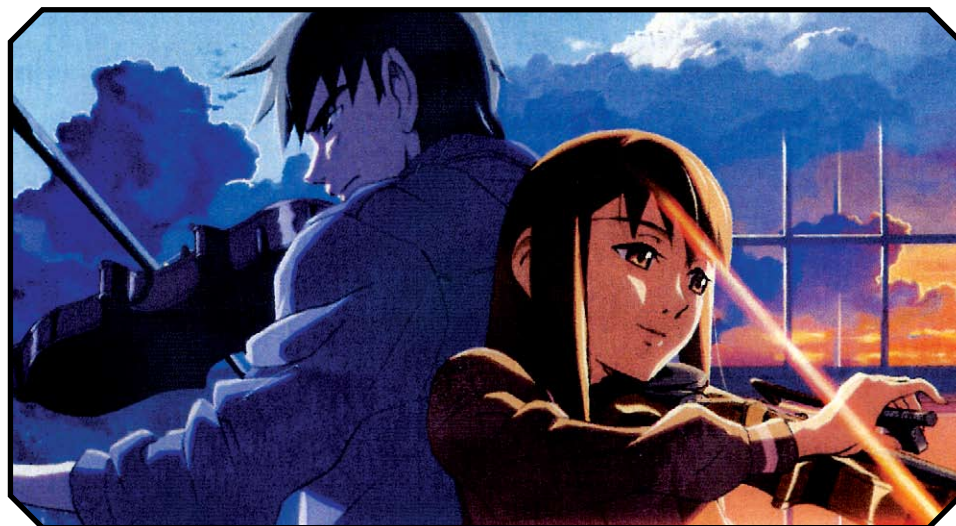


## what are we watching on dvd?



### THE PLACE PROMISED IN OUR EARLY DAYS

90 Minutes, A Makoto Shinkai Film (ADV Films)

Back in 2002, Makoto Shinkai won an award as “Most Valuable Newcomer” at the Tokyo Anime Fair 21 for his film “Voices of a Distant Star”.

What made this film so different from many anime out there was that it was created only by a staff of one and that was Shinkai Makoto, himself.

Using a Power Macintosh 7600/120 computer and various consumer and professional design and animation software, he was able to write, direct and create an animation so beautiful that it was difficult to believe that one man was responsible for it.

Now, Makoto is back with another award winning animated film titled “The Place Promised In Our Early Days”.

The film takes place after the Second World War, with Japan now divided into two factions.

Honshu and the rest of the Southern Islands came under the sovereignty of the United States and Hokkaido was annexed by “Union”.

In 1996, an unusual tower was

created South of Honshu and its purpose is unknown.

In the Aomori prefecture (Northern Japan), the storyline focuses on three friends who made a vow to fly an airplane to the tower and find out its secrets.

Two programmers and their friend Sayuri made a promise that was meant to be kept until something happened to Sayuri and the promise was broken.

The film features three main parts. Focusing on the characters as they make the promise.

The next focuses on the lives of the individuals three years later, on how a broken promise has set two of the main characters into two different paths in their lives, one working for the Southern Islands as a master hacker and the other who has not fully adjusted because his love for Sayuri and feels empty without her.

And the third and final part which focuses on the two friends as they are put into opposing paths and the answer to Sayuri’s connection with the tower.

If you thought Makoto Shinkai

did amazing things with his first film, “The Place Promised In Our Early Days” is a glimpse of what Makoto can do with a full staff and potential for the future. Absolutely amazing!

The attention to detail on the animation is very well done. There is strong attention to detail for buildings, outdoor scenery and vehicles which are well done.

Even the audio was a pleasure to listen to and the surround sound is well done.

I’ve heard noises may it be rain or subtle noises used effectively on my rear speakers. Very nice!

Of course, with a beautiful looking and sounding film, it wouldn’t make a whole lot of difference if the storyline is bad. Fortunately, the storyline of this film is quite good.

It’s not too difficult to understand and it could have been “Ghost in the Shell” cerebral but fortunately, it doesn’t go that far.

As for the DVD special features, the original Japanese trailer collection is included. You also get the interviews with the Japanese cast and an interview with director, Makoto Shinkai.

I may be a bit biased towards Makoto’s work because I’m amazed of how one man has inspired so many people with creating an anime by himself and the potential shown through this film.

“The Place Promised In Our Early Days” is a film that doesn’t disappoint and fortunately has a good balance via storyline, animation and with sound.

Makoto Shinkai has created another winner.

— DENNIS A. AMITH

REVIEW GRADE

A-