



ANIME

# My Neighbour Totoro (Tonari no Totoro)

Satsuki and Mei move to a new home in the country after their mother falls ill, and soon discover house spirits inside and wood spirits and other creatures outside. The girls are whisked away on a magical adventure where they board a 'cat bus' and make quirky new friends. Cited by Akira Kurosawa as one of his favourite Japanese films of all time, *My Neighbour Totoro* introduced the world to the iconic and loveable Totoro, now the logo of Studio Ghibli.

**bfi.org.uk**

*My Neighbour Totoro* is my favourite film. I would not change, add or remove a single frame. It is perfect as it stands, a shining moment in the career of a great director when everything was at its peak. Miyazaki Hayao's skills in almost every aspect of animation are justly renowned, and nothing showcases them better than this film, so beautiful that every frame could hang on the walls of a gallery. (Many have done so, more than once.) Studio Ghibli produced this at the same time as *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), a pair of masterpieces on childhood and innocence exploring memories from the directors' pasts. Miyazaki made some beautiful films after *Totoro*, but none would ever capture so honestly and precisely the glorious, unfathomable, heart-breaking fragility of a child's world.

*Totoro* is among the simplest of films, one of very few with the courage to tell a child's story from a child's viewpoint at a child's pace. Time is intensely important, but not fixed; it is measured by adult things, like watches or bus schedules, or by the movement of light across childhood afternoons. Two young sisters move with their father to the country to be near the hospital where their mother is being treated for a nameless illness that never quite goes away. The hospital is named for the one where Miyazaki's mother was treated for spinal tuberculosis when he was a child. There is no villain, only the tiny conflicts all children experience. The girls discover the magic of nature and the unobtrusive kindness of the rural community. The older sister learns that death is not a man in a black hat, an enemy to be fought, but a fact of life that changes it forever, although its beauty endures.

This is a film in which everything that will ever be important happens without anything much happening at all. Every frame is packed with life – intensely observed, scrupulously presented, passionately loved. *Totoro*'s forest remains evergreen because there is more intensity and passion invested in any given frame than some franchises muster across an expensive multi-part run. The film's initial lack of box-office success gave way to a long run as Ghibli's biggest earner, largely by turning that dedication and commitment to making something beautiful into a delightful range of merchandise.

The woods, valleys and small farms that Miyazaki documents with such a depth of tenderness have now been built over, swallowed by the expansion of Tokyo. *Totoro*, however, endures, a remembered dream flying across a sky of perfect blue in a landscape that will never fade or die. If Miyazaki had never made another film, he would still be one of the greatest of all directors.

**Helen McCarthy, *Sight & Sound*, Summer 2020**

Studio Ghibli was established after the success of *Nausicaä: Valley of the Wind* (1984) specifically for the production of Hayao Miyazaki’s follow-up, the Swiftian tale of airborne adventure, *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (1986). However, it was the double-billing of his next title with Isao Takahata’s tonally quite different *Grave of the Fireflies* that really cemented the position of Japan’s best-loved animation house on its home turf.

Ironically, at the time, *My Neighbour Totoro* was seen as the lesser of the pair. Nevertheless, this touching tale of two sisters who move with their father to a rickety wooden house in the country to be closer to their mother convalescing in a nearby hospital has gone on to achieve classic status. A celebration of the childhood imagination, it retains a freshness and originality that appears almost naive to modern viewers, and can be described (alongside 1992’s *Porco Rosso*) as the most personal and heartfelt of Miyazaki’s creations, with its setup stemming from an episode from his own youth when his mother was bed-bound with spinal tuberculosis.

A rich fantasy world beneath the ordinary is unveiled before our eyes as the girls explore their new environment, full of tiny spider-like creatures scuttling through the rafters and other strange supernatural beings invisible to adults. These include the huge woolly beastie of the title, hidden deep within the nearby forest, who would become the most iconic of Ghibli’s creations.

**Jasper Sharp, [bfi.org.uk](http://bfi.org.uk), 27 March 2014**

**MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO (TONARI NO TOTORO)**

*Director:* Hayao Miyazaki  
*Production Companies:* Studio Ghibli, Tokuma Group  
*Executive Producer:* Yasuyoshi Tokuma  
*Producer:* Toru Hara  
*Line Producer:* Eiko Tanaka  
*Assistant Director:* Tetsuya Endo  
*Screenplay:* Hayao Miyazaki  
*Production Camera Supervisor:* Hisao Shirai  
*Supervising Animator:* Yoshiharu Sato  
*Editor:* Takeshi Seyama  
*Art Director:* Kazuo Oga  
*Music:* Joe Hisaishi  
*Sound Director:* Shigeharu Shiba

**Voice Cast**

Noriko Hidaka (*Satsuki*)  
Chika Sakamoto (*Mei*)  
Hitoshi Takagi (*Totoro*)  
Toshiyuki Amagasa (*Kanta*)  
Shigeru Chiba (*Kusakari-Otoko*)  
Shigesato Itoi (*Tatsuo Kusakabe*)  
Sumi Shimamoto (*Yasuko Kusakabe*)  
Reiko Suzuki (*Roba*)  
Machiko Washio (*Sensei*)  
Akiko Hiramatsu  
Masashi Hirose  
Tanie Kitabayashi  
Chie Kojiro  
Yuko Maruyama  
Yuko Mizutani  
Daiki Nakamura  
Tomohiro Nishimura  
Tarako  
Naoki Tatsuta  
Ikue Otani

Japan 1988  
86 mins

THE HISTORY OF ANIME

**Early Days of Anime Shorts Programme 1917-1946**  
Tue 29 Mar 18:00; Mon 11 Apr 20:40  
**Momotaro’s Divine Sea Warriors (Momotarō: Umi no Shinpei)**  
Wed 30 Mar 21:00; Wed 13 Apr 18:30  
**Astroboy**  
Fri 1 Apr 18:15; Sun 17 Apr 12:10  
**Kimba the White Lion (Jangaru Taitei)**  
Fri 1 Apr 20:45; Sat 9 Apr 12:40  
**Belladonna of Sadness (Kanashimi no Belladonna)**  
Mon 4 Apr 20:30 (+ intro by Helen McCarthy); Mon 18 Apr 15:30

ANIME AT THE IMAX

**Ghost in the Shell (Kōkaku Kidōtai)**  
Mon 25 Apr 15:00, 21:00  
**Belle (Ryū to sobakasu no hime)**  
Thu 31 Mar 20:40 (NFT1); Mon 25 Apr 18:15

ANIME CLASSICS PART 1

**Steamboy (Suchimubōi)**  
Sat 9 Apr 20:20; Fri 15 Apr 20:30; Wed 20 Apr 18:10  
**Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honneamise (Ōritsu Uchūgun: Oneamisu no Tsubasa)**  
Tue 12 Apr 18:00; Sat 23 Apr 20:40  
**Patlabor: The Movie (Kidō keisatsu patorebā: Gekijō-ban)**  
Wed 13 Apr 20:40; Sun 17 Apr 18:20; Thu 28 Apr 18:15  
**Cowboy Bebop: The Movie (Cowboy Bebop: Tengoku no tobira)**  
Thu 14 Apr 20:45; Sat 16 Apr 20:30; Fri 22 Apr 20:40  
**Patlabor 2: The Movie (Kidō keisatsu patorebā: The Movie 2)**  
Fri 15 Apr 18:15; Thu 21 Apr 20:30; Thu 28 Apr 20:45  
**The Case of Hana & Alice (Hana to Arisu Satsujin Jiken)**  
Sat 16 Apr 18:35; Tue 26 Apr 20:55

EMERGING FEMALE VOICES

**A Silent Voice (Koe no Katachi)**  
Wed 6 Apr 20:30; Mon 18 Apr 18:10 (+ intro by Dr Rayna Denison, Professor in Film and Digital Arts, University of Bristol)  
**The Anthem of the Heart (Kokoro ga Sakebitagatterunda)**  
Thu 7 Apr 20:30; Fri 22 Apr 18:10  
**Maquia: When the Promised Flower Blooms (Sayonara no Asa ni Yakusoku no Hana o Kazarō)**  
Fri 8 Apr 18:00; Sat 23 Apr 17:45  
**Liz and the Blue Bird (Rizu to aoi tori)**  
Thu 21 Apr 18:15; Sat 30 Apr 17:45

STUDIO GHIBLI

**Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi)**  
Mon 28 Mar 20:35; Fri 29 Apr 18:00  
**When Marnie Was There (Omoide No Mani)**  
Tue 29 Mar 20:40  
**My Neighbour Totoro (Tonari no Totoro)**  
Tue 5 Apr 18:20; Fri 8 Apr 20:50

This season was co-programmed by writer and academic Hanako Miyata



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