

The Gamecock

Newly released 'Akira' DVD proves anime form revolutionized animation

DVD REVIEW

**"Akira"
Special Edition DVD**

PLOT: A secret military project endangers Neo-Tokyo when it turns a biker gang member into a rampaging psionic psychopath that only two kids and a group of psionics can stop.

OVERALL: The classic anime has finally come to DVD, restored and revitalized.

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BY TUG BAKER
THE GAMECOCK

To some, it's a religion. To others, it's a fad. Whatever side you choose, it's undeniable that anime is a whirlwind force in today's entertainment industry.

What started this craze in America for cartoons from Japan?

"Akira" did.

In 1982, Katsuhiro Otomo began a manga (comic book) strip called "Akira." Its wild popularity forced it into an epic series of comics, and in less than six years, Katsuhiro was asked to make it into an animated film.

While anime had been huge in Japan for many years, nothing before had received the success that "Akira" did. It was only a short while before it was dubbed in English and sent in small release to American theaters. For the first time, an anime film was praised by American critics and audiences. Roger Ebert, to this day, sings its praises, and with every new version of the movie released, he highlights it as his "Video Pick of the Week."

Now, with a newly dubbed and translated version of "Akira" available on DVD, the significance of the film must be reevaluated. Simply put, Akira is a revolution. When Akira hit the United States, the only decent animation studio was Disney. However, Disney held no real appeal to adult audiences.

With "Akira," however, there was a very adult science fiction storyline that was as thought-provoking as it was shocking.

"Akira" is set in Neo-Tokyo in the year 2019, 31 years after the original Tokyo was destroyed by a



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"Akira," newly dubbed and translated, is now available on a special edition DVD.

mysterious force known as Akira. The city has become a cesspool of crooked politicians, religious fanatics, and biker gangs. The leader of one gang is Kaneda, a wisecracking punk. At the opening of the movie, Kaneda's gang has a bike brawl with a rival gang during which Tetsuo, the youngest member of the gang, is involved in an accident with a strange child who has escaped from an army facility.

Army officials, led by the ever-present Colonel, make off with Tetsuo and the child. They discover that Tetsuo has rapidly growing psychic abilities and decide to keep him as their new test subject. Meanwhile, Kaneda has fallen in with a revolutionary group that wants to infiltrate the army and find out the truth behind Akira. Kaneda takes the opportunity to try and find his friend, but as Tetsuo's power grows, he becomes hostile and wants only to find this Akira to prove his superior strength.

The animation, with its dark undertones and attention to detail, rivals today's animation. The soundtrack is an amazing mix of ancient Japanese instruments and synth wave. Altogether, it's

regarded as one of the best animated films of all time.

For the new version of "Akira," Katsuhiro decided to re-dub the film. For fans of "Akira," it might be hard to see familiar characters open their mouths and unfamiliar voices coming out, but the problem is small, and the new voice actors, as a whole, are just as good as the old ones. However, it would have been nice to include the original English dub on the DVD as well.

The new DVD is also completely restored and smoother-looking and -sounding than any of the worn-out VHS tapes floating around.

As far as extras go, the special edition DVD includes two films made in 1988 about the making and music of "Akira." Also included is an interview with the director, trailers, videos on the restoration process and more than 4,500 still images of production materials.

All in all, the new "Akira" is a must-have for any fan of the movie and also a perfect chance for a newcomer to discover the film that revolutionized the way the world think about animation.

Ex-Beatle Paul McCartney proposes to Heather Mills

BY BETH GARDINER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON (AP) — Sir Paul McCartney, the former Beatle who lost his first wife to cancer three years ago, is engaged to Heather Mills, an activist for land mine victims.

McCartney, 59, proposed last Monday during a trip to Britain's Lake District, his spokesman said. The two plan to marry some time next year.

The 33-year-old Mills is a former swimwear model whose left leg was amputated below the knee after she was run down by a police motorcyclist in 1993.

The spokesman said McCartney bought the sapphire and diamond engagement ring in India earlier this year.

"Paul and Heather said today they would like to thank their relatives and friends for all the great support they have shown them since they met two years ago," said a statement from McCartney's office.

McCartney, who was knighted in 1997, has three grown children and a stepdaughter from his first marriage. McCartney spoke briefly with journalists Thursday evening outside his home in St. John's Wood, north London. Asked how he proposed to



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Ex-Beatle McCartney announced his engagement to Mills on July 27.

his fiancée, the former Beatle said, "That's private. That's just for me." He then went back inside for a quiet dinner with his future wife.

McCartney met Mills at a charity function when she appealed for help for her own foundation, The Heather Mills Trust, which provides limbs for victims of war. McCartney said last year that he was smitten instantly.

"So I found out her telephone number — like you do — and rang her up and said we should talk about some charity stuff," he said. "I did

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