

My First Experience of



Accessibility Service

Interview and Writing by Mitsuharu Nagai (Source:Website Home Theater CHANNEL)



"ONE PIECE FILM: RED"

A commentary by the original author, Eiichiro Oda, making it the most exciting in HELLO! MOVIE history

Interview and Text by Mitsuharu Nagai
(Home Theater CHANNEL)

This is a series of articles introducing the “HELLO! MOVIE” service, a new style of movie theater viewing. One of the features of “HELLO! MOVIE” is a “movie soundtrack service. All you need to do is go to a movie theater with a smartphone with a dedicated app installed and earphones, and the smartphone’s microphone will pick up the sound of the main movie, and the smartphone app will play the pre-downloaded commentary audio. This part introduces the commentary service that was implemented for the Japanese release of “ONE PIECE FILM: RED”

Author Eiichiro Oda’s commentary adds over 3 minutes of depth to the main feature.

The latest anime film, “One Piece Film: Red,” has been breaking records since its release on August 6, 2022. It returned to the number one spot at the Japanese box office in its 13th week of release and remained at the top during the first week of November, with a total audience of 13.4 million people and a box office revenue exceeding 125 million USD. This places it in 9th position in the all-time domestic box office rankings, while it continues to set records. (Note: As of November 2023, the latest data indicates 137 million USD in box office revenue).



Panel at the entrance of the screen announcing the HELLO! MOVIE! commentary

In celebration of the record-breaking success of the movie, on November 5th (Saturday), the “Film Red on-the-go version of SBS 《Secondary Audio Screening》” featuring the original author and general producer, Eiichiro Oda, as well as Director Goro Taniguchi, became available on HELLO! MOVIE. “SBS” is derived from the question section - “Solicit Questions (Shitsumon wo Boshu Suru noda)” - published in the “One Piece” manga comics.

With the on-the-go version of the immensely popular SBS section, where Eiichiro Oda answers questions from readers, you can listen to theater commentary using the HELLO! MOVIE smartphone app with your earphones. Through the interaction between Oda and Director Taniguchi, behind-the-scenes stories and secrets of the making of “One Piece Film: Red” that can

now be shared are revealed. They also respond to provocative questions collected on X (formerly known as Twitter).

As usual, you launch the HELLO! MOVIE app, place your smartphone in the drink holder, and watch while listening to the commentary with your earphones. Surprisingly, even after the end credits of the film roll and the theater lights brighten up, you are still left in awe of the commentary that extends over 3 minutes beyond the end of the main feature. It’s the most exciting commentary in the history of HELLO! MOVIE. However, the direct relationship with the main video is thin, making it feel like you’re listening to a standalone “radio program.”

The true essence of the One Piece Film series is innovation in movie entertainment.

In fact, this isn’t the first time that the “One Piece Film” series has used the HELLO! MOVIE app. In the 2019 theatrical release of “One Piece: Stampede,” they experimented with offering audio commentary through earphones by all nine voice actors of the characters from the “Straw Hat Pirates” that was in step with the progress of the movie.

At that time, the app wasn’t called “HELLO! MOVIE” but rather was offered under the “Another Track” service for smartphones. Back then, there were still relatively few movie produc-



tions that used the commentary service through “Another Track,” highlighting the forward-thinking approach of adopting it for the “One Piece Film” series.

The forward-thinking approach of One Piece doesn’t stop there. In “One Piece 3D Mugiwara Chase” (2011), they took on the challenge of producing the entire film in full CG and digital 3D. This was right after 2009, which was considered the “3D year” following the release of “Avatar,” and 3D screenings were also implemented for “One Piece Film: Gold” (2016). Furthermore, “Gold” was even offered as the first-ever 4DX and MX4D for-

mat screenings. While Japanese cinema was generally hesitant about 3D and 4D, One Piece has consistently and eagerly pioneered new screening formats.

It was also the “One Piece Film” series that elevated “visitor bonuses” to a social phenomenon.

On the other hand, it was none other than the “One Piece Film” series that pushed “theatrical audience giveaways,” which have now become commonplace in the screening of anime films in Japan, to the level of a social phenomenon. The “theatrical-version limited comic” distributed with “Strong World” (2009) was an initiative that paved the way for subsequent anime works based on manga.

The latest installment also began with a theatrical-version limited comic. Every week, a different giveaway is offered. The seventh novelty item was the “Wanpi-no-mi “FILM RED” “Shanks,”” with a limited distribution of 200,000 units. The eighth was the “Special Shanks 104kan Kakegae Cover,” the ninth was the “Yumekawa♡Uta Rubber Band,” and the tenth was the “Pukupuku♡Uta Balloon,” with more to come.

In recent years, the audience giveaways for Japanese anime works have become somewhat excessive, but it was likely unexpected that “One Piece Film: Red” would have such a long run. When there are only few films that continue to be screened for over 10 weeks each year, the sight of film companies consistently rolling out novelty goods to meet the expectations of fans is rather refreshing.

Miraculous balance of a musical film showcased in this work

Now, the reason for the somewhat

lengthy introduction is because Toei has recommended “no spoilers.” I can’t reveal too much about the HELLO! MOVIE commentary content. However, even a month after the service started, I am still excited about what it offers. I’d like to touch on the charm of the commentary briefly.

The remarkable success of the 125 million USD in box office revenue for this film is not solely attributed to the previously mentioned novelty service. That’s because, while the previous films in the “One Piece Film” series were also big hits, they didn’t break any all-time records for Japanese films. The most successful film in the series so far, “One Piece Film: Z,” earned a box office revenue of 47 million USD. This didn’t even place it in the top 100 in terms of all-time box office rankings for films released in Japan.

“One Piece Film: Red” has earned nearly three times the box office revenue of “One Piece Film: Z.” There is no doubt that one of the reasons for this tremendous success is that it has become an “unparalleled musical movie.” The character of the singing princess, UTA = artist Ado, with her seven-color vocal expressions, and the well-crafted collaboration of songwriters who are currently at their peak, have created an exquisite balance.

“One Piece Film: Red” is different in nature from the previous offerings in the One Piece series. It is revealed in the HELLO! MOVIE commentary that “Luffy doesn’t utter the name of a single technique!” (please listen to the commentary to find out why).

To date, not only in the “One Piece Film” series but also in other productions based on shonen manga (comics for boys), there has been a tendency towards clichés. While the visual and auditory impact has increased with



Figure of the character “Shanks



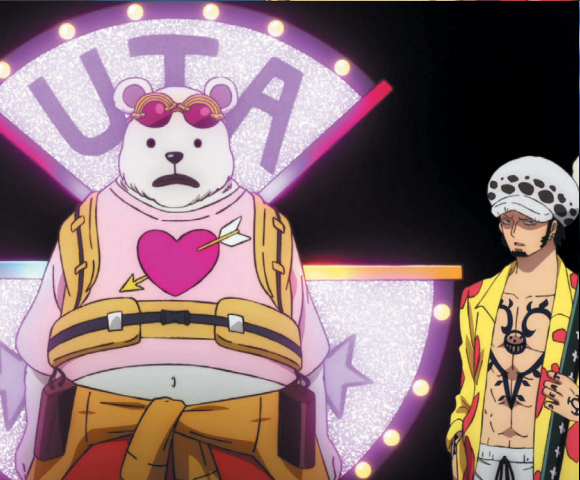
Comic book cover for replacement



Cheering goods for music concerts (balloons)



Cheering goods for music concerts (rubber band)



each new release, audiences have grown somewhat fatigued by the repetitive pattern where justice always prevails (good triumphs over evil), new challenges are followed by even greater obstacles, or the disappointment of the “final boss not being the true final boss.” Against this background, the musical scenes in “One Piece Film: Red” have elevated this film into a high-quality musical movie. In the commentary, it’s revealed that Eiichiro Oda, the original author, commissioned for this project the seven artists he personally admired. You can catch glimpses of his fondness for each artist. On the other hand, it’s evident that the artists themselves are fans of the “One Piece” manga and, in response to Oda Eiichiro’s offer, they brought their extraordinary talent, resulting in a collection of outstanding songs that left no room for compromise. Audiences can immerse themselves in the music album entitled “Uta’s Songs One Piece Film: Red,” which includes new compositions, and find a meaningful reason to visit the movie theater.

In addition, it’s worth noting that the original comic is approaching its final chapters, generating high levels of anticipation. Furthermore, as a boys’ adventure tale, “One Piece” ultimately centers around the stories of Shanks and Luffy, or Ace, Luffy, and Sabo, which serve as its foundation. “One Piece Film: Red” opens a window into the most delicate aspects of this narrative. As the series approaches its 30th anniversary, readers who were originally elementary school students are now in their forties, and even fans who had moved away from the series may find a reason to return and engage.

In the commentary, there are a few

hints about the final chapter of “One Piece.” Those who know the conclusion (people to whom Oda revealed the ending) include not only the assigned editor but also Director Goro Taniguchi. Moreover, according to Director Taniguchi, the concept has remained unchanged for over 20 years.

Learn about the relationship between the original work and the theatrical version in HELLO! MOVIE commentary.

In the commentary, Eiichiro Oda delves into his “theory of visual creation” and the “relationship between the original comic and the theatrical version’s story.” It’s very intriguing, so it’s definitely worth listening to. Despite being the general producer, it becomes apparent that Oda adheres to a strict division of labor and doesn’t interfere much with the animation production process. However, he focuses on preserving the world of “One Piece” in the final stages. It’s also revealed that he takes great care to ensure there are no contradictions for those fans who only read the original comic. This is sure to please fans of the original work.

Furthermore, during the planning stages of this film, Eiichiro Oda himself was initially hesitant to turn it into a “musical.” The commentary discusses how this reluctance ultimately led to the creation of a “high-quality musical” and the various twists and turns involved in that process.

Let me introduce some of the questions from the digest of the commentary that is available on the official website:

• *Were there any other candidates for the line “You’re a sore loser!” in the film?*

• *In Chapter 1055, “The New Gene-*

sis,” of the Jump magazine, there is a silhouette. Is it Uta?

• *Is Luffy’s constant desire for a musician influenced by Uta?*

• *Oda, please explain the “Figarland Family”!*

These are some of the questions that Eiichiro Oda answered with his true feelings or chose not to reveal.

Normally, HELLO! MOVIE commentaries are recorded with the cast shortly after a stage greeting event following the release of the film. Therefore, it often takes 2 to 4 weeks after the film’s initial release for the commentary screening. In the case of “One Piece Film: Red,” thanks to its mega-hit status, the recording took place around the 10th week after the initial release. Questions were solicited on X (formerly known as Twitter), and the recording was approached with ample consideration given to the market’s response. If you count the number of questions in the commentary, there are around 35 questions, touching on the essence of the film. It’s incredibly comprehensive.

In typical commentary recordings, the cast watches the main film while speaking. In that sense, there is a connection with the visuals, but it tends to be a surface-level commentary that is improvised. The commentary by Director Taniguchi and Oda seems to have a prepared script for the session, considering which questions match with which scenes. However, their conversation is so deep and rich that it feels more like a radio program. It truly stands as the “most exciting commentary in HELLO! MOVIE history.” Therefore, I recommend seeing and digesting the regular version of the film before attempting a commentary screening.



Blu-ray



“One Piece Film: Red” (STANDARD EDITION)

[UltraHD Blu-ray]

This Blu-ray is on sale only in Japan.

Director: Goro Taniguchi

Original work and general producer: Eiichiro Oda

Screenplay: Tsutomu Kuroiwa

Character design: Masayuki Sato

Chief animation director: Masayuki Sato

Music: Yasutaka Nakata

Theme song: Ado

In-movie song contributions: Yasutaka Nakata / Mrs. GREEN APPLE

/ Vaundy / FAKE TYPE. /

Hirokyu Sawano / Yuta Orisaka / Motohiro Hata

Voice cast: Monkey D. Luffy: Mayumi Tanaka / Uta: Kaori Nazuka /

Shanks: Shuichi Ikeda

2022 production / 115 minutes / G / Japan

Distributor: Toei

© Eiichiro Oda / 2022 “One Piece” production committee

“One Piece,” which began serialization in “Weekly Shonen Jump” in 1997, has become a global phenomenon. In 2021, the total worldwide circulation of the comic exceeded “490 million copies,” the tankobon (independent books) reached the milestone of “Volume 100,” and the TV anime surpassed “1,000 episodes.” “One Piece Film: Red” is the latest theatrical installment presented by General Producer Eiichiro Oda. Directed by Goro Taniguchi (known for the “Code Geass” series), the film features the original character Uta, voiced by Kaori Nazuka, whose singing voice is provided by Ado. Kenjiro Tsuda portrays Gordon, a mysterious character who holds the key to Uta’s and Shanks’ past. Furthermore, the world-renowned songstress Uta’s music includes the theme song composed and written by Yasutaka Nakata, as well as in-movie songs (six in total) composed by Mrs. GREEN APPLE, Vaundy, FAKE TYPE., Hirokyu Sawano, Yuta Orisaka, and Motohiro Hata. This summer, Uta’s singing voice weaves a heartwarming story.

Experiencing audio guide for movie "Belle" with visually impaired person

Interview and Text by Mitsuharu Nagai
(Home Theater CHANNEL)

In this part, I would like to introduce another feature of "HELLO! MOVIE", the barrier-free service. In fact, I will have the opportunity to go to the theater with a visually impaired person and experience the audio guide for the first time myself.

Common sense for barrier-free movies changed by "HELLO! MOVIE"

The Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games (August 24 to September 5, 2021) ended with the Japanese national team winning the second largest number of medals in its history. I think the Paralympic games became an opportunity not only for me but also for many people to become interested in the characteristic rules of various para sports, including wheelchair competitions, blind soccer, boccia, and goalball, simply by watching them on TV.

This article is one of a series of articles presenting a theater service called "HELLO! MOVIE." In the previous articles, I presented this service as a new movie watching style that allows you to enjoy commentaries free of charge. Meanwhile, "HELLO! MOVIE" originally became popular as a barrier-free screening service which provides audio guides, subtitle guides, etc.

The barrier-free services of "HELLO! MOVIE" include "subtitle guide with glasses (smart glasses)" for people with hearing impairments and "audio guide with smartphone" for people with visual impairments. Movies for which either or both of these services are available are marked with a logo or logos (shown separately). Whichever service he or she will use, the viewer is required to come

to the theater with a smartphone with the dedicated app installed. As for how to use the barrier-free content, the viewer can listen to the audio guide with earphones he/she brings, or if he/she wears smart glasses that are available for rent at some movie theaters, he/she can see a subtitle guide superimposed on the movie.



Logos of subtitle-guide-compatible films (left). Logo of audio-guided film (right).

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to go to the theater with a HELLO! MOVIE user who is visually impaired and to experience an audio guide for the first time.

Barrier-free works have a short history, so they are few in number.

I have long believed a considerable number of TV programs with sign language guides and supplementary audio guides have existed for some time. However, according to barrier-free movie promotion organizations City Lights, the history of audio guides, which are narrations for visually impaired people, can be traced back to supplementary audio commentary included in some TV programs such as the Tuesday Suspense Theater, which started in 1983 (quoted from their official website). As for movie works, the first limited edition DVD of "The Green Mile" released in 2000 finally included an audio guide for the first time.

Even just five years ago (around 2015), there were only about 50 movies that included audio guides at the time of their theatrical release while only about 120 commercially available DVDs included audio guides. Considering that there are

around 1,000 to 1,200 new movies released in Japan each year, it is clear that there are still very few movies that include audio guides.

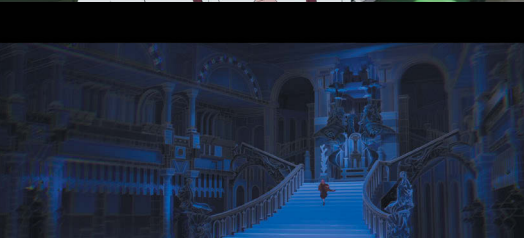
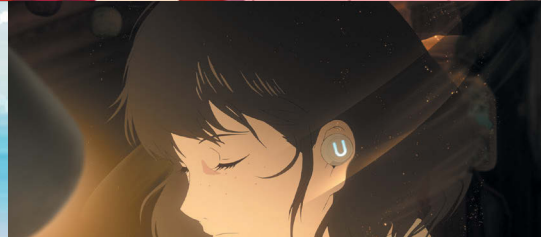
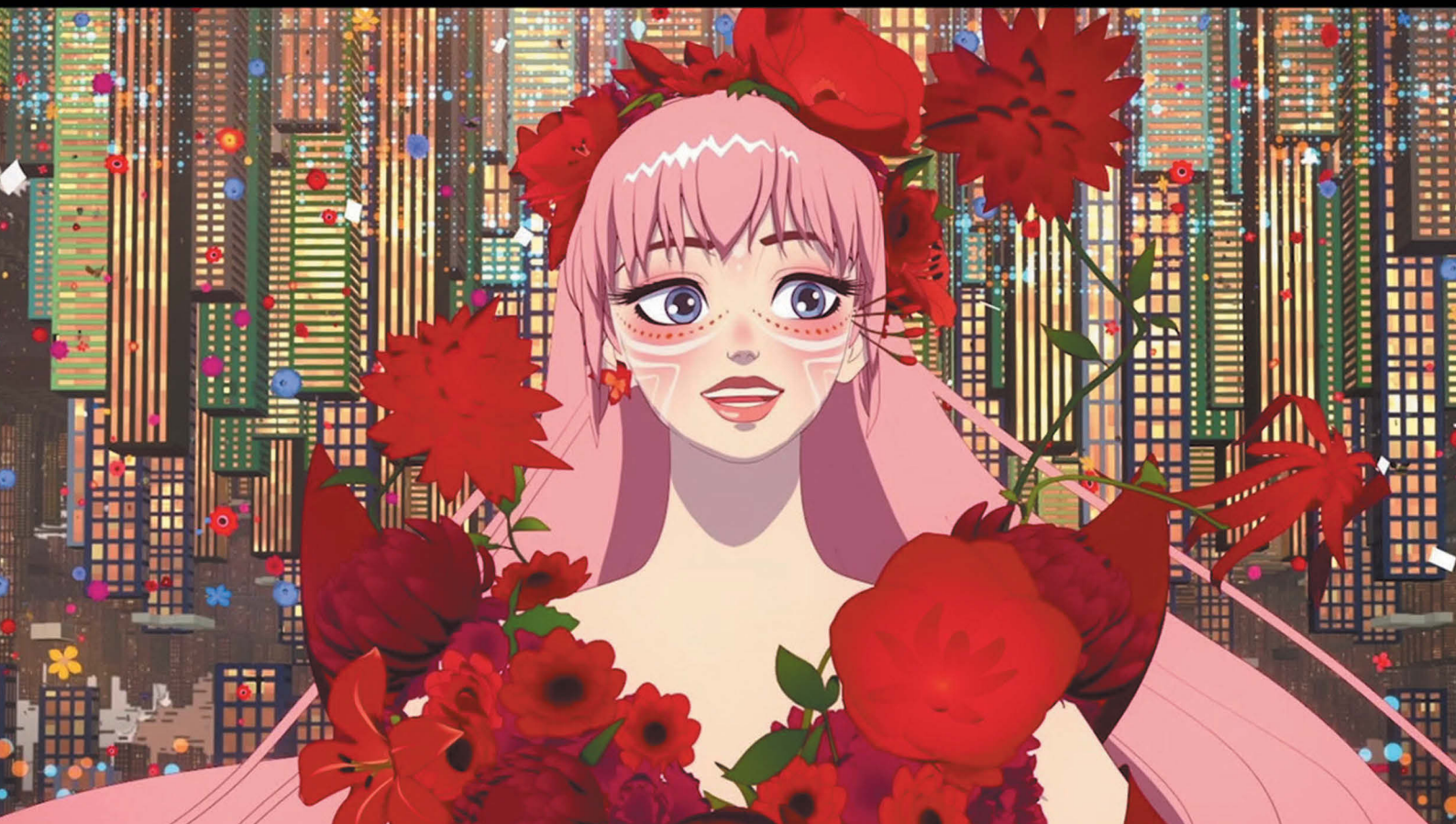
The barrier-free screening service created by HELLO! MOVIE (including projects with UDCast equipped with the same audio synchronization technology at the beginning of development) and started in 2016 significantly changed the environment surrounding works with audio guides, at which time there were only 50. Approximately 350 movies with the barrier-free screening service have been released so far. This figure may not be enough to call the service a "full-scale barrier-free service"; however, it shows the magnitude of the role that HELLO! MOVIE has played over the past five years.

109 Cinemas Kawasaki started a rental service for smart glasses for subtitle guides

109 Cinemas Kawasaki, located in Kawasaki, Kanagawa, cooperated with me in presenting the barrier-free screening service at this time. 109 Cinemas started a rental service for smart glasses for subtitle guides in August. I interviewed Mr. Kazutaka Higashi, Manager of 109 Cinemas Kawasaki.

Mr. Higashi: "It has been a month since we started the service and we already have several users. We also receive phone queries at the theater."

He went on to explain: "The smart glasses will be rented out free of charge; however, users are required to apply to use them in advance. They apply by calling the theater's main phone number or by using the inquiry form on our website. We only can rent them out to four users a day due to



XREAL Air / XREAL Beam

EPSON MOVERIO BT-40S



limited stock, so we ask users to make a reservation at least one day before.” As explained, a subtitle guide refers to the system where Japanese subtitles are superimposed on the movie being shown, through the smart glasses (EPSON MOVERIO “BT-300”), an eye-glass-type device, worn by the viewer. As with the HELLO! MOVIE audio guides which require the use of earphones, viewers need to bring their own smartphones to the theater. They can bring their private smart glasses; however, only EPSON MOVERIO BT-300 smart glasses are compatible with the movies. Smart glasses supplied by other makers cannot be used. It is expected that it will take some time for smart glasses to become widely available, so rental will likely remain the mainstream for the time being. The smart glasses will be rented out free of charge; however, a general viewing fee for reserved seats needs to be paid. Unfortunately, the smart glasses are not compatible with 3D or IMAX 3D screenings. And, in principle, people with impairments will be prioritized and non-impaired people cannot use this service (this is a rule of the theater I visited for this coverage, and similar rules may not necessarily be applicable to subtitle glasses rental service in other theaters nationwide. Contact each theater for details.)

Joy of being able to go to the movie theater on the first day of release

Now, it’s time to experience an audio guide for the first time with the movie entitled “Belle.” Mr. Shunsuke Narisawa, visually impaired, kindly agreed to watch the movie with me. He is a company manager and lives in Tokyo. Mr. Atsushi Takigawa was also with me. He is President of Evixar Inc. and HELLO! MOVIE Inc., developer and service provider of HELLO! MOVIE. I asked Mr. Narisawa about the appeal of HELLO! MOVIE straightaway. Mr. Narisawa: “It is dangerous for me

to walk around in private and the scenery won’t change if I am alone. It is not easy to walk with someone and there are few things I can enjoy alone. But a service like HELLO! MOVIE enables me to enjoy a movie alone.”

“Of course, I want to enjoy movies alone while I sometimes want to enjoy them with someone else. With my impairments, I couldn’t enjoy games and cartoons with friends when I was little, so it wasn’t easy to make friends. With HELLO! MOVIE, I can enjoy the same movie with someone else. It’s also good to share the same fun with someone and have the same hobby as them.”

“Everyone has opportunities to read other people’s stories and autobiographies; however, I don’t have many chances to read books.”

“If we say to an institution like Japan Braille Library, ‘I want to read this book,’ they will convert it to Braille. Roughly speaking, hundreds of books are converted to Braille in a year. However, those are usually novels. Weekly magazines, etc. that are currently being published cannot be converted. Reading materials, such as magazines, which are produced rapidly or have a real-time nature and seasonality cannot be converted given the amount of human labor required (transcription, etc. into Braille).”

“Contrary to this, HELLO! MOVIE offers many works with audio guides from the first day of release. So, I can watch new movies released on weekends with non-impaired people without any time difference. I believe this service saves several steps which involve human labor.”

HELLO! MOVIE makes me forget the feeling of being blind

Mr. Narisawa continues: “We have audiobooks (such as Audible offered by Amazon) nowadays; however, I do not use Audible so often as I don’t feel comfortable with it. It feels like the story goes in one ear and goes out the

other. With an audiobook, I don’t really get the feeling of really getting into the characters. Meanwhile, the audio guides of HELLO! MOVIE give me a feeling close to the feeling of actually reading a book and it stirs my emotions.”

Mr. Narisawa: “You sometimes hear that people shed tears or deepen their understanding by remembering the part over and over while they read a book, but I cannot do so with Audible. Of course, this may be due to my personality. Anyway, the stories do not go into my head.”

“I think I have pretty good chemistry with HELLO! MOVIE. I think the efforts of HELLO! MOVIE are really attractive,” said Mr. Narisawa.

I, author of this article, think that people often empathize with the characters when they read a book silently; however, narrations of audiobooks may be too curt and monotonous to make people become empathic.

Furthermore, Mr. Narisawa described HELLO! MOVIE as follows: “Intuitively, it is like the movie ‘Satorare’ (see the note below). I think comparing it to Satorare best describes the immersion I feel. In fact, I do not see it with my own eyes; however, I feel like someone is accidentally adding

Note: It refers to the movie “Satorare TRIBUTE to a SAD GENIUS” (Japan, 2001, directed by Katsuyuki Motohiro). ‘Satorare’ people have the ability to convey what they think in their heart to those around them, like a radio. This movie is a human fantasy that describes the relationship between a young Satorare person who has recently become a surgeon and the people around him. This story is set in Japan, which promotes a thorough protection policy to ensure that Satorare people with an IQ over 180 will not be aware of their own Satorare peculiarity. Movie director Katsuyuki Motohiro has adapted Makoto Sato’s popular comic into a movie co-starring Masanobu Ando and Kyoka Suzuki. The main character of this movie is a young man who was a supporting character in the comic of the same title.



"Satorare TRIBUTE to a SAD GENIUS" (Japan, 2001)



109 Cinemas Kawasaki, located in Kawasaki, Kanagawa, cooperated with me in presenting the barrier-free screening service at this time. Experience an audio guide for the first time with the movie entitled "Belle" (IMAX version). Mr. Shunsuke Narisawa, visually impaired, kindly agreed to watch the movie with me.

words to the feeling I get when I feel as if I were seeing it with my eyes. The feeling of it echoing. This is marvelous.”

“It may be an exaggeration to say I can forget the feeling of invisibility when I watch HELLO! MOVIE, but it feels like I’ve reached the point where I can almost forget it.”

Animation is difficult for visually impaired people to understand

I had requested Mr. Narisawa to choose a movie he wanted to see then, in advance. As a result, we settled down to watch the IMAX version of the animation movie “Belle.” This movie is currently in theaters and is a huge hit.

I asked him why he chose it. He said, “Because this movie is getting a lot of attention and is also a hit. Actually, ‘It’s a Flickering Life’ was also a candidate; however, the theme of internet and real life sounds entertaining. I heard about this movie from the movie trailer and wanted to see it.”

Readers of this article may think “Watching an IMAX version with a person who is visually impaired?” This was simply because the screening time of the regular version of the movie did not match the interview schedule, and audio guides of HELLO! MOVIE can be played in synchronization with IMAX versions without any problems. In addition, IMAX versions stress not only the screen images but also the sound, so we took it upon ourselves to try the IMAX version.

Mr. Narusawa: “In fact, it is difficult for visually impaired people to understand animations. This is especially true of Ghibli works.”

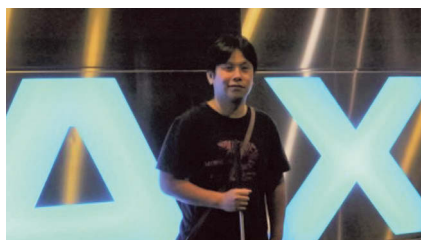
Mr. Narusawa: “I have watched about 10 works with HELLO! MOVIE so far. I would not have had these opportunities if I hadn’t become acquainted with Mr. Takigawa. It’s all thanks to getting to know one of the people who created HELLO! MOVIE. I thank him a lot.”

“When I wanted to watch a movie, I had no other choice but to look for works with audio guides first. It was simply like the environment went from negative to zero. However, with HELLO! MOVIE, most popular works have audio guides, and I can engage myself in a conversation like ‘Which movie are we going to watch today?’” So we have the liberty of “choosing a movie we want to watch,” which non-impaired people take for granted. This is spreading thanks to HELLO! MOVIE.

I asked simple questions here: “Are there any regulations concerning the gender of audio guide narrators? For example, is it selected depending on the gender of the main character? And could a movie have more than one narrator?”

Mr. Narisawa: “It depends. Basically, a movie has one narrator, but there are no specific regulations. If there is more than one, there will be two narrators. It’s rare to have more than two narrators in a movie.”

Mr. Takigawa: “Recently, the number of audio guides in which the actors or voice actors of the works themselves appear is gradually increasing.”



The number of describers has increased due to the spread of HELLO! MOVIE

Mr. Takigawa: “The job of creating audio guides is called ‘describer.’ In the early days of production, it was a volunteer job. However, the occupation of describer has been newly established due partly to HELLO! MOVIE. The production side may still think ‘audio guides need only be offered’ and ‘the cheaper, the better,’ but the

situation has been considerably improved.”

Author: “The movie entitled ‘Radiance,’ directed by Naomi Kawase (2017, see the note below), was selected for competition at the Cannes International Film Festival, and it has a describer as the main character. Like subtitle translators, are some describers better than other? Will their names be listed in the credits?”

Mr. Takigawa: “Yes. With our HELLO! MOVIE service, the audio guide is played on the smartphone app. I think the describers’ names are now more often mentioned at the end of audio guides.”

Apart from those persons who can understand foreign languages like native speakers, for many Japanese people, subtitles or dubbing translations are critical elements. The name of the dubbing translator may not even be listed in the end credits depending on the film distributor, which indicates that the evaluation of describers, the history of which is shorter, is still even lower.

(Note) “Radiance”
Depicts how a woman who has been lost in life (acted by Ayame Misaki) changes through an encounter with a gifted photographer who is losing his eyesight (acted by Masatoshi Nagase), 2017, directed by Naomi Kawase.
(C)2017 “RADIANCE” FILM PARTNERS/KINOSHITA, COMME DES CINEMAS, Kumie



Understanding of audio guides depends on experience level

Mr. Narisawa: “My disease is called retinitis pigmentosa. It is true that I find it difficult to go to the movie the-

ater by myself. The biggest weakness of people with this disease is that they have limited vision and are not good in dark places. It is more difficult to go to an indoor environment, such as a movie theater, museum, or planetarium, than to walk outside.”

“There are several hundred thousand visually impaired people in Japan. For many of them, impairments are associated with aging – they develop symptoms as they age. Indeed, there are only a few thousand visually impaired people under the age of 20. There are very few people who are born with no vision at all. In fact, the visual acuity of many visually impaired people declines with age.”

“In my case, there are some movies that I was able to watch with my own eyesight in the past. I was able to watch movies up to the Ghibli’s Princess Mononoke, with my own eyesight. So, I feel like I can now enjoy movies thanks to my old movie-watching experience and the support of the supplementary audio.”

Author: “Does that mean that your understanding of the movie is supported not only by the audio guide but also by your own experience?”

Mr. Narisawa: “I think that’s pretty much the case. For example, the effects of audio guides change a lot depending on whether the listener understands the ‘concept of color.’ In terms of experience, for example, whether you have experience riding a bike will affect how well you can understand the audio guide. Even if someone tells you that ‘a bike moves forward,’ you won’t understand unless you have ridden one. So, it can be difficult to convey to visually impaired people the content of movies about unknown sports.”

“The same goes for local customs. For example, it is difficult to make audio guides about Japanese culture for foreign people. And considering today’s children are born with digital tools such as YouTube and SNS, I think

there is also a large difference in experience by generation.”

Animation is difficult for visually impaired people to understand

“In fact, animation is difficult for visually impaired people to understand. This is especially true of Ghibli works. There is no sound associated with motions.”

“No sound associated with motions?”

“In animations, there is almost no sound except for the characters’ lines. In a live-action movie, there are a lot of sounds from the people moving around and environmental sounds. In an animation, even if a train is moving, the sound of the train is often not included intentionally.”

This is a surprising and shocking fact. It is true that there may be no art that expresses events through the movement of images as much as animation. When a non-impaired person thinks that “there is a sound,” it means that they are creating the sound in their brain when they see an image.

The actual sound that is played may be the background music (movie music), and sound effects are only added to emphasize the characters or things to which viewers’ attention is wanted. They do not take the time to create environmental sounds that do not matter, and for visually impaired people, this means that “animation has no sound.”

Narisawa: “In addition, time may rewind in some scenes. And even if a time leap is made, it is difficult to know it just from the sound. In animations, characters often recall. Animations often express whether the main character is dreaming or going about their daily life, through images alone. This is why I’m not good with animation.”

Author: “I see. Then, in art-type works, the describer’s ability is tested in a different sense, isn’t it.”

Mr. Narisawa: “That’s right. Particularly in art-type works, there are ele-

ments that can’t be understood unless you put it into words, but once you put it into words, it can come to an end. There are scenes where they stare at each other in silence. Audio guides are often created based on the voices attached to the lines (characters’ lines), so it is difficult to create them without lines in the first place.”

“Even in live-action movies, some directors do not fully describe the meaning. I mean directors who insist on ‘Read between the lines! This is a movie!’ (lol)”

Name of Suzu’s dog, learned from the audio guide

On the day of interview, I experienced an audio guide for the first time with the IMAX version of the movie “Belle.” For comparison, I had already viewed the regular version before the interview. This work has a beautiful synchronization between the very dynamic visual beauty of the virtual reality world and the music.

As usual, I placed my smartphone in the drink holder, inserted an earphone into one ear to listen to the audio guide and main audio at the same time, before start watching the movie. There was a delay in the synchronization of the audio guide at the beginning of the movie, but after that it played smoothly without any problems. I assume that this occurred because there is no such thing as a start flag in HELLO! MOVIE, which is included in the regular version. HELLO! MOVIE, which recognizes the audio patterns of the work, can also be played in the IMAX version.

At the beginning of the movie, I learned from the audio guide for the first time that the name of the dog owned by Suzu, the main character of the movie Belle, is Fuuga. Fuuga does not have a right front paw. Fuuga appears from the beginning of the movie, going for a walk with Suzu before school. The sight of it balancing and eating food is impressive.



Suzu crosses the Asoo-chinkabashi Bridge, Ochi-cho, Kochi Prefecture, crossing over the Niyodo River, to go to school.

According to the original novel, the dog was adopted by Suzu's family as a "rescue dog." It had lost its right front paw after accidentally being caught in a wild boar trap. This indicates that the describer probably also acquired information from the original novel before completing the audio guide.

It is also extremely difficult to explain everything that is happening on screen, such as the characters' movements, facial expressions, clothing, and scene changes. For example, if you convey in words that someone is "angry," we have to imagine how angry he/she is.

There are other things that become clear for the first time through the audio guide. They include names of famous places and historical spots in town, the names of buildings and stations, and dishes.

Meanwhile, whether the viewer can tell that the story is set in Kochi Prefecture depends on his/her experience, regardless of the presence or absence of the audio guide. It is natural that the viewer can't tell unless he/she knows famous things, places, etc. of Kochi Prefecture, in the first place.

Suzu crosses the Asoo-chinkabashi Bridge, Ochi-cho, Kochi Prefecture, crossing over the Niyodo River, to go to school. A "chinkabashi bridge," or submerging bridge, refers to a bridge designed to submerge in water during flood, and the audio guide also uses the expression "crossing the stone bridge." You do not need to be aware

that the bridge is a stone bridge if you watch the regular version. I, the author of this article, became aware of the Asoo-chinkabashi Bridge for the first time through the information given in the audio guide.

Actually, it would appear to be difficult to know that the story is set in Kochi Prefecture just from the audio guide.

Mr. Narisawa: "The word 'slice (of bonito)' came up several times, and I was wondering what it was until the end. The name 'Kagami River' was used, but this would mean little to you if you weren't familiar with Kochi Prefecture. The name 'JR Ino Station' is also local. The line 'Can't go to Kawasaki without getting on a plane' said near the end of the movie made me realize that the story is set far away. In the last 10 minutes or so, I became aware that it might be Kochi Prefecture."

It may be even more difficult for non-impaired people whose source of information is solely images to understand the setting for the story. "Making a pilgrimage to the holy land," that is, visiting locations where an animation story is set, is currently popular. The viewers mostly obtain information of these locations by referring to the Internet after viewing the movie.

The Kagami River, Ino Station, and the dog's name Fuuga can be learned from the audio guide, which is very interesting. I became aware that the prerequisite information is very different between the main story and the audio guide.

Listening to the audio guide and the main story at the same time and blending the information from both channels to understand the story

Author: "I think that this movie reflects the world to a great extent. What do you think about the movie?"

Mr. Narisawa: "It was very entertaining. It has quite a social satirical element. It incorporates themes such as the Internet, avatars, and DV (domestic violence), making the story enjoyable even though it is an animation."

"It is hard to understand the lines which intentionally leave hints at the possibility of something without clear explanations. This movie has a difficult setting, but it was still easy to understand. Not just for this movie, whether you can recognize the main character at an early stage is generally important."

"This movie was worth watching. This work also had a flashback scene unique to animation (scene where Suzu's mother has an accident when Suzu was young)."

"As is also often the case with animation, it was difficult to understand what demonstrative pronouns such as 'here' and 'there' refer to. I find it difficult to understand them unless specific names are mentioned. Rather, I must listen to both the HELLO! MOVIE audio guide and the voices from the main story and blend them to understand."

There are also needs of people with impairments in online video streaming

Author: "Do you also watch movies on online video streaming services?"

Mr. Narisawa: "I usually do not watch movies anywhere other than in theaters. For me, I like the fun of going to the movie theater. I rarely drink Coke outside a theater (lol). It's also fun to listen to movie trailers. I want to watch "First Gentleman" next time.

"The way visually impaired people



watch movies varies from person to person. In fact, many visually impaired people may prefer to watch them in familiar places (such as their home) at their own pace. I think there is also a need for videos that do not cause problems even if you put your eyes too close to the PC display. The functionality to pause the video is also useful when it comes to video streaming.”

In video streaming services offered by Netflix or Amazon Prime Video, audio guides are provided through the supplementary audio functionality; however, these audio guides are provided by the video producers. In other words, the number of audio guides for streamed videos may not increase without promotional activities such as HELLO! MOVIE.

Services that visually impaired people want from movie theaters

Mr. Narisawa: “HELLO! MOVIE alone cannot fulfill all the requirements, so I think it would be nice to have a screening where you can talk to your companion viewers straightaway when you miss something. It would be

good to allow a free conversation screening.”

This may be close to variations of screenings, such as cheer screenings and screenings for moms raising kids, which some theaters have already provided.

“In addition, people who find it difficult to see in dark places want theaters to be more brightly lit. Theater toilets are darker than toilets in other places.”

“Non-impaired people often mistakenly believe that visually impaired people can’t see anything. They do not think that we can see things, albeit with difficulty. It’s not actually a matter of all or nothing. Very few visually impaired people cannot even see light. There are very few completely blind people, who sometimes appear on charity programs on TV. In fact, not many impaired people can read Braille or sign language when communicating.”

Lighting designs with an emphasis on atmosphere could constitute a non-barrier-free environment in highly public facilities.

Mr. Narisawa: “A player of blind soccer who I know says ‘On the pitch, I

can forget that I’m visually impaired.’ It’s because everyone wears a sleeping mask. When I watch a movie with the HELLO! MOVIE service, I could feel a sense of joy that I can enjoy as other people do or a sense of immersion in the work if not making me forget I’m visually impaired. I don’t have many experiences like this in everyday life.”

This interview was an opportunity for me, the author of this article, to re-understand how the audio and subtitle guides offered by the HELLO! MOVIE service play an important role. And many of the perspectives of people with impairments that became clear to me for the first time thanks to active and honest talk of Mr. Narisawa were surprising to a non-impaired person.

What a barrier-free environment should provide can simply be things that non-impaired people take for granted. Unfortunately, existing barrier-free services are still full of excuses. (Source: An article published on the “Home Theater CHANNEL” website on September 30, 2021.)



Blu-ray



“Belle” (SPECIAL EDITION)

[UltraHD Blu-ray]

This Blu-ray is on sale only in Japan.

VPXT-71892 Price:9,680 Yen (tax included)

Disc:Full-length BD disc + UHD-BD (Dolby Vision® & Dolby Atmos®) Full-length disc + 2 bonus discs

Specifications:Main 121 min. + bonus footage / 4 discs / Main audio: 1. Japanese linear PCM 2.0 ch, 2. Japanese Dolby Atmos, 3. Linear PCM 2.0 ch with barrier-free Japanese audio guide / barrier-free Japanese subtitles (main feature only)

Full-length Blu-ray: Single-sided dual-layer/color/16:9 CinemaScope<1080p High-Definition

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