

Japanese filmmaker showcases anime in Jordan

By Taylor Luck

AMMAN — The popularity of Japanese anime has been growing in Jordan, capturing imagination of children and young adults alike.

Japanese anime filmmaker and director Makato Shinkai and producer Noritaka Kawaguchi are currently in the Kingdom to promote the medium — a Japanese style of motion-picture animation characterised by highly stylised, colourful art and futuristic settings.

At an animation workshop yesterday, Shinkai showcased the genre by screening his 2002 piece "Voices of a Distant Star", a film that was created entirely by him save for sound design.

Shinkai and Kawaguchi detailed the artistic and business aspect of the industry, which began in Japan in 1963 and is now reaching a global scale.

Shinkai, who has transformed conventional anime by producing his own art through digital photography and imaging, told participants that it takes him eight months and one computer to produce a feature, which normally requires a large production house and hundreds of staff.

Addressing the absence of Middle Eastern films in the medium, Kawaguchi stressed that any Arab anime would have to be cre-

ated in the region in order to be authentic and appeal to wide audiences.

"Only you can make this happen," he told participants.

When asked how they knew about or saw Shinkai's movies, the audience indicated they had seen the films on Internet or illegally copied DVDs.

Although uneasy about the affects of piracy on the industry, Kawaguchi said it shows that demand in countries like Jordan was grow-

ing rapidly. Noting that his company currently doesn't have distribution in the Middle East, he said the region was a market he was keen on entering.

Shinkai, meanwhile, was more positive about the high level of piracy of his work.

"As a creator I'm happy to know that Jordanians are able to see my films and enjoy my work. If it brings people interested in my films and encourages some to follow their creativity

and imagination, then it's all worth it," he told The Jordan Times.

The director expressed his support to visual artists throughout the Kingdom, noting that their enthusiasm and passion will go far in developing the Jordanian film industry.

"Creators in Jordan have a real good chance to create and promote their work in the world. If you have an idea and computer, no one can stop you," he said.

Shankai's visit, sponsored

by the Royal Film Commission, the Japan Foundation, and the embassy of Japan, will include a one-week workshop for visual artists, an activity in a children's centre in East Amman, film screenings and talks on animation both from artistic and business point of view, so as to support and encourage visual creators and business in Jordan.

Those interested in attending events can contact the Royal Film Commission at 06 464 22 66.



Photo courtesy of Makato Shinkai

Anime, a Japanese style of motion-picture animation, characterised by highly stylised, colourful art and futuristic settings