

= Spike Spiegel =

Spike Spiegel (Japanese : ????? ? ????? , Hepburn : Supaiku Sup?geru) is the central protagonist of the 1998 anime series Cowboy Bebop . Spike is a former member of the criminal Red Dragon Syndicate , who left by faking his death after falling in love with a woman called Julia . He is first introduced as the partner of Jet Black , captain of the spaceship Bebop : the two are legalized bounty hunters pursuing criminals across the populated worlds . During his adventures on board the Bebop , he is drawn back into a bitter feud with Vicious , a rival from the Syndicate who seeks to kill him .

Spike was created by Shinichir? Watanabe and Toshihiro Kawamoto as part of the production entity Hajime Yatate . Created as a mirror image of Watanabe and based on Yusaku Matsuda 's character in Tantei Monogatari , he was designed as someone who would expect others to follow his lead . Kawamoto deliberately designed him to appear " uncool " to create the opposite effect for viewers . His final confrontation with Vicious was planned well in advance . His portrayal in the later movie adaptation displayed the character 's softer side and inner thoughts . Spike is voiced in Japanese by K?ichi Yamadera . In the English dub , he is voiced by Steven Blum .

In addition to the series , Spike has been featured in two manga adaptations , and been the main protagonist of two video game adaptations . Reception of Spike has been positive in Japan and the West , with multiple reviewers praising his portrayal . He has appeared on multiple reader and critic lists of the best anime characters . In addition to the series , many reviewers of the movie positively noted his expanded portrayal in The Movie . Both actors have been praised for their performances , with Blum commenting that it boosted his voice acting career .

= = Characteristics = =

Spike is a fictional bounty hunter who was born on Mars on June 26 , 2044 : he is 27 years old , has fluffy dark @-@ green hair and brown eyes . His right eye is artificial , and consequently lighter than the other . He stands 6 ' 1 " and weighs 155 lbs . Spike is a heavy smoker , and is frequently seen smoking despite rain or " no smoking " signs . A skilled martial artist who practices Jeet Kune Do , he is a devote follower of the philosophies of Bruce Lee . He also owns a converted antique Asteroid racer called the Swordfish II . During gunfights , he most often uses a Jericho 941 . In his younger days before joining the Bebop , Spike was part of the Red Dragon Syndicate , a Chinese criminal organization : during his time there , he was impetuous and volatile , but after leaving he became a calm and collected character with a love for combat . While holding little value in money or justice , he always holds true to his own values and fulfills his obligations . He also generally does this his way rather than following orders , which generally gets him into trouble . Watanabe has said that Spike has a habit of being very indirect with his emotions ; for example , he may behave antagonistically towards someone he actually likes . He says that this could apply to Spike 's relationship with Faye Valentine .

= = Appearances = =

= = = In Cowboy Bebop = = =

Years before the beginning of the series , Spike is a rising member of the Red Dragon crime syndicate . While there , he becomes a partner and friend of Vicious , another member of the Syndicate . Wounded from a gun battle , Spike is nursed back to health by Vicious ' girlfriend Julia , and the two fall in love . They plan to elope and escape the Syndicate , but Vicious finds out and attempts to force Julia to kill Spike or risk her own death . After Spike fakes his death to escape the Syndicate , Julia goes into hiding and does not meet up with him . Spike eventually met and teamed up with former Inter Solar System Police officer Jet Black . As legalized bounty hunters , they travel the Solar System 's inhabited worlds hunting criminals .

During his time on the Bebop , he and Jet are joined by Ein , an intelligent Welsh corgi ; Faye Valentine , a gambler and original resident of Earth woken from cryogenic sleep ; and Edward " Ed " Wong Hau Pepelu Tivruski IV , an eccentric girl from Earth who is a master hacker . Spike also has run @-@ ins with Vicious on two occasions : in " Ballad of Fallen Angels " , while pursuing a Red Dragon executive , Spike and Vicious battle in a derelict church and Spike is nearly killed . Later , in " Jupiter Jazz " , Spike hears that Julia was seen on Callisto and abandons the Bebop to look for her . Once there , he stumbles into a drug deal orchestrated by Gren , a man Vicious betrayed who is seeking revenge . During their confrontation , a three @-@ way battle ensues : Vicious escapes , and Gren is fatally injured , but he succeeds in telling Spike that Julia is alive and in hiding .

During the final story of the series , " The Real Folk Blues " , Julia comes out of hiding and sends a message to Spike through Faye : the two meet and resolve to flee as originally planned . Vicious , having staged a coup d'état and taken over the Red Dragon Syndicate , sends assassins after the two . During a battle , Julia is shot and killed . After saying his goodbyes to Jet and Faye , Spike storms the headquarters of the Syndicate and has a final confrontation with Vicious : Spike is severely wounded and Vicious is killed . Shortly after this , Spike walks into and collapses in the entrance hall . Spike 's ultimate fate was deliberately left ambiguous , with Watanabe eventually unable to say whether he lived or died .

= = = In other media = = =

Spike is the main protagonist of Cowboy Bebop : The Movie , a story set between Episodes 22 and 23 of the original series while the Bebop crew are still working together . The crew of the Bebop take on a massive bounty for Vincent Volaju , who releases a cloud of deadly protean @-@ based nanomachines in Mars ' capital city . During his pursuit , Spike initially fights then allies with Elektra Ovirowa , a former comrade of Vincent 's .

Spike appears along with the other main characters in the manga adaptation of Cowboy Bebop and the alternate manga Cowboy Bebop : Shooting Star . In the PlayStation Cowboy Bebop , players control Spike as he pilots the Swordfish II during aerial battles through pre @-@ set courses . Spike appears as one of the playable characters in the PlayStation 2 action / beat ' em up video game Cowboy Bebop : Tsuioku no Serenade , a game set within the continuity of the series .

= = Creation and conception = =

During the first work by Shinichirō Watanabe on Cowboy Bebop , the first image that came to him was of Spike . Prior to that , Watanabe had the character of Spike in mind for a long time beforehand . From that point on , Watanabe " tried to build a story around him , trying to make him cool . " Watanabe created Spike as a mirror image of himself : in Watanabe 's words , " I don 't smoke or drink or fight , but I want to ? so Spike does . " Spike forms the main focus on the series , with the central theme being his past and its karmic effect on him . Spike was portrayed as a very old @-@ fashioned type of man , who would simply do what he wanted and expect others to follow his lead and watch him from the sidelines . Spike 's artificial eye was included as Watanabe wanted his characters to have flaws . He was originally going to give Spike an eye patch , but the producers vetoed it . In order to portray him as cool , Toshihiro Kawamoto designed Spike to look " uncool " : when he stands still , he has a hunched appearance . This meant that when the character was moving vigorously , he came across as " extra cool " . Spike 's appearance was primarily based on the main protagonist of Tantei Monogatari , portrayed by famous Japanese actor Yusaku Matsuda . Spike 's Swordfish II spaceship was created by mecha designer Kimitoshi Yamane . Yamane liked the English biplane torpedo @-@ bomber Fairey Swordfish , which led him to name the Swordfish II after the bomber . The conclusion of Spike 's story and his final battle with Vicious were planned by Watanabe well in advance , with each episode featuring them meant to shadow their final confrontation . Some of the staff were unhappy about this approach as a continuation of the series would be difficult . While he considered altering the ending , he eventually settled with his original idea .

Spike's Japanese voice actor, Kōichi Yamadera, was pleased to have gotten the part, but Unshō Ishizuka, Jet's voice actor, was surprised that Yamadera was not cast as Jet. Spike and Jet were designed to be opposites, with Spike being thin and wearing smart attire, while Jet was bulky and wore more casual clothing. His English voice actor, Steven Blum, used film noir imagery to get himself in the right frame of mind to voice the character convincingly. Blum had some difficulty portraying the character in scenes where he was showing vulnerability. He called Spike an "example of a character [he] didn't fully appreciate until the series was over", also adding that he would like to reprise his role as the character if given the chance. Spike's portrayal was expanded in *Cowboy Bebop: The Movie*. Specifically, according to Yamadera, the character displayed more of his inner thoughts and showed a gentler side than he did in the series. This was because the team had more time available to express such details. Blum found his performance in the movie one of his most difficult from an emotional standpoint, as there were scenes where Spike was portrayed quite differently from the version he had been playing in the series.

= = Reception = =

Spike's character has been well received in Japan. He won first place in the Best Male Character category at Animage's annual Anime Grand Prix awards two consecutive times in 1998 and 1999. In the August 2001 issue of *Newtype*, Spike was ranked first on the magazine's list of "Top 10 Most Popular Male Anime Characters in Japan". The next year in July 2002, Spike was again placed at number one on *Newtype*'s anime list of "Favorite Male Character". In a *Newtype* poll from March 2010, Spike was voted by readers as the eighteenth most popular male anime character from the 1990s. In 2014, Kōichi Yamadera was voted by fans as the third coolest "old guy" voice actor in a Goo Ranking poll, with his portrayal of Spike cited as one of the contributing factors.

Western critics have also directed significant praise towards Spike. In his review of *Cowboy Bebop*, Anime News Network's Mike Crandol praised the character portrayals, especially Spike's, stating that "Spike's character in particular runs the gamut from goofy to blasé to teeth @-@ gnashing tough; he is one of most three @-@ dimensional anime leads in recent memory." Christi of *THEM Anime Review* 4 @. @ 0 complimented Spike's story arc in the series, saying that "the underlying theme of Spike Spiegel and his motivations for what he does is absolutely intriguing." *DVDTalk*'s Kyle Mills called Spike the epitome of a good lead protagonist, referring to him as "composed, always cool, and is essentially the ultimate badass", although his true nature is gradually shown throughout the series. In an article in *The Atlantic*, writer Alex Suskind was positive about Spike's portrayal and development, saying that the word "cool" was the most apt way of describing him and referring to him as "a space @-@ age samurai @-@ cum @-@ Marlboro Man". Richard Eisenbeis of *Kotaku*, writing a retrospective on the series, praised the relationship between Spike and Faye, especially the way it evolved through the series without overt verbal expressions of affection.

His portrayal in *The Movie* has also received praise: IGN's Andy Patrizio said that Spike "opens up his soul a little" during the film, while Chris Beveridge of *Mania.com* found Spike more likable in the film than in some parts of the series, comparing him to Lupin III and praising the moments where he could be himself and show more of his inner self. Carlos Ross of *THEM Anime Review* said that Spike's portrayal was one of the things that worked in the film, and DVD Talk's Neil Lumbard, alongside general praise of the characters, positively noted the further exploration of his personality. Anime News Network's Mike Crandol was less enthusiastic, saying that while Spike was the only one who got much attention during the film, some sequences felt like they could work without him.

Blum's portrayal as Spike has also drawn praise. Isler stated that "Steve Blum launched his career into new heights when he gave the performance of a lifetime in the English dub of the series, giving Spike a sense of smooth, effortless cool that many argue surpassed the original Japanese version." While praising the whole principal cast of the series as one of the best English dubs, Serdar Yegulalp of *About.com* highlighted Blum as Spike as the standout performance of the series.

, stating that " Cynicism never sounded this suave or self @-@ assured " . Blum himself has called Spike a " gigantic benchmark " in his career and life , saying that " Spike changed everything " for him . He stated that his role as Spike opened up new opportunities for voicing characters , including T.O.M. on Toonami and Jamie on Megas XLR .

In 2009 and 2014 , IGN ranked Spike among the best anime characters of all time . In 2009 , Chris Mackenzie ranked Spike as the fourth greatest anime character behind Goku , Astro Boy , and Speed Racer . In 2014 , Ramsey Isler ranked him as second greatest behind Shinji Ikari of Neon Genesis Evangelion . At the 2005 Anime Awards from About.com , Spike was nominated in the category " Best Lead Male Character " , though he lost to Goku . In 2010 , Wired included Spike on its list of the " 6 Genre @-@ Tripping Gunfighters Jonah Hex Must Duel FTW ! " , with writer Scott Thill complimenting his abilities , while also commenting on his presence of heart compared to other equivalent protagonists . In 2013 , Complex ranked Spike the fourth most stylish anime character ever , with writer Jian DeLeon commenting that " The Mars @-@ born bounty hunter knows the benefit of a good uniform " . In 2014 , WatchMojo.com named Spike an honorable mention on its list of the " Top 10 Anime Anti @-@ Heroes " , and also ranked him at number nine on its list of the " Top 10 Anime Heroes " .