

AKIRA

The story of a film made for seven hundred million yen and of a legend made from a press release. Both figures checked, and the difference explained.

1982

THE MANGA BEGINS

1988

THE FILM OPENS

¥700M

THE REAL COST

30

PAGES, FREE

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A MONOGRAPH EVERY WEDNESDAY

Thinking Lite Soft publishes a free monograph every Wednesday about a work that explains cyberpunk. Essay, checked data and industry context. In PDF and EPUB, in Spanish and English, no sign-up and no data harvesting. This is number 02.

WHY THIS ISSUE CORRECTS SO MUCH

Almost every famous figure attached to Akira comes from the same place: the 1988 publicity apparatus. They survived thirty years because nobody went and looked at the paperwork. Here are the good ones, sourced, along with the story of how the others were manufactured, which is just as interesting.

WHO SIGNS IT

Words by Mark S. James. Editing, design and layout by Thinking Lite Soft, a visual novel studio in Barcelona. This issue is laid out without film stills or manga pages: the artwork is our own.

TRANSPARENCY

Pages 26 and 27 are studio notebook and they talk about PRECINCT 2099, our own game. They carry the studio's yellow identity so they stay separate from the body of the essay.

01

TEN EPISODES AND DONE, SAID THE EDITOR

Kodansha was launching a magazine and needed a name. Katsuhiro Otomo was twenty-eight, had a science fiction prize at home, and a habit of drawing the final page without sketching it first.

Otomo was born on 14 April 1954 in Hasama, a town in Miyagi prefecture that is now part of the city of Tome, in rural northeastern Japan. He tells it without decoration: «I am from Tohoku, in northern Japan and it's a very rural area so didn't have anything to do during my childhood, so I read a lot of manga.» He finished high school, moved to Tokyo and phoned an editor he had already spoken to. He was hired from that call.

He debuted in 1973, aged nineteen, with a comics adaptation of Prosper Mérimée's *Mateo Falcone* in a special issue of *Manga Action*. Over the following years he built up short stories and a reputation as an artist who took backgrounds seriously. Then came *Domu*.

Between 1973 and 1977 he strung together short stories in *Weekly Manga Action*. In 1979 he attempted his first science fiction, *Fireball*, and left it unfinished. In 1981 he took a Japan Cartoonists Association prize and in 1982 a Seiun for *Kibun wa mō sensō*. At twenty-eight the craft was already there, along with a way of drawing you could recognise across a room.

THE COMIC THAT WON A LITERATURE PRIZE

Domu ran in fits and starts between 1980 and 1981, in special issues of an action magazine, and was collected in a single volume on 18 August 1983. It is the story of a housing block where somebody is killing neighbours with their mind. That same year it won the Nihon SF Taisho, the major prize of Japanese science fiction, until then reserved for literature. It was the first comic to take it.

A comic about psychic powers enters the roll of honour of Japanese literary science fiction. From that point on, Otomo can ask for what he wants.

Naoki Urasawa, who is who he is, put it in 2025 in a sentence that leaves little room: the manga we read today would not have this shape if *Domu* had not been published. Taiyō Matsumoto decided to do this for a living after reading it. Satoshi Kon said it was the manga he would most have liked to adapt.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY CHAPTERS ACROSS EIGHT YEARS

Kodansha had just launched *Young Magazine* and came looking for him. Otomo remembers it with exactly the right amount of indifference: «It started when *Young Magazine* was published, as it was a new magazine. The publisher visited me and asked me repeatedly to write something for them.» And then the line that explains the next eight years: «I remember from the first meeting with the publisher for *Akira* that it would only be like ten episodes or something like that, so quite short and would be done quickly.»

The first chapter ran in issue 24 of 1982, cover-dated 20 December. The last one in the issue dated 25 June 1990. One hundred and twenty chapters, six volumes, more than two thousand pages. Of the ten planned episodes, all that survived was the memory of the meeting.

Each instalment ran between fifteen and twenty-six pages and carried a title illustration drawn for the occasion. The collected volumes came out in B5, the same size as the magazine, with tinted page edges. They are not identical to what had appeared fortnightly: the volumes involved additions, corrections, deletions, reordered pages and redrawn art. The complete edition Kodansha published decades later returns the pages, title illustrations included, to the state in which they ran in the magazine.

THE METHOD: NO SKETCH AND NO SAFETY NET

He worked straight onto the final board. «My method was to completely draw the first page as a warm-up without preparatory sketches, directly on the final board, with no reworking, to get going as quickly as possible.» In another interview he puts it even more flatly: he drew on the same page he handed in to the editors, no do-overs.

The density of the backgrounds came from a declared devotion to Shigeru Mizuki. «I think drawing backgrounds in this much detail was influenced by the manga of Shigeru Mizuki, whom I'm a huge fan of. Backgrounds take up the most space in any panel.» And on Tokyo, the line that sums up his whole body of work: «In Tokyo, buildings are eternally being torn down and rebuilt. I can instinctively see how a building would collapse.»

WHAT STORY HE WAS TELLING

Otomo explained it in 2016: «I wanted to draw this story set in a Japan similar to how it was after the end of World War II—rebellious governmental factions; a rebuilding world; foreign political influence, an uncertain future; a bored and reckless younger generation racing each other on bikes. *Akira* is the story of my own teenage years, rewritten to take place in the future.»

There is a second reason, and it has to do with an old wound. *Fireball*, his first attempt at science fiction, in 1979, was left unfinished for lack of preparation. «Due to a lack of preparation, I had to bring *Fireball* to a hurried end without the finale I had in mind, so I didn't want to repeat that disappointment. You could say that *Akira* was born from the frustration I had about that at the time.»

There is a detail of the calendar that Otomo left inside the fiction and almost nobody looks at. In the manga, the bomb that erases Tokyo falls on 6 December 1982 at seventeen minutes past two in the afternoon. That is the same fortnight the serialisation reached the newsstand. That invented date has since found its way into dozens of reference pages as though it were the publication date of the first chapter.

THE MANGA, PIECE BY PIECE

What you need to know about the comic that started all of it, with the sources that hold up every line.

AUTHOR	Katsuhiro Otomo. Hasama, Miyagi prefecture, 14 April 1954
DEBUT	1973, aged nineteen, adapting Mérimée in <i>Manga Action</i>
PREVIOUS WORK	<i>Domu</i> (1980-1981), <i>Nihon SF Taisho</i> 1983 and <i>Seiun</i> 1984
MAGAZINE	<i>Weekly Young Magazine</i> , Kodansha. Fortnightly in 1982
FIRST CHAPTER	Issue 24 of 1982, cover-dated 20 December
LAST CHAPTER	Cover-dated 25 June 1990
CHAPTERS	120, of between fifteen and twenty-six pages each
VOLUMES	6, KC Deluxe imprint, from September 1984 to March 1993
LENGTH	More than 2,000 pages, by Dark Horse's own account
RATE	Over 300 pages a year, peaking at 586 pages in 1984
THE GAP	Nineteen months between chapters 87 and 88, because of the film
PRIZE	Kodansha Manga Award, general category, 1984, with the series still running
US EDITION	Epic Comics, 38 issues between 1988 and 1996, in colour
REFERENCE EDITION	Dark Horse, six black and white volumes, 2000-2002
FORMAT	B5 volumes, the size of the magazine, with tinted edges
INTERNAL DATE	The bomb falls on Tokyo on 6 December 1982, at 14:17
INSTALMENTS	Fifteen to twenty-six pages, each with its own title page
THE COLOUR EDITION	Never completed in collections: the final run exists only in single issues
THE AUTHOR, AFTER	Angoulême Grand Prix 2015: first Japanese author to win it

02

THE NUMBER
THAT CAME
OUT OF A
PRESS KIT

For thirty-two years everyone repeated that Akira cost one point one billion yen. In June 2020 a producer asked out loud where that number had come from.

The good figure is seven hundred million yen. The initial budget was five hundred million. It comes from Ken Kakuda, Kodansha's production manager on the film and the representative of the company running the committee, in an interview for Morihiko Saitō's book on the economics of Japanese animated cinema: «The initial budget was 500 million yen, but in the end it came to 700 million.»

At the 1988 average rate, around one hundred and twenty-eight yen to the dollar, that seven hundred million is about five and a half million dollars. The most expensive anime film ever made, they said. That same year Disney spent around thirty-one million on *Oliver & Company*.

WHERE THE 1.1 BILLION CAME FROM

Toho's marketing department. The distributor handed out press material quoting one billion yen in production cost. It was publicity: in bubble-era Japan, announcing an enormous budget was part

of the campaign. That figure circulated, got rounded upwards on the internet to one point one billion, and settled into Wikipedia. From there it went out to the rest of the world, including the translations that turned yen into dollars and reported that the film had cost eleven million.

Producer Shigeru Watanabe asked it in public in 2020: «Where did the figure of 1.1 billion come from?» Nobody had an answer.

Watanabe had been an executive at Bandai Visual, one of the eight companies on the committee, and had worked with Otomo on other projects. He pointed at Kakuda's statement and explained where the myth came from. The journalist Ruchiyo Fukuda published it in ITmedia on 8 June 2020 under a headline that left no room: Akira did not cost 1.1 billion, it cost around 700 million.

THE FILM WASN'T THE FLOP THE STORY SAYS EITHER

The second legend says *Akira* sank in Japan. It comes from the same place. The film took in around seven hundred and fifty million yen in distributor revenue in 1988, according to the annual *Kinema Junpo* box office accounting published on 7 February 1989. Set against the billion in the press kit, that is a hole. Set against the seven hundred it actually cost, it is a film that held.

It also helps to know what is being measured. Japanese 配給収入 is not gross box office: it is what the distributor keeps after splitting with the exhibitors, historically between half and sixty per cent. Japan only began publishing gross takings as a standard metric in 2000. Seven hundred and fifty million in distributor revenue implies a gross of the order of one point three to one point five billion.

AND THAT IS BEFORE EVERYTHING THAT FOLLOWED

That calculation is made before adding home video, laserdisc, merchandising and the entire international run that began in 1989. The domestic failure headline only works if you compare against a number that was advertising.

THE COMPARISON THAT DOESN'T HOLD EITHER

«The most expensive anime film in history to that point» stands on announced budgets. *Castle in the Sky* (1986) is listed at eight hundred million announced. *Royal Space Force* (1987) announced eight hundred, and its own producer, Toshio Okada, and its director, Hiroyuki Yamaga, later gave real figures of between three hundred and sixty and four hundred and forty million. Marketing fictions were being compared with each other.

An honest formulation survives, and it is still impressive: one of the most expensive animated productions made in Japan to that date, with seven hundred million yen documented. The absolute record label falls apart the moment you ask for the paperwork.

AND THE THIRD CLAIM DOESN'T HOLD EITHER

The English Wikipedia states that *Akira* was the sixth highest-grossing Japanese film of 1988. With seven hundred and fifty million in distributor revenue it does not even reach the top twenty of that year, which was led by *Tonkō* with something on the order of four and a half billion. The original claim may have meant another metric, animated films or Toho releases, and as written it does not stand.

The drift has an English-language version with its own signature. *Variety*, in the review of the day, describes an eight million dollar extravaganza. Others published ten and eleven. Finding any of those three numbers in a piece about *Akira* is the quickest signal that the piece copied another one.

The full trail of the figure is in *ITmedia* (8 June 2020) and in *Crunchyroll News* the same day. The English Wikipedia took on the correction but keeps claims from the older data set around it.

03

EIGHT
COMPANIES
TO PAY FOR
ONE FILM

In Akira's credits, where a producer should be, there is a list. That list is the system that has financed Japanese anime ever since, and here it appears almost in its original form.

A Japanese production committee is not a company. It is a voluntary association with no legal personality of its own, outside corporate law, under no obligation to publish accounts. It does two things: it spreads the risk, so a failure is divided among several companies instead of sinking one, and it spreads the specialisation, because a publisher cannot distribute to cinemas and a distributor cannot manufacture toys.

Decisions are taken by simple majority among the members, and one of them acts as secretary and concentrates the effective authority. Creators sit structurally outside that table, even when they are part of the committee. And there is a useful reading trick: the order in which the companies appear in the credits tells you who put in the most money.

THE EIGHT NAMES

The film's production and copyright credit names the Akira Committee, made up of Kodansha, Mainichi Broadcasting System, Bandai, Hakuhodo, Toho, Laserdisc Corporation, Sumitomo Corporation and Tokyo Movie Shinsha. Eight entities. The English-language version that circulates most lists only seven and leaves out the studio that made the animation.

Nausicaä needed two companies in 1984. Akira needed eight. The difference is exactly the size of the budget.

Kodansha comes first, which is what you expect from the owner of the manga and the largest contributor. Toho handled cinema distribution. Tokyo Movie Shinsha made the animation. Mainichi provided the television window, Bandai the merchandising, Hakuhodo the campaign and Laserdisc the home video: it was Laserdisc that released the making-of nine days after the premiere.

Otomo set a condition before agreeing to direct. He had worked on an earlier film without authority over the result, and this time he demanded total creative control. He got it, and it is probably the decision that shows most on screen. The production credits name Ryohei Suzuki and Shunzo Kato; the real authority sat spread across the eight companies on the list, at a table where the author of the original work, by the design of the system, does not vote.

SUMITOMO DIDN'T ONLY PUT IN MONEY: IT PUT IN THE COMPUTERS

The eighth company on the list is the easiest one to dismiss as a wallet. Sumitomo Corporation is a trading house, a *sōgō shōsha*, and the textbooks use it as the typical example of the trading house that joins an anime committee to supply capital. On *Akira* it did something more.

The film's computer graphics carry three names: Hi-Tech Lab Japan, Wavefront Technologies — the American software house — and Sumisho Electronic Systems, which is the Sumitomo group's IT subsidiary. Which is to say the financial partner also supplied the technical capability.

WHAT THE COMPUTER WAS FOR IN 1988

Very little, and for very specific things, which is exactly what makes it interesting. Doctor Ōnishi's brainwave pattern display, that shape nobody can trace by hand with any precision, was generated in 3D and composited over cel backgrounds. It was also used to calculate the trajectories of falling objects, parallax effects in backgrounds and adjustments to lighting and lens flares.

The computer animated nobody. It generated geometry and calculated parameters that the traditional pipeline then executed. Which is why Kuni Tomita, a key animator on the team, can say something thirty years later that sounds contradictory and is not: «We (animators) didn't even use computers back then. (It was) all hand-drawn.»

THE COMMITTEE THAT STAYED

The model moved to television in 1992 with *The Irresponsible Captain Tylor* and became general after *Evangelion* in 1995. Today it finances practically all the anime being made. And it keeps the trait it already had here: the animation studio works as a subcontractor and normally takes no share of merchandising or advertising revenue.

The making-of Laserdisc released runs fifty minutes, is called *AKIRA PRODUCTION REPORT*, came out on 25 July 1988 and cost four thousand eight hundred yen. A second volume followed on VHS in November. A good part of what is known today about how the film was made, including the colour coordinator's statements quoted later, comes off those two tapes.

There is no public paperwork on the exact split of contributions. The committee was under no obligation to publish accounts and it did not publish them. What can be documented is each company's corporate role and the functions that appear in the credits; for Mainichi Broadcasting, for instance, the standard role of a broadcaster inside a committee is known, and the specific *Akira* contract has yet to surface. We say so because the complete table that circulates online does not exist.

The list of eight comes from the on-screen credit as recorded by the Japanese Wikipedia. The link between Sumitomo and Sumisho Electronic Systems is in the film's CG credits.

AKIRA (1988)

The production data that survives a check, and the data that doesn't, described as what it is.

DIRECTOR	Katsuhiro Otomo, who demanded total creative control before agreeing
SCREENPLAY	Katsuhiro Otomo and Izo Hashimoto
ANIMATION DIRECTOR	Takashi Nakamura, credited in hiragana
ASSISTANT ANIMATION DIRECTOR	Koji Morimoto
ART DIRECTION	Toshiharu Mizutani
PHOTOGRAPHY	Katsuji Misawa · Editing: Takeshi Seyama
SOUND	Susumu Aketagawa, direction · Tetsuo Segawa, recording
MUSIC	Geinoh Yamashirogumi, led by Shoji Yamashiro
STUDIO	Tokyo Movie Shinsha, with Telecom Animation Film
PRODUCTION	Akira Committee, eight companies · Distribution: Toho
RELEASE	16 July 1988, Japan · 124 minutes
COST	700 million yen, about 5.5 million 1988 dollars
STORYBOARD	738 final pages, distilled from some 2,000 of notes
DRAWINGS	Around 150,000, a consequence of animating on twos instead of threes
CUTS	Around 2,200 · Colours: 327, per the production material
EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION	Ryohei Suzuki and Shunzo Kato
COMPUTER GRAPHICS	Hi-Tech Lab Japan, Sumisho Electronic Systems and Wavefront Technologies
LEAD VOICES	Mitsuo Iwata (Kaneda), Nozomu Sasaki (Tetsuo), Mami Koyama (Kei)
BOX OFFICE	750 million yen in distributor revenue in Japan, 1988
MAKING-OF	AKIRA PRODUCTION REPORT, 50-minute laserdisc, 25 July 1988

04

ANIMATING
ON TWOS,
WHICH COSTS
TRIPLE

The technical decision that explains what *Akira* looks like fits in two Japanese words, and it appears in none of the fun-fact lists going round the internet.

Japanese anime in the eighties was mostly animated «on threes»: one drawing every three frames, eight drawings a second. It is the technique that made an entire industry affordable and the one that gives Japanese television animation its recognisable cadence. *Akira* was animated «on twos»: one drawing every two frames, twelve a second, as the baseline.

The arithmetic result of that decision is around one hundred and fifty thousand animation drawings. For scale: *My Neighbour Totoro*, released the same year, used around fifty thousand. *Akira* triples Ghibli, and it does so because it chose to move differently.

The decision gets paid for in people. Every second of screen time demands half again the work of the country's standard, and that half, multiplied by two thousand two hundred cuts and a hundred and twenty-four minutes, produces exactly the account Otomo gives when he says they did not

have enough animators. The technique that makes *Akira* move the way it moves is the same one that wrecked its schedule.

The famous figure is 160,000 cels. The Japanese sources say 150,000 drawings, which is a different quantity altogether.

WHERE THE FIGURE BROKE

The international press notes said «160,000 single pictures». The account in *The Japan Times* says «160,000 frames». The word cel appears in no original source. The conversion of «pictures» into «animation cels» was made by the English Wikipedia citing the backmatter of the 1988 Epic Comics issue, and everyone copied from there. A cel can hold several levels and a drawing can be reused: the two quantities do not match.

THREE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN COLOURS FOR A FILM SET AT NIGHT

Akira takes place almost entirely at night. Animation avoided night scenes for exactly that reason: they cost chromatic range, and chromatic range costs money and labour. The film's colour sheet records three hundred and twenty-seven references, of which around fifty were mixed specifically for it.

The colour coordinator, Kimie Yamana, explained it to the making-of camera in 1988 without giving a single number: «If you look at the color chart you'll see the tremendous variety of dark tones. Many colors you wouldn't see in other animation. There's such subtlety in the various tones, you wouldn't notice them on a television screen. But in the theater the large variety of colors really makes a difference.»

It is worth spelling out what «creating a colour» means in cel painting: mixing and registering a new opaque paint reference in the studio's catalogue. Plenty of popular accounts tell it as though Akira had widened the visible spectrum. It is laboratory and archive work, and it explains why the figure appears in the production material and in nobody's mouth on the team.

THE LEVEL OF DETAIL, DESCRIBED BY THE MAN IN CHARGE OF IT

Art director Toshiharu Mizutani described the standard in the cinema programme for the premiere: «Even in a single window of a building,

the kind you would normally fudge with a glint of glass, everything is drawn precisely: the lighting, even the small objects sitting on the desk.»

The key animation credits are another thing worth reading slowly. Toshiyuki Inoue, Hiroyuki Okiura, Yoshinori Kanada, Koji Morimoto, Satoru Utsunomiya, Shinya Ohira, Yasuomi Umetsu, Hiroyuki Kitakubo, Makiko Futaki and many more. Telecom Animation Film, the studio's subsidiary, contributes its own block of animators listed separately. It is the roll call of the people who would define the next twenty years of anime, working here at the same time and on the same film.

ONE MONTH FOR ONE SEQUENCE

The sequence of the toys assembling themselves was animated by Hiroshi Kawasaki, and it took him a full month of painstaking work. The Japanese animators' archive records it as 労作: laborious work.

And yet the director does not remember a disciplined army. Otomo, in 2017: «There were just too many cuts. I think there were more than two thousand cuts in the end. That meant we didn't have enough animators to do all the work. So each animator had way more work than they could do. The studio had to outsource the animation abroad to reduce the costs and they weren't very good.»

05

VOICES
FIRST,
UNTIL THE
AIR RAN
OUT

Japanese anime dubs over mouths that are already drawn. Akira did it the other way round, the way the West does, and that decision changed who could be cast.

The Japanese norm is called アフレコ, after-recording: you animate first and the actors fit their performance to the rhythm of the drawing. Akira used プレスコ, prescoring: the voices were recorded first and the mouths animated on top. Otomo also created lip movement patterns specific to the film, which makes the sync read as more fluid than in conventional anime.

The sound director, Susumu Aketagawa, summed it up in a sentence that goes to the bottom of the matter: «The actors were able to set their own timing and pauses in the performance.» It was recorded over the storyboards. Since the storyboards were running late, it had to be recorded in batches.

Prescoring is the Western practice, the Disney model, and in Japanese anime it was an exception. It has a side effect that shows up decades later: the mouths end up fitted to specific Japanese phonemes, which makes dubbing into other languages considerably harder. The animators' archive also preserves the physical trace of the

method: some of Takashi Nakamura's early drawings were made as lip sync tests.

«You don't take the timing of the drawing: you take your own timing.» Mitsuo Iwata, the voice of Kaneda, on the difference between the two methods.

A RADIO PLAY WITH TWO THOUSAND STORYBOARD PANELS

Iwata told it in 2019: «I was surprised by the prescoring, which was rare even then. They gave us the script and a brutal quantity of storyboards and, with no picture, we recorded it as though it were a radio play.» Nozomu Sasaki, who played Tetsuo, adds the effect it had: «Because there were no restrictions, I could do the intonation and the pauses I wanted, and that let me concentrate on the character.»

THE LEGENDARY METHOD WAS ABANDONED HALFWAY THROUGH

Aketagawa chose Iwata precisely because he came from live action, with the craft of a camera actor and none of the dubbing trade's habits, and asked him for his own realistic performance. He brought a theatre sensibility that contrasted with the established *seiyū* of the period. Sasaki describes the room: «It was a high-ceilinged studio and we moved around inside it, so it felt like a small theatre.»

Iwata went off script in the motorbike sequence with Kei, improvised comic lines and the director let the take run. Those improvisations ended up in the final cut. Iwata found out watching the film.

AND THEN THE WORKLOAD ARRIVED

The animation director, Takashi Nakamura, said in 2002 what no reference page says: «We only recorded in advance the voices that carried emotional weight. Each key animator prepared their own tape and drew while listening to it... At the start we did it all the time, but... no, we stopped, especially in the second half. We were sunk by the sheer volume of work.»

It fits with everything else. The two thousand two hundred cuts, the animators who were not enough, the outsourcing abroad. Akira's prescoring was an ambition of actor direction that the production ate through halfway, and it still left

the first hour of the film with a rhythm of performance that had no equivalent in the anime of its time.

Aketagawa also says there were later adjustments at several points: recording before drawing does not save you a return to the studio. With the storyboards arriving late, the film was recorded in batches, and each batch set the timing of the scenes that then had to be animated on top.

There is a reading that gets past the heroic version. Akira's prescoring worked where the film had money and time, which is to say at the start. The second half was animated the way everything else in Japan was animated in 1988, and it is still extraordinary. Both things are true at once, and that makes a better story than the slogan.

THE CAST

Kaneda, Mitsuo Iwata. Tetsuo, Nozomu Sasaki. Kei, Mami Koyama. The Colonel, Tarō Ishida. Ryu, Tesshō Genda. Doctor Ōnishi, Mizuho Suzuki. The three numbered children: Fukue Itō, Tatsuhiko Nakamura and Kazuhiro Kandō.

Aketagawa's statements come from his «音物語» column in Anime Hack (16 July 2019 and 2 January 2020).

Iwata's and Sasaki's, from ENCOUNTER, 1 November 2019. Nakamura's, from Akira Archive, 2002.

06

AN AGRICULTURE
DOCTOR WRITES
THE SCORE

The man who signed Akira's music took his doctorate with a thesis on ergot alkaloids. It is not colour: his scientific career is what explains how the film sounds.

His name is Tsutomu Ōhashi, he was born on 14 March 1933 in Tochigi prefecture and he signs his musical work as Shoji Yamashiro. He studied agricultural chemistry at Tohoku University and took his doctorate there in 1975. He then taught at Tsukuba and at the Chiba Institute of Technology, and headed the KANSEI brain science department at the ATR laboratories. His declared fields include molecular biology, artificial life and something called staging engineering.

In 1974 he founded Geinoh Yamashirogumi after successfully mounting a full performance of Balinese kecak. The collective came out of an earlier choir that sang Bulgarian women's polyphony. It performs around eighty distinct musical traditions from around the world, and its members are deliberately amateur: teachers, journalists, engineers, students. More than ten hold doctorates.

The collective describes itself as civilisation criticism through action, and every summer it stages a kecak festival on the plaza of a Shinjuku tower. How they ended up on Akira has two versions that fit together: Otomo knew their 1986

record Ecophony Rinne, and Aketagawa says he was the one who proposed them and that what finally convinced Yamashiro was discovering that a good part of his members were young readers of Otomo.

«Anyone in the village can play it, and the more people play, the better the art turns out.» Ōhashi on why gamelan spreads the difficulty unevenly.

HOW HE TOOK THE COMMISSION

By saying no. Otomo turned up at his house and Yamashiro refused on the spot — «out of the question», he remembers saying — on the grounds that he had no experience with commercial film music. He gave in under persistence. And once inside, he described it this way: «All I did was go all out and write totally self-complacent music that I wanted to hear, other people be damned.» In the same interview he compared the process to swinging a sword with his eyes closed.

BAMBOO PERCUSSION, NŌ CHANT AND A MOTORBIKE RECORDED AT DAWN

The record credits give names by school: Nobuyuki Shirasaka on ōtsuzumi, Junzo Miyamasu on kotsuzumi, Yukihiro Issō on nō flute, Masamichi Yamazaki on shite-kata chant. There is a credited Balinese voice, Ida Bagus Sugata. And there are Roland D-50 and Yamaha DX7-II synthesisers, reprogrammed because the digital instruments of the period could not hold gamelan tunings and they had to be rebuilt.

The motorbike sound did not come from a library. Aketagawa says they borrowed a Rikuo — the Harley-Davidson built under licence in Japan, very deep in the bottom end — and recorded it at dawn beside the Sendagaya studios, with microphones placed on the roof of the building. That material was reused for the highway scenes.

The record came out attached to the film. The single with the theme from *Akira* was released on 16 July 1988, the day of the premiere; the *Symphonic Suite Akira* eleven days later, ten tracks and almost seventy minutes; and the soundtrack with dialogue in October. It was recorded in three different halls — the Victor studios in Aoyama, the Vario Hall and the Hitomi auditorium — and mixed in Aoyama.

THE THESIS APPLIED TO THE FILM THIRTY-TWO YEARS LATER

In 2000 Ōhashi published an article in the *Journal of Neurophysiology* arguing for what he calls the hypersonic effect: sound components above

twenty-five kilohertz, which nobody consciously hears, would increase alpha activity in the brain when heard mixed with everything else. In 2014 he extended the finding by distinguishing frequencies that help from frequencies that get in the way.

A DISPUTED THESIS

This is not settled fact. A 2007 Boston Audio Society double blind test returned 49.5 per cent correct answers, equivalent to chance. The NHK laboratories attempted to reproduce the results without success, and four hundred and eighty listening tests run by Laurie Fincham at KEF found no difference. We say so here because the film itself applies it.

For the 2020 4K remaster, Yamashiro personally remixed the «Kaneda» theme and supervised a master at 192 kHz with ultrasonic content up to 96 kHz, through a proprietary process he calls Hypersonic Pegasus. His official comment of 24 April 2020 closes the circle: «At last the sound world of *Akira* that I conceived more than thirty years ago can be enjoyed in something close to its original form.»

The Miraikan in Tokyo keeps a permanent installation devoted to that score, with six speakers and a gamelan on display as an exhibit. The music of a 1988 animated film is shown in a science museum, and the label on the case talks about frequencies.

07

THE MANGA
ENDS TWO
YEARS LATER

In July 1988 Otomo released the adaptation of a story he was still writing. The last chapter of the comic came out on 25 June 1990.

To decide what went into the film he wrote the ending first and worked backwards, seeing which elements of the manga fitted into two hours. He filled some two thousand notebook pages with ideas and designs, and the final storyboard came to seven hundred and thirty-eight.

Meanwhile the manga stopped. Between chapter 87, on 20 April 1987, and chapter 88, on 21 November 1988, there are nineteen months of silence covering exactly the production and release of the film. Before that gap the pace had gone up: «By the time production began on the anime *Akira*, the manga was running on a weekly schedule—in other words, we drew 20 pages a week. When the manga deadline drew near, we'd pull several all-nighters, then I'd walk right into the anime studio the day after.»

To hold that pace he brought in a second assistant and, when a deadline squeezed, a third just for the screentone. Eight years of serialisation average

out at over three hundred pages a year, peaking at five hundred and eighty-six in 1984, the same year he won the Kodansha manga prize with the series half published.

From volume 4, July 1987, to volume 5, December 1990, three and a half years pass. The whole film happens inside that gap.

WHAT THE FILM LEAVES OUT

The entire political arc of the final stretch. In the manga, Tetsuo becomes de facto sovereign of the Great Tokyo Empire over the ruins, with his court of followers. There is a foreign military intervention, by the United States and the United Nations, that does not exist in the film. And Akira is a living, present character rather than cryogenic remains and a set of visions.

TWO VERSIONS OF THE SAME STORY, WITH TWO DIFFERENT ENDINGS

Lady Miyako, who in the comic is a former test subject, a spiritual leader and a central piece of the resolution, has a minimal role in the film. Chiyoko, George Yamada and others vanish or become extras. The manga's ensemble cast, where Kaneda is one protagonist among several, concentrates on screen onto Kaneda and Tetsuo.

The change to Tetsuo is the more productive of the two. In the manga his slide is faster and more merciless. The film gives him a motive you understand immediately — the inferiority complex of the kid the gang treats as the little one — and with that it turns an escalation of power into a story about two friends.

There is another block the film leaves out: the drugs. The government pill programme for containing psychic capability carries a weight in the comic that the screen barely gestures at. The relationship between Kei and Kaneda, which reaches explicit romance in the manga, stays here at a hinted flirtation. And Kaori's death differs enough between the two versions to change whose story it is.

THE TWO ENDINGS

The film's is emotional: Kaneda and Tetsuo meet again through their shared memories of the

orphanage and the singularity resolves as a cosmic event. The manga's is political: the United Nations forces are fought and the Great Tokyo Empire is proclaimed. It gains in complexity what it loses in sweetness.

Otomo, in 2017, on the first cut: «Actually, when I saw the first rush of the movie version of Akira I thought it would be a failure.» And afterwards: «Maybe time had made me softer but when I saw it again I thought, 'Oh, this is interesting' and that maybe it wasn't so bad after all.»

With the years he came to appreciate having two different versions of the same thing, and he went on thinking too much of the original had been cut. Both fit in the same head, and it is probably the most honest thing that can be said about an adaptation made by the author himself of a work he was still writing.

A QUOTE WORTH LOOKING AT TWICE

It gets repeated a lot that Otomo called making the film before finishing the manga «the worst possible idea». The line comes from a 2010 book by Jonathan Clements, not from a consultable interview. The fact is documented; the quote is second hand. We flag it because that is exactly what this issue is about.

08

GEORGETOWN, CHRISTMAS 1989

Akira did not arrive in the West with a studio campaign. It arrived with two neighbourhood cinemas, a label founded months earlier and a full year of word of mouth.

Streamline Pictures was founded in late 1988 in Los Angeles by the writer Carl Macek and the animation historian Jerry Beck. It was one of the first North American companies created with the express purpose of distributing anime translated, uncut and faithful to the original.

Its release of Akira occupied the Biograph cinema in Georgetown, Washington, from 25 December 1989 to 11 January 1990. Two and a half weeks. In parallel, the Cinema 21 in Portland had it from 29 December to 4 January. New York did not see it until the Film Forum, 19 to 25 October 1990.

The American take from that circuit was around four hundred and forty thousand dollars, with a peak position of nineteen. As a cinema business that is almost nothing. As a market operation it was the first time an adult, uncut anime went round American cinemas with a campaign of its own, and it opened the gap later filled by Manga Entertainment, Central Park Media and AnimeEgo.

None of those venues is a multiplex. The film took nearly a year to cross the United States from one city to the next.

BRITAIN, AND THE LABEL THAT CAME OUT OF IT

The British release was on 25 January 1991, through Island Visual Arts, a subsidiary of Island Records. It took £439,345 on its opening weekend, entered the box office at number three and held four weeks in the top ten. The unexpected success led Andy Frain, Island's marketing director, to found a label dedicated to nothing else: Manga Video. Out of that came the adult, aggressive reputation anime carried in the British market through the nineties.

AN IBM 286 AND A COMIC THAT CHANGED COLOUR

Alongside the cinema run, Marvel published the manga in the United States through its Epic imprint: thirty-eight issues between September 1988 and February 1996. The pages were mirrored to read left to right, the sound effects were redrawn and Otomo reworked backgrounds so the compositions would function reversed. And it was coloured throughout.

The colourist was Steve Oliff, chosen personally by Otomo after editor Archie Goodwin introduced them. His team worked with an IBM 286 at twelve megahertz, an AT&T Targa graphics board, DOS and unstable software, plus a homemade heat sink to cool the maths coprocessor. The first ten issues were coloured without seeing a single printed proof: somebody scanned the pages and posted him the floppy disks.

WHAT WAS ACTUALLY NEW

Oliff puts it precisely when he wants to be precise: it was the first time the artist making the colour guide was also the one executing the colour separation. What that allowed was free gradients anywhere in the frame and colours outside the industry's standard screened palette. The first issue took him three months.

The method was mixed. Oliff made the full colour guides by hand and his crew reproduced them afterwards on the computer. To keep chromatic coherence with the film he was sent colour slides from the 1988 picture. Otomo supervised closely

for the first five or six issues and then let go. Oliff points to issue 32 as his high point of technical experiment, and remembers the hardest page was the baby, from trying to make the skin look translucent.

THE SUPERLATIVE THAT NEEDS QUALIFYING

«The first comic coloured by computer» comes from Oliff himself, and it is the reference that holds the claim up on Wikipedia. Academic sources lower the volume: «one of the first». *Shatter* (1985) is earlier, for a different reason: it was drawn on a computer and coloured by hand. A safe formulation: the first mass-market commercial comic coloured through digital separation, and the one that made the industry adopt the method.

Oliff won several Harvey awards for that work in the early nineties and the first Eisner for colouring ever given, in 1992. The colour edition was never completed in collections: the final chapters exist that way only in the original single issues.

The Epic series stopped for two years between issues 33 and 34, waiting for the Japanese edition to finish. Then came Dark Horse with six black and white volumes between 2000 and 2002, and in 2017 Kodansha published the 35th anniversary box: two thousand five hundred and thirty-two pages, right-to-left reading for the first time in the United States and two Eisner awards the following year, one of them for design, with NORMA Editorial credited on the team.

09

ONE HUNDRED
AND FORTY-
SEVEN DAYS

In one shot of the film there is a hoarding at the olympic stadium with a countdown and graffiti over it. On 28 February 2020 the arithmetic lined up.

The sign reads 「東京オリンピック開催迄あと147日」: one hundred and forty-seven days to the opening of the Tokyo Olympic Games. Below it, the official line: «Let's make them a success with the strength of the people.» And over the top, sprayed on, 「中止だ中止」 — cancel it, cancel it — and 「粉碎」, smash it.

The film is set in Neo-Tokyo in 2019, thirty-one years after a third world war, and the climax takes place inside that stadium, built on top of the facility where Akira is buried. When Otomo drew and shot that, Tokyo was not a candidate for anything: the IOC chose the city for 2020 on 7 September 2013, twenty-five years after the film.

The countdown hoarding is stuck to the building that holds the whole plot up, which is why the shot was still remembered thirty years later. Somebody eventually did the subtraction.

On 28 February 2020 there were exactly 147 days to the opening ceremony of 24 July. The whole country noticed on the same day.

THE HASHTAG THAT HIT NUMBER ONE

That day, with COVID in full swing and the government asking for public events to be postponed, Japanese users did the sum and 「#中止だ中止」 reached the top of Twitter's trends in Japan. On 4 March a full-size replica of the sign appeared on the campus of Kyoto University. On 24 March the IOC and Tokyo 2020 announced the postponement.

THE PROPHECY HOAX, AND HOLLYWOOD'S TWENTY-THREE YEARS

In March 2020 a claim circulated widely that Akira showed the World Health Organization recommending the Games be postponed over pandemic risk. It is false. The film contains no outbreak, no appearance by the WHO and no discussion of cancelling any Games over a disease. PolitiFact checked it on 13 March 2020 and rated it false.

What is true is more interesting than the prophecy: a piece of set-dressing graffiti drawn in 1988 became readable again as a political slogan thirty-two years later, on the exact day the count lined up. The Games were held in 2021 with the stadium empty.

THE LIVE ACTION FILM THAT NEVER EXISTED

Warner Bros. bought the rights in April 2002 for a seven-figure sum. Since then at least five directors have been attached and fallen away — Stephen Norrington, Ruairí Robinson, the Hughes brothers, Jaume Collet-Serra and Taika Waititi — around ten screenwriters passed through, and two release dates were announced and cancelled. Moving the action to Chicago, to New York and to Neo-Manhattan was considered, along with renaming Tetsuo as Travis.

Jordan Peele turned down the offer to direct in 2017 and explained afterwards: «Ultimately, I felt

like if I was going to put that much energy into trying to honour one of the best works of all time, why not put that energy into something of my own?» In June 2025 Warner let the rights lapse and they returned to Kodansha, with eight figures of accumulated investment behind them.

The analysis that gets repeated most about why it ran aground points at two things. One is casting: every leaked casting script brought another round of whitewashing accusations. The other goes deeper. The story is anchored in the Second World War and the atomic bombings, and every attempt to transplant it — swapping the bomb for 11 September, moving Neo-Tokyo to Manhattan — collided with that. In 2019 it came close, with shooting announced for July in California and a release set for 21 May 2021. Waititi left to direct *Thor*.

MEANWHILE, THE ORIGINAL IS STILL PLAYING

The 2020 4K restoration screened in IMAX in Japan, the United States and Britain, and in 2025 it headlined POM Anime's European programme. In August 2026 the first new 35mm print in decades was struck from that 4K master, for a tour that opened at the BFI Southbank in London.

FIVE IDEAS AND THE LINES THAT HOLD THEM UP

This issue is about a film and about the legend built on top of it. These five lines, all of them traceable, hold up what we have told.

11億はどこから出た数字？

«Where did the figure of 1.1 billion come from?»

SHIGERU WATANABE, PRODUCER, JUNE 2020 · IDEA 1, A REPEATED FIGURE IS NOT A CHECKED FIGURE

Watanabe had been an executive at one of the eight companies on the committee. Asking in public was enough to bring down a number that had been circulating for thirty-two years. The real figure was printed in a book, in the production manager's own words, waiting for somebody to look for it. The full trail is three steps: an interview in a book by Morihiko Saitō, a producer who points at it in public and a journalist who publishes it the same day. None of the three is a secret archive.

最初はずっとやってたんだけど.....やってないよね、後半なんか特に

«At the start we did it all the time, but... no, we stopped, especially in the second half»

TAKASHI NAKAMURA, ANIMATION DIRECTOR, 2002 · IDEA 2, AMBITION IS MEASURED IN THE SECOND HALF

Prescoring is the method everyone cites when talking about Akira. The man who ran the animation says it was applied to the voices carrying emotional weight and was gradually dropped as the production drowned. The famous technique lasted as long as the air did. And the first hour of Akira still has a rhythm of performance with no equivalent in the anime of its time, which suggests the part of the method that was applied was enough to change the whole film.

THE ACTOR'S TIMING AND THE SOUND YOU CAN'T HEAR

画の間ではなく、自分の間で取る

«You don't take the timing of the drawing: you take your own timing»

MITSUO IWATA, VOICE OF KANEDA, NOVEMBER 2019 · IDEA 3, WHO SETS THE PULSE OF A SCENE

Recording before animating changes who is in charge of the beat. Iwata came from live action cinema and Aketagawa picked him for exactly that, so he could ask for a realistic performance instead of a reading fitted to an already drawn mouth. He improvised jokes that ended up in the final cut.

聴こえる音は耳から、聴こえない音は体表面から受容される

«Audible sound is received through the ears; inaudible sound, through the surface of the body»

TSUTOMU ŌHASHI, COMPOSER OF THE SCORE · IDEA 4, A SCIENTIFIC THESIS INSIDE A FILM

Ōhashi has argued since the nineties that the frequencies we do not hear affect brain activity. There are failed replications and double blind tests that find no effect. What is interesting is that the theory was applied to the remix of his own film in 2020, thirty-two years after recording it.

«When I saw the first rush I thought it would be a failure»

KATSUHIRO OTOMO, DIRECTOR, MAY 2017 · IDEA 5, THE AUTHOR IS A POOR JUDGE OF THEIR OWN WORK

Otomo adapted his own comic without having finished it, wrote the film's ending first, watched the result and thought he had got it wrong. He watched it again years later and changed his mind. He still thinks too much was cut from the original, and at the same time he appreciates having two different versions of the same story.

FROM 1954 TO 2026

1954

On 14 April Katsuhiro Otomo is born in Hasama, Miyagi prefecture. He will move to Tokyo straight out of high school.

1983

On 18 August *Domu* is collected in a single volume. That year it wins the Nihon SF Taisho, the first ever given to a comic.

1982

On 20 December, the cover date of issue 24 of *Young Magazine*, the first chapter of *Akira* appears. The editor had talked about ten episodes.

1984

Kodansha Manga Award, general category, with the series still running. That year Otomo draws 586 pages.

1987

On 20 April chapter 87 is published. The serialisation stops for nineteen months to make the film.

1988

On 16 July *Akira* opens in Japan, distributed by Toho. One hundred and twenty-four minutes, seven hundred million yen of cost.

1988

On 25 July Laser Disc Corporation releases the making-of. In September, Epic Comics publishes the first issue of the colour manga in the US.

1989

On 25 December Streamline Pictures opens the film at the Biograph cinema in Georgetown, Washington. Two and a half weeks.

1990

On 25 June chapter 120, the last one, is published. The manga finishes two years after the film.

1991

On 25 January it reaches British cinemas. Out of its success the Manga Video label is born.

1992

Steve Oliff wins the first Eisner for colouring ever given, for *Akira*. Criterion releases the film on laserdisc.

2002

In April Warner Bros. buys the live action rights. Twenty-three years of project without a film begin.

2015

On 29 January Otomo receives the Angoulême Grand Prix. He is the first Japanese author to win it in forty-two editions.

2020

On 28 February the hashtag 「中止だ中止」 reaches number one in Japan. On 24 April the 4K remaster supervised by Yamashiro is released.

2025

In June Warner lets the rights lapse and they return to Kodansha. In 2026 the first new 35mm print in decades is struck.

WHAT WE'RE TAKING TO PRECINCT 2099

We are two people making a cyberpunk detective visual novel in Barcelona. These are the five things we are taking from this issue, said without disguise.

1 • THE ENDING GETS WRITTEN FIRST

Otomo decided what went into the film by writing the resolution and working backwards. We did the same with the three endings of PRECINCT 2099: all three were written before the first scene existed, because they are the ones that decide which clues are needed. A case that closes in all three exits demands that discipline from the start.

2 • CHOOSING WHERE THE MONEY GOES

Animating on twos instead of threes tripled the number of drawings and defines the look of the entire film. It is a decision about where to put the money. In a two-person game the currency is time: we spend ours on the scene variants that depend on the tone you take, and not on the number of scenes. It shows in what is there and it shows in what is missing.

3 • LET THE PERFORMER SET THE BEAT

Prescoring existed so the actor could place their own pauses. PRECINCT 2099 has no voice acting, so the beat belongs to whoever is reading. That is why the text comes in short blocks and the dice rolls resolve in view, with no animation forcing you to wait. The rhythm is the player's.

4 • NO INFLATED FIGURES

Akira's legend grew on a press kit budget. We say the length up front: between an hour and a half and two hours, one complete case. Said by us it is honesty; discovered by the player, it is the review that does damage.

5 • EIGHT COMPANIES AND TWO PEOPLE

That film needed a consortium of eight companies to spread the risk. There are two of us and the risk is spread with nobody. The upside is that there is no table where the creator sits structurally outside the decision. That is the whole change in the industry across forty years, told from the small side.

PRECINCT 2099, ON ONE PAGE

In case you got this far without knowing who publishes this.

One night, one case, three endings. Kade Katano investigates an impossible death in a sealed penthouse in NeoTokyo, with seven people who were inside and none who wants to talk. The file closes in all three resolutions. There is never a «to be continued».

HOW YOU INVESTIGATE

With an ocular implant that scans the scene, encrypted terminals you have to open and conversations where pressing somebody with data is the only weapon. When things get serious you roll two six-sided dice and add an attribute, in full view. Failing opens another scene.

TONE RUNS THE CITY

Professional, cynical or cold. The city answers according to how you speak and nobody scores your morality. The same clue pulled three different ways leaves three different versions of the same night.

WHO MAKES IT

Two people. The script, the design and the direction are signed by Mark S. James; the sketches, the storyboards, the concepts and the Steam cards are made by María. There are no more of us and there is no more budget, and that is one of the reasons we show the process: it is the only thing a studio this size can offer that a big one cannot.

THE FACTS

Out on 17 November 2026 on Steam, at €7.99 with regional pricing. Windows first, macOS later. Spanish, Catalan, English and Japanese, no voice acting. Between an hour and a half and two hours. Soundtrack and manual included. Script by Mark S. James.

And there is a prequel under way: *The Dragon Hunter*, five episodes published on Kindle in English and Spanish, starting in Neo-Shanghai in 2092, seven years before this night.

NOTES, SOURCES AND WHAT WE COULDN'T CONFIRM

This issue corrects several much-repeated figures. Here is where each one comes from and what still cannot be stated.

WHAT WE HAVE CORRECTED

The seven hundred million yen budget comes from Ken Kakuda, Kodansha's production manager, in Morihiko Saitō's book on the animated film industry, brought to light by producer Shigeru Watanabe and published by Ruchiyo Fukuda in ITmedia on 8 June 2020. The one billion in Toho's press kit and the one point one billion on the internet are the same publicity figure at two stages.

The one hundred and fifty thousand drawings appear in Japanese sources as 作画枚数, number of drawings, tied to the technique of animating on twos. The hundred and sixty thousand in the international press notes likewise refers to images rather than cels. The conversion into «cels» is a translation drift.

WHAT WE DO NOT CLAIM

That it was the most expensive anime film in history to that point: the comparison is made between announced budgets, and the rival films' numbers were inflated too. That 1,300 people worked on it: the figure comes from the same promotional package and clashes with what the director says. That production lasted exactly three years: we have found no primary source.

We also do not take the 50 exclusive colours as settled: the 327 appears in independent sources, the 50 only in promotional material from the committee itself. Nor the 49 million dollar worldwide gross, impossible to consolidate for a film released in stages between 1988 and 1991.

A DATE WITH THREE CANDIDATES

The first chapter has three dates in circulation and we picked one. 20 December 1982 is the cover date of issue 24 of *Young Magazine* and two independent Japanese sources support it. 16 December is given by the comics scholar Bounthavy Suvilay, and is probably the day it went on sale. 6 December appears in a great many places and is the date inside the fiction: the day the bomb falls on Tokyo in the manga itself.

INFLUENCES: WHAT IS DOCUMENTED AND WHAT IS REPEATED

Enormous lists circulate of works «influenced by Akira» without a single statement from their authors. We have only used the ones with a quote: Yoji Shinkawa, designer on *Metal Gear*, and Jordan Peele, who also explained why he turned down the adaptation. What gets attributed to Hideo Kojima was said by Shinkawa. The term «Akira slide» is documented on Usenet from 29 September 1999, and is probably older.

There are three more things we left out for the same reason. The membership of Geinoh Yamashirogumi, which runs from fifty to several hundred depending on who is counting, with the label's official profile giving no figure at all. The jegog credit, the Balinese bamboo percussion, consistent with the group's repertoire and absent by name from the credits of both records. And the Roger Ebert line quoted everywhere, which comes from a television programme rather than a printed review.

Main sources: ITmedia, Forbes, The Japan Times, ENCOUNTER, Anime Hack, eiga.com, TMS Entertainment, Kodansha, Dark Horse, Cartoon Research, Anime News Network, Empire, PolitiFact, Variety and Livres Hebdo. This monograph reproduces no film stills and no manga pages.

THE SERIES

THE COMING WEDNESDAYS

One monograph a week, free, in PDF and EPUB and in both languages.

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How much cinema a video game can take before it stops being one. The codec as an interface for telling a story and the fourth wall used as a mechanic.

NO. 04 · THE ANIMATRIX

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What a universe gains and loses when other hands tell it. The anthology as a stress test for a world.

NO. 05 · THE MATRIX

THE WACHOWSKIS · 1999

The engine of borrowing: popularised philosophy, Hong Kong action and anime assembled into one film that had to invent how to shoot itself.

NO. 06 · BLADE RUNNER

RIDLEY SCOTT · 1982

The distance between a flop and a canon is measured in decades. Rain, smoke and successive cuts.

NO. 07 · SNATCHER

KONAMI · 1988

The small adventure that taught its author to direct before he directed the big one, with investigation turned into a playable loop.

NO. 08 · SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN

RYŪTARŌ NAKAMURA · 1998

How to make science fiction with almost no animation: silence, layers of sound and a network understood as psychological space.

WHERE TO DOWNLOAD AND WHERE TO FOLLOW

This monograph downloads free in PDF and EPUB from thinkinglitesoft.com, with no sign-up and no data left behind. If it was useful, the best way to pay it back is simple: see the film on a big screen if you can, read the six volumes and tell somebody about it.

And if you got here out of curiosity about who publishes this, we are two people in Barcelona finishing a detective visual novel. In November we will find out whether we learned anything from all of the above.

WEDNESDAY MONOGRAPHS

Number 02 is devoted to Akira. Number 03, on Metal Gear Solid, comes out next Wednesday. Every issue, in both languages and both formats, stays archived on the same page.

thinkinglitesoft.com/monographs

PRECINCT 2099 · WISHLIST

Our detective visual novel is out on 17 November 2026 on Steam, at €7.99 and in four languages. Adding it to your wishlist before launch is what helps a studio this size most.

Steam · app 5045000

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Five episodes of around forty minutes, written by Mark S. James, starting in Neo-Shanghai in 2092, seven years before Kade Katano's case. Available on Kindle in English and Spanish.

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