



Megumi Hayashibara as Atsuko Chiba

Fever Dream

Paprika parades clever creativity

PAPRIKA: Directed by Satoshi Kon. Screenplay by Seishi Minakami and Satoshi Kon. Based on the story by Yasutaka Tsutsui. Developed by Masao Maruyama. Starring the voices of Megumi Hayashibara, Toru Emori, Katsunosuke Hori, Toru Furuya, Akio Ohtsuka and Kouichi Yamadera. In Japanese with English subtitles. Sony Pictures Classics, 2007. R. 90 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Much as it's hard to explain a dream to someone else, it's hard to explain *Paprika*. The latest animated film from director Satoshi Kon (*Millennium Actress*, *Tokyo Godfathers*), requires that you give in to its dream logic, a mishmash of gorgeous but sometimes ominous imagery, imaginative technology and detective story. Based on a novel by Yasutaka Tsutsui, who later stopped writing "to protest the excessive, self-imposed restraint of Japanese publishers" (according to production notes), *Paprika* feels something like what might happen if William Gibson and Hayao Miyazaki shared a fantastic dream with the help of the film's dream-sharing invention, the DC Mini.

The DC Mini is an exceptional device, an odd headset that allows the wearer's dreams to be shared, seen and analyzed. It's been developed as a psychotherapy treatment, but when several prototypes are stolen from the research lab, the DC Mini quickly becomes a weapon. Dangerous dreams are planted in the minds of doctors working on the lab — one sees a parade and goes running out a window to follow it; another nearly vaults over a balcony while investigating a lab worker suspected of leaking the prototypes.

Paprika begins in the dreams of a detective, the delineation between dream life and the real world seemingly clear. A sassy red-head named Paprika talks a troubled detective named Konakawa through his dreams, suggesting meaning, exploring possibilities. But when she leaves, a gorgeous credit

sequence follows her as she heads through the city, her appearance constantly changing. It's a hint as to how swiftly *Paprika* moves between waking and dreaming, between imagination and what might be real. People and things appear in the real and the dream worlds: the iconic cat with one paw raised, a toy robot, a creepy doll, an amusement park. But as the story continues and the DC Mini is used to infect more people with someone else's dream, a parade of strange, chanting objects that shouldn't be mobile walks from the dream world into the real world. The parade, awash in confetti, sweeps up everything in its path, an unforgettable visualization of what all our dreams might look like mashed together.

You can resist *Paprika* or try to make perfect sense of it, but you'd do better to give in to its strange visions, perfect soundtrack and appealing characters, many of whom need to come to terms with multiple facets of themselves. Throughout the film, phrases repeat, images recur, and the power of film to affect a viewer's imagination is discussed overtly and slyly as Konakawa explores the past that haunts his sleep. Konakawa connects dreams with film while Paprika suggests that they're not unlike the Internet, a place where the mind can vent unchecked. The DC Mini becomes a wireless router, carrying sleepers into the same dream while they sleep in different beds.

Paprika is short and swift, an energetic, perfectly overwhelming visual marvel that once again confirms animated film isn't just a children's playground. Watching reality, personality and creativity shift, merge, separate and transform in Kon's delightful down-the-rabbit-hole romp is a strange treat, one that you may find cropping up in your own dreams for nights to come. **EW**

Paprika opens Friday, July 6, at the Bijou.

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—Elizabeth Weitzman, N.Y. Daily News
Paprika
5:20, 7:20 & 9:20 Nightly
Sat & Sun Mat 3:20

PARIS, JE T'AIME
"If you've ever been to Paris, the film's varied takes on the City of Lights is seeped in reverie. If you haven't, *Paris, Je T'aime* serves as an enticing invitation."
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