shindan Report –* (2019 / CX). Her voice roles include the theatrical animation *Eagle Talon 7 – Joo Heika no Joboob* (2014), children's philosophy program *Q – Kodomo no Tame no Tetsugaku* (2017- / E Tele), and the tokusatsu drama *Secret x Warrior Phantomirage!* (2019- /TX).

### **Nagi Amano**

**Hina's younger brother. Although he is only in primary school, his mature behaviour makes him popular among girls, and he even starts offering romantic advice to Hodaka.**

SAKURA KIRYU (Voice: Nagi)

Born in 2004 in Tochigi prefecture. In 2016, she won grand prix in the 41st Hori Production Talent Scout Caravan "Pure Girl 2016" aged 12, the youngest in the competition's history. In 2017, she was selected as the tenth and youngest Peter Pan in the long-running *Peter Pan* musical, which launched her career as an actress and which she continued to play for three years. She played Tokine Shinomiya, the heroine in *Love's Stoppage Time* (2019), in her first film appearance. She is also due to play Misa Amane in *Death Note the Musical* (to be performed in January 2020).

### **Yasui**

**An aging detective who visits Suga's office, investigating an incident in Tokyo.**

SEI HIRAIZUMI (Voice: Yasui)

Born in 1944 in Aichi Prefecture. In 1964, he was selected at the fourth Daiei Film Kyoto Fresh Face competition, and made his debut with *Yoidore Hakase* (1966). His main film appearance includes: *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Street* (1971), *Violent Cop* (1989), *Wild Berries* (2003), *Nobody Knows* (2004), and *Shin Godzilla* (2016). His drama appearance includes: *The Grand Family* (2007 / TBS), *The Suspicious Housekeeper* (2011 / NTV), the morning drama *Amachan* (2013 / NHK), and *Overprotected Kahoko* (2017 / NTV). His tasteful voice and expressions make him a popular choice for radio and voice-over. His voice acting includes *The Case of Hana and Alice* (2015) for which he played the same character he played in the live-action version.

### **Takai**

**Yasui's partner, who shows up investigating Hodaka in a case.**

YUKI KAJI (Voice: Takai)

Born in 1985 in Tokyo. He made his voice-acting debut in 2004. He played the protagonist in *Over Drive* (Mikoto Shinozaki) in 2007. His TV voicing roles include *Attack on Titan* (Eren Yeager), *Blue Spring Ride* (Kou Mabuchi), *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Meliodas), *My Hero Academia*

(Shoto Todoroki), *MIX* (Touma Tachibana), *Skilled Teaser Takagi* (Nishikata), *Psycho-Pass 3* (Arata Shindo), and *Ahiru no Sora* (Sora Kurumatani). He has received the 3rd Seiyu Awards Best Rookie Actors award, as well as the 7th and the 8th Seiyu Awards Best Actor awards. He published a book *Your Power to Always Be the Best* in May 2018, and its manga version was released in 2019. He is successful not only in anime but also in dubs, narration, radio, news programs, and musicals.

## **Fumi**

**An old lady who lives downtown, and who asks for Hodaka and Hina's services.**

CHIEKO BAISHO (Voice: Fumi)

Born in 1941 in Tokyo. She made her film debut with *Hanjo* in 1961. The following year, she launched a singing career with Yoji Yamada's *The Sunshine Girl*, and won the 4th Japan Record Award Newcomer award. Since 1969, she became a nationally renowned actress playing Sakura in the film series *Otoko wa Tsurai Yo*, and won the Ministry of Culture Awards for Arts Minister Film Award in 1970. She received the Medal with Purple Ribbon in 2005 and Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette in 2013. Her recent film appearances have included: *The Little House* (2014), *Dad, Chibi is Gone* (2019), and *Otoko wa Tsuraiyo: Okaeri Torasan (It's Tough to Be a Man: Welcome Back Tora-san)*, released in December 2019). She has performed numerous voice acting roles including *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), in which she played the heroine and also sang the theme tune.

## **Crew**

### **Makoto Shinkai (writer/director)**

Born in Nagano prefecture, 1973, he made his professional debut with the self-produced short *Voices of a Distant Star*. It won numerous prizes, including the 1st Tokyo International Anime Fair 21 Open Competition Award for Excellence. His first feature-length film, *The Place Promised in Our Early Days* (2004), won the 59th Mainichi Film Award for Best Animation Film. *5 Centimetres per Second* (2007) won Best Animated Feature Film at the Asia-Pacific Film Festival, as well as the Lancia Platinum Grand Prize at the Future Film Festival in Italy. With *Children Who Chased Lost Voices* (2011), Shinkai won the Golden Monkey King award at the 8th China International Cartoon and Animation Festival. His *Garden of Words* (2013) won the animation category Grand Prix at the Stuttgart Festival of Animated Film. *Your Name* (2016) was a record-breaking hit anime, beaten at the box office only by Studio Ghibli's Oscar-winning *Spirited Away* (2001). At the 40th Japan Academy Awards, Shinkai's work on *Your Name* won him both Director of the Year and Screenplay of the Year, the first time for an animated film. It won numerous other awards both inside and outside Japan, including Best Animated Feature at the 49th Sitges Film Festival, the Judges Award at Scotland Loves Anime, and Best Animation Film at the 42nd Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards.

### **Masayoshi Tanaka (character design)**

Born in Hiroshima in 1976, he joined the Artland studio fresh out of college and first worked on the baseball anime *Princess Nine*. He has been a crucial animation talent on dozens of TV shows ever since, with credits including *Highschool of the Dead*, *Sword Art Online* and *Darling in the Franxx*. His

work in animated film includes *Maquia: When the Promised Flower Blooms*, *Her Blue Sky*, and Makoto Shinkai's *Your Name*, for which he animated the acclaimed opening sequence.

#### **Atsushi Tamura (animation director)**

A much respected animator with the world-beating Studio Ghibli, Tamura worked on films including *Princess Mononoke*, *The Cats Return*, *Howl's Moving Castle*, and the Oscar-winning *Spirited Away*.

#### **Hiroshi Takiguchi (art director)**

Previous works as art director have included *009 RE: Cyborg*, *The Case of Hana and Alice*, *Blame!* and Makoto Shinkai's *Garden of Words*.

## **Music**

### **RADWIMPS**

Yojiro Noda (vo/gt/pf), Akira Kuwahara (gt), Yusuke Takeda (ba)

Formed in 2001, major debut in 2005. With a boundary-defying musical style, and romantic depictions of everything from love, to life to death, they have won a huge level of popularity among young Japanese. They were in charge of the acclaimed music for Makoto Shinkai's previous film, *Your Name* (2016), displaying a wide range of musical creativity not only for the band sound, but also for incidental music. Their work for the film won them the 2017 Japan Academy Film Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Music. On the release of their new album, *Anti Anti Generation* in December 2018, they embarked upon a 17-concert live tour in ten locations, including their first stadium performance as the main attraction.

"When production began, we didn't get a particularly detailed request from the director, Mr Shinkai. Instead of a summary or a written impression of my thoughts, I think I managed to interpret the script in my own way, creating a world that was very different from the visuals, and handing that over to the director. This time, we invited a female vocalist, Toko Miura, as a new initiative. Her singing voice was a new attraction for the audience, and helps form the world of *Weathering with You*. As for the incidental music, we felt confident using a wider range of instruments and melodies than in the previous work. Our songs and the work of Makoto Shinkai have something in common – love between two individuals travels freely between the micro and the macro, out to the universe. A cluster of small microcosms makes a bigger universe, making us feel that the mechanism of the world may be intimately connected with us as individuals. *Weathering with You* is indeed such a work." – Yojiro Noda

### **Toko Miura**

Born in 1996 in Hokkaido. She launched her acting career with the Suntory advert "Natchan" in 2002. After that, she started her career in films and dramas. With films such as *Watashitachi no Haa Haa* (2015, directed by Daigo Matsui / protagonist), *Tsukiko* (2017, directed by Michio Koshikawa), and *Wonderful Dynamite Scandal* (2018, directed by Masanori Tominaga, heroine), and dramas including *From Miyamoto to You* (2018, directed by Tetsuya Mariko), and the omnibus film *21st Century Girl*, "Kimi no Sheet" (2019, directed by Aya Igashi), she has appeared in works by contemporary popular directors and is regarded as one of the most promising actresses in Japan. When selected as a vocalist for Makoto Shinkai's latest film *Weathering with You*, attention was

drawn to her voice, which was described “conveying straightforwardly something that slightly transcends personal feelings, more like a sound of the world rather than a singing voice of an actor” (Makoto Shinkai) and “having an overwhelming mysterious power that can turn any weather sunny.” (Yojiro Noda, RADWIMPS)

“When I met the team members of *Weathering with You* for the first time, I felt the weight of all the hours they had spent on this film, and, more than anything else, their love for this work. I feel sincerely grateful that they entrusted their thoughts and feelings to my voice. We recorded the songs slowly and carefully over a period of about two months, under Yojiro Noda’s direction. The recordings were sent to me for me to listen and then sing them again... re-recorded, sent back again, it was fun, like an exchange of letters. They are gentle songs that watch over the two characters in the film, and nudge at their backs on occasions. I am looking forward to the day you get to experience this music along with the film.” – Toko Miura

### **100% Perfect Sunshine Girl by Jonathan Clements**

Teenage runaway Hodaka (Kotaro Daigo) is living hand-to-mouth in Tokyo, writing for a tabloid newspaper about conspiracy theories and the occult. One magical story seems to come true, when burger-bar waitress Hina (Nana Mori) is revealed to have the ability to control the weather. For a short period, in a limited space around her, she is able to stop the rain, a skill that Hodaka soon puts to use in a bespoke service – for anyone planning a cook-out, wedding or sports meet, the weather no longer needs to be an unknown quantity. Such guarantees, however, come with a heavy price...

The Japanese press notes for *Weathering with You* tell of Makoto Shinkai and his companions scrabbling around for an international title that encapsulated the themes of their film. One cannot help but wonder if one of the rejected names was *100% Perfect Sunshine Girl*, a term much repeated in the film, and also recalling the 1961 Yoji Yamada film *The Sunshine Girl* (*Shitamachi no Taiyo*), which starred a young Chieko Baisho as a factory-worker in a dead-end job, seeking to escape to a career as a singer. The film launched the career of Baisho, who provides the voice of *Weathering with You*’s kindly grandmother nearly sixty years later. But the term’s strongest resonance for Shinkai is surely that of “On Meeting the 100% Perfect Woman One Fine April Morning”, the 1981 short story by Haruki Murakami that echoes throughout much of Shinkai’s work.

Shinkai has made no secret of the heavy influence of Murakami, particularly in such films as *5cm per Second*, which charts the many years and miles that separate two people who *should* have been together, right up until the moment when their eyes meet on opposite sides of a level crossing in Tokyo. He has acknowledged inadvertent similarities between *Weathering with You* and Murakami’s *Kafka on the Shore* (2002), which similarly features a runaway protagonist who is thrust into a series of magic-realist happenings.

Shinkai has long been concerned with the distance between people, and with their struggle to overcome barriers to true love – separated by time, by age, or by simple geography. Just as Murakami expanded his “100% Perfect” short story into the sprawling novel *1Q84* (2009), which featured childhood sweethearts separated by a split in universes, Shinkai hit the big time with *Your Name* (2016), in which a boy and a girl swap bodies, leaving messages for each other as they try to solve the mystery that has befallen them, which crosses space and, it transpires, time.



Notably, *Your Name* delivered a happy ending – after repeatedly leaving his endings ambiguous or his lovers not-quite-reunited, Shinkai ensured that everybody left the cinema with a smile. In *Weathering with You*, he takes things a little further, gently musing whether the idea of love being able to change the world might prove dangerous in the wrong hands.

The inspiration for *Weathering with You* came from a single line. Shinkai wanted the character of Hodaka to say “*I don’t care about the weather. I’d rather have you.*” He then plotted out a story that could lead to such a declaration, fixating on weather as the ultimate expression of his micro and macro concerns – a global system that nevertheless affects our lives, moods and decisions on an intimate, daily basis. But such an idea also provides Shinkai with an excuse to revisit many of his earlier obsessions – raindrops, clouds and rays of sunshine, elements that an animator can play with to his heart’s content.

Much of *Weathering with You* has been inspired by the response to *Your Name*. Shinkai has spoken of criticisms that the musical interludes in his films felt more like pop videos than integrated parts of the work – a concern he addressed here by collaborating with Yojiro Noda, lyricist for the group RADWIMPS, while the script was still in production. He has also spoken of his personal sense of responsibility – that his previous works had been small-scale entertainments aimed at an audience of hipsters and anime fans, but that *Your Name*’s summer tent-pole status had taken it to a far wider audience than he was used to. Well aware that *Weathering with You* was sure to reach a similarly broad market, Shinkai announced a determination to do something more memorable with what for many Japanese ticket-buyers would be their default cinema experience of the year.

Shinkai was plainly unequipped for the fame that *Your Name* brought to him. He has spoken in interviews of being recognised in the street by enthusiastic fans, but also of overhearing people bad-mouthing his film in public. The reaction of some celebrity critics was particularly tough. Hirokazu Kore-eda, director of the Oscar-winning *Shoplifters*, diplomatically commented that the film was packed with elements of a hit, “...perhaps *too* packed.” Yoshiyuki Tomino, the notoriously prickly creator of *Gundam*, declared that he doubted anyone would be watching *Your Name* in five years’ time.

“I asked myself,” a wounded Shinkai told Matt Schley of the *Japan Times*, “should I make a film my critics will like, or should I make one they’ll hate even more?” The experience of a critical backlash left Shinkai more focussed, confrontational, and determined to tell a story with a greater impact. One also wonders about the deliberately contrary way he appears to have run his production, almost as if taunting the anime old guard with his attitude towards his staff. Whereas old-school anime is strewn with tales of ill-health and burn-out, Shinkai made a point of ordering organic bento boxes, and bussing in massage therapist and acupuncturist to keep his animators happy.

There was a palpable rustle of excitement through the cinema at the film’s UK premiere in October 2019, at the moment when one of Hodaka and Hina’s clients is revealed as a leading character from *Your Name*. Another shows up in a blink-and-you’ll-miss-her cameo, working as a shop assistant; two more standing in a window, watching the rain with the child they discussed having at the end of the previous film. For any long-term Shinkai fans, such cameos introduce a tantalising prospect – that *Your Name* and *Weathering with You* are building blocks of an entire “Shinkai World”, weaving into a rich and overlapping tapestry of interlocking stories. Unfortunately, as with an earlier cross-over character between *Your Name* and Shinkai’s earlier *Garden of Words*, chronology and geography don’t quite fit. His most avid fans wasted no time in tabulating on-screen dates and comments from

the two films, essentially “proving” that the characters from *Your Name* could not, or should not have been in Tokyo at the time that *Weathering with You* took place. Except, of course, there was a bit of jiggery-pokery with alternate realities in the previous film, enough for this one to still offer a chance, however, remote, that all Shinkai’s star-crossed lovers get to watch the same Shinkai sky.

Shinkai describes *Weathering with You* as consciously part of our era – a recession-hit Japan depicted as seedier than his earlier middle-class idylls, an unforgiving and largely unfriendly Tokyo that recalls the memories of a younger, fresh-faced Shinkai, when he arrived from the Nagano mountains. In particular, he recreates his teenage memories of the famously squalid Kabukicho area of Tokyo, where the teenage Shinkai, new in town, found himself beset by religious preachers and pornographers.

He has spoken of how Tokyo for him began as an impersonal urban jungle, before he began to form memories and friendships that slowly transformed its mean streets into places of reverie and delight. His characters scrimp and save and gather their pennies; they knowingly trade in bargain basement Forteanism until Hina’s skill suddenly creates the prospect of powerful, magical traditions. They find themselves in a modern world that has largely forgotten the meaning, power and, indeed, price of ancient sorceries. Such concerns have only made Shinkai’s ending controversial for many viewers – although he delivers precisely the love-conquers-all message that he has been edging towards in many earlier films, an earnest, heartfelt declaration of love brings with it a heavy burden on the rest of the world. Fandom has been divided whether the film’s treatment of weather makes it a film that addresses today’s climate crisis or dismisses it with a wave of the hand.

“There are people actually dying and there’s buildings crumbling and it was just something that moved me so much,” he noted in an interview with Kambole Campbell on the *Polygon* website. “It’s something I worry about so I wanted to incorporate that into my film, but also have the individual wishes of a boy contrasted with the wishes or the good of the community, and the conflict between that.”

**Jonathan Clements is the author of *Anime: A History*.**

## **Heavy Weather by Andrew Osmond**

By most counts, *Weathering with You* may be Makoto Shinkai’s seventh film – and his fifth to run over an hour – but you might also call it his difficult “second” album. In 2016, *Your Name*’s stunning commercial success catapulted Shinkai as if he’d been struck by that film’s rogue comet. Before, Shinkai was an acclaimed but niche director with a loyal fan following – big in anime fandom, but barely-known outside it. After *Your Name*, Shinkai was a maker of blockbusters like Spielberg or Miyazaki.

Technically, Shinkai had still only made *one* blockbuster, but the Japanese marketing machine made sure Shinkai’s next film was pre-sold as a national event. *Weathering with You* opened on hundreds of screens across Japan in mid-July, welcoming in the summer. Toho, the film’s distributor, opened *Weathering with You* just a week after the Japanese release of *Toy Story 4*. The Shinkai brand was considered more than able to see off Buzz and Woody; how could Pixar’s toys fare against Shinkai’s star-crossed teenagers?

And *Weathering with You* is very much a Shinkai brand film, and most definitely has star-crossed teenagers. This time they’re Hodaka, a boy from a remote Japanese island who comes to Tokyo and

flounders trying to build a life in the big city; and Hina, a girl who has magic-seeming power to control the weather. The story is largely told through Hodaka's eyes – his narration fills the film – showing his haphazard arrival in Tokyo, his chance meeting with Hina, his wonder at her powers, and his deepening feelings for her.

The film frequently follows the *Your Name* template, which was already more like a Hollywood film than Shinkai's earlier work. For example, when the teens look to be doing well in their partnership, that's fair warning that things will soon get *far* tougher for them. Like Mitsuha, Hina has an outspoken younger sibling – a boy, Nagisa – to lighten many scenes. Most obviously, the story puts venerable Japanese belief systems into a present-day setting, even more than *Your Name*. In the previous film, the Shinto practices were associated with a remote country town. In *Weathering*, Hina's powers impact directly on Tokyo, the setting for almost all of the film.

However, the film is far from a *Your Name* clone. As commentators quickly noted, the early scenes in Tokyo have a surprising grittiness under the rueful humour. The boy Hodaka arrives in the city nearly penniless, holing up in a cybercafé, and glimpsing Tokyo's seedy side – there's a glimpse of Tokyo's infamous "Vanilla" truck, which is decorated with manga-style faces but is *actually* inviting women to work in the sex trade. In one scene, Hodaka tries to play a white knight and gets a harsh lesson in the realities of poverty, going far darker than the sex jokes in *Your Name*.

There's maybe a hint of Satoshi Kon's film *Tokyo Godfathers*, but Hodaka's situation – a teenage boy alone in a city of adults – has a more obvious reference for *both* Japanese and Western viewers. Very early, we see that Hodaka possesses a copy of *Catcher in the Rye*, a book already prominent in anime, in the "Laughing Man" strand of *Ghost in the Shell Stand Alone Complex*. Several of Hodaka's experiences and decisions can be seen as those of a latter-day Holden Caulfield, determined to stay rebelliously pure and not play by the rules imposed by grown-ups.

Hodaka eventually ends up working with a couple of journalists writing for *MU* magazine, Japan's equivalent of Britain's *Fortean Times*, exploring mysteries and the supernatural. (*MU* is a very real magazine; Tessie was glimpsed reading it in *Your Name*.) The portrait of this small group, Tokyo-based but working outside the corporate mainstream, recalls the programmers in *Eden of the East*, whose director, Kenji Kamiyama, gave us the "Laughing Man" in *Stand Alone Complex*.

Anime like *Eden* and *Tokyo Godfathers* may have influenced Shinkai's own aesthetic of extreme (if idealised) realism. *Weathering* may be the *densest* depiction of Tokyo in anime, showing from the city from the gutter up to its highest vantages, absurdly epic, and a likely reason for the film's reported struggles to meet its release date. Central Tokyo districts including Shinjuku, Ikebukuro, seedy Kabukicho and waterside Odaiba are represented, along with prominent shots of the New National Stadium for the Olympics, which is under construction as of writing. Shinkai fans will be unsurprised his beloved Tokyo trains are all over the film, even shaking Hina's house though she doesn't mind a jot.

One incidental, perhaps coincidental point, is that a couple of short scenes feel remarkably close to Mamoru Hosoda's *Boy and the Beast*, which was also largely set in central Tokyo – especially a moment when Hodaka flees police, then finds a diminutive non-human friend. It feels ironic, given Hosoda seemed on track to become "the" mainstream anime director in Japan after Miyazaki. *Boy and the Beast* was Hosoda's biggest hit in Japan, but was utterly overshadowed by Shinkai's *Your Name*.

Beyond Tokyo, the spectacle comes from the film's handling of the titular weather – an area where Shinkai proved himself six years ago when he based a whole anime around rain, *Garden of Words*. *Weathering with You* is enchanted with weather's transitions and juxtapositions, which can make reality fantastical: sunbeams piercing rain, grey clouds replaced by a sublime sunset, instant shifts from one environment to another.

There are debts to Miyazaki; there were similar weather transitions in *Princess Mononoke* in a build-up to battle. Shinkai also borrows Miyazaki's fascination with flooded spaces from *Ponyo* (which harks back to the 1973 kids' film *Panda! Go Panda! Rainy Day Circus*, which Miyazaki made with Takahata). But Shinkai may have been equally influenced by Mamoru Oshii, who used weather with unequalled poeticism. Think of the rainfall during the canal scene in Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*, or the snow blanketing Tokyo in *Patlabor 2*.

Weather itself is linked to the realm of the supernatural, as the opening scenes make clear. In Japan, there are old stories and modern jokes about characters who attract good or bad weather (though it's hardly unique to Japan – think how royal lions seem to control the weather in Disney's *Lion King*). *Teru teru bozu*, miniature dolls that look like ghosts, appear through the film, traditionally made by Japanese kids to pray for good weather – Hina's little brother dresses up as one.

The film also has passages to wondrous other realms, which a "lucky" human may traverse. But Japanese viewers, who grew up on stories like *Urashima Taro*, know such wonder journeys can come with terrible prices.

On a smaller scale, some motifs in *Weathering* follow *Your Name* directly. Count the eating scenes, including a lovely interlude where Hina shows Hodaka how to cook up a feast on a budget. *Weathering* continues *Your Name's* focus on screens and social media; mobile texting and maps, a "fund-me" website, TV weather reports and emergency warnings. Then there are little details to catch on a rewatch. For example, some riverboats glimpsed in the last scenes look like tributes to the futuristic boats designed by anime legend Leiji Matsumoto, already traversing Tokyo's waterways.

From the first trailer, *Weathering* trumpeted how much it was following *Your Name's* template. It looks like *Your Name*, with the same ravishing spectacle, the same dense real detail, even the same character designer. That's Masayoshi Tanaka, who often works on productions with Mari Okada, including *Maquia*, *anohana* and *Anthem of the Heart*. Tanaka is also much of the reason why last year's mecha series *Darling in the Franxx* looked so good, whatever you thought of its story.

There's a change in Animation Director, but only from one veteran of Studio Ghibli to another. *Your Name's* Masahiro Ando bows out, replaced by Atsushi Tamura who – according to the *Sakugabooru* website – animated some of *Spirited Away's* defining moments, including Chihiro discovering that her parents have become pigs, and feeding a thrashing dragon a vomitous antidote. In *Weathering*, many of the most eye-catching shots involve chases, both on foot and on a vehicle to draw whoops from young males. The latter chase ends with a stunt that looks inadvisable to try at home or anywhere else.

RADWIMPS, the band that scored all of *Your Name*, is back for the music, though the group rings a change by inviting a female vocalist onto two of the songs – actress Toko Miura, who doesn't seem to voice a character, but has appeared in many live-action film and TV roles through the 2010s. While her vocals on "Grand Escape," one of the songs, are prominent on the trailer, wait for how it's used in the film, synched breathtakingly to the action as it turns fantastical.

Of *Weathering's* Japanese cast, both Hodaka and Hina are played by newcomers, Kotaro Daigo and Nana Mori. This is a contrast to *Your Name*, where the teens were played by established actors; Daigo and Mori were chosen through a casting call of more than 2,000 hopefuls.

Although Hodaka and Hina are central, *Weathering* gives more room than *Your Name* to its support cast, especially Hodaka's older co-workers at the "supernatural" magazine. The male Keisuke is voiced by prolific live actor Shun Oguri, who once played a live-action Lupin the Third. His co-worker Natsumi (their relationship isn't immediately revealed) is played by actress-model Tsubasa Honda. Given Keisuke is lean and wily, and Natsumi is voluptuous (to Hodaka's discomfort) and a daredevil, they may be Shinkai's tribute to Monkey Punch.

A big-haired detective called Takai is voiced by the *very* familiar Yuki Kaji, most famous for his ongoing voice role as Eren in *Attack on Titan*. Also look out for a grandmotherly women called Tomi, voiced by Chieko Baisho, a regular in the *Tora-san* live-action films and the voice of Sophie (all ages) in *Howl's Moving Castle*. As for cameos from past Shinkai characters, there *seem* to be a couple. However, given certain details, these may be alternative versions of the characters we've seen, much as a schoolteacher in *Your Name* seemed to be an alt-version of a character in *Garden of Words*.

This may provoke some fan discussion; however, the main debate will concern the film's ending. Shinkai reportedly said before the film opened that *Weathering with You* would divide viewers. He's also talked about how *Your Name's* success meant it was reviewed and discussed far more than his previous anime, including (inevitably) more negative commentary. And we've already talked about how *Your Name* propelled Shinkai up to a blockbuster brand.

All this seems reflected upon in the last scenes of *Weathering with You*. Yes, they do serve up many things that Shinkai fans will expect, but there are also some jaw-dropping surprises and open provocations. They're *exactly* the things to inspire angry online articles, ones that start by describing *Weathering's* handling of certain subjects as "deeply problematic" and go south from there.

They also suggest a very cunning head-game with the audience. Shinkai could have almost had one of his characters turning to the audience and asking "But isn't this what you loved in *Your Name*?" Yes it is, but some of the context is *very* different, as if Shinkai is asking us what his style, his passionate teens frantic to connect, actually *means* outside the movie.

Fittingly, the Tokyo screenings of *Weathering with You* were linked with another well-known anime brand which is known for turning round and confronting its audience, asking, "But what does this *really* mean"? Yes, the trailers in front of *Weathering* included one for *next* summer's big anime film: *Evangelion 3.0 + 1.0*.

**Andrew Osmond is the author of *100 Animated Feature Films*. This article originally appeared in the festival brochure for Scotland Loves Anime, where *Weathering with You* received its UK premiere.**

## Credits

Kotaro Daigo / Nana Mori

Tsubasa Honda / Sakura Kiryu / Sei Hiraizumi / Yuki Kaji

Chieko Baisho / Shun Oguri

Original, screenplay, director: Makoto Shinkai. Music: RADWIMPS. Character design: Masayoshi Tanaka. Animation director: Atsushi Tamura. Art director: Hiroshi Takiguchi. Technical director: Yuga Tokuno, Kenji Imura. CG chief: Yoshitaka Takeuchi. Cinematographer: Ryosuke Tsuda. Assistant director: Yoko Miki. Sound director: Haru Yamada. Sound effect: Eiko Morikawa. Production: Minami Ichikawa, Noritaka Kawaguchi. Planning and producer: Genki Kawamura. Executive producer: Yoshihiro Furusawa. Producer: Wakana Okamura, Kinue Itou. Music producer: Sayoko Narukawa.

Production: "Tenki no Ko" production committee (Toho, CoMix Wave Film, Story, Kadokawa, East Japan Marketing & Communications, voque ting, Lawson Entertainment)

Production producer: STORY, inc. Animation production: CoMix Wave Film. Distribution: Toho

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Length: 110 minutes / Vista Vision