

Studio Ghibli co-founder, director Isao Takahata dies at 82

By Yuri Kageyama
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Isao Takahata, co-founder of the prestigious Japanese animator Studio Ghibli that stuck to a hand-drawn *manga* look in the face of digital filmmaking, has died. He was 82 years old.

Takahata started Ghibli with Oscar-winning animator Hayao Miyazaki in 1985, hoping to create Japan’s Disney, and helped shape the style and voice of what became one of the world’s most respected animation studios as well as this nation’s prized cultural export.

He directed *Grave of the Fireflies*, a tragic tale about wartime childhood, and produced some of the studio’s films, including Miyazaki’s 1984 *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*, which tells the horror of environmental disaster through a story about a princess.

Takahata died of lung cancer at a Tokyo hospital, according to a studio statement.

He was fully aware how the floating *sumi-e* brush sketches of faint pastel in his works stood as a stylistic challenge to Hollywood’s computer-graphics cartoons.

In a 2015 interview with The Associated Press, Takahata talked about how Edo-era woodblock-print artists like Hokusai had the understanding of western-style perspective and the use of light, but they purposely chose to depict reality with lines, and in a flat way, with minimal shading.

That, he said, was at the heart of Japanese *manga*, or comics.

“It is about the essence that’s behind the drawing,” he said at Ghibli’s picturesque office in suburban Tokyo. “We want to express reality without an overly realistic depiction, and that’s about appealing to the human imagination.”

His 1982 rendition of “Gauche the Cellist,” a classic by early 20th-century poet-writer Kenji Miyazawa, was inspired by oil paintings. When he spoke of computer graphics or other digital techniques like 3-D, he practically said the terms with a scoff.

He said Ghibli strove to fuse Japanese and western filmmaking styles.

In the interview, Takahata confessed to an almost love-hate relationship with Miyazaki because their works were so different. He said he tried not to talk about Miyazaki’s works because he would have to be honest, and then he would end up getting critical, and he didn’t want conflict with an artist he so respected.

His last film, *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*, based on a Japanese folktale, was nominated for a 2015 Oscar for best animation feature, although it did not win.

Fans dance as India court grants bail to Bollywood superstar

By Ashok Sharma
The Associated Press

NEW DELHI — A court has granted bail to Bollywood superstar Salman Khan while he appeals his conviction on charges of poaching rare deer in a wildlife preserve two decades ago, a welcome development for thousands of fans who greeted their hero with songs and firecrackers.

Khan was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison and was immediately sent to jail. Within days, judge Ravindra Kumar Joshi ordered him to sign a surety bond of 50,000 rupees (\$770) before he was set free from the jail in Jodhpur, a town in western India.

Hundreds of Khan’s overjoyed fans danced outside the courtroom and chanted “We love you, Salman.” His sisters, Alvira and Arpita, were present during the hearing.

Carrying big garlanded posters of Khan, the fans set off firecrackers and sang songs from his Bollywood movies as some of them chased his car heading to the airport.

The scenes were more intense outside his Mumbai residence in India’s entertainment capital. Thousands of fans waited for hours and lit up the sky with fireworks as Khan reached his home.

Flanked by his father and other relatives, he came to the balcony of his apartment with folded hands and waved, thanking them for their support. He retreated after signalling his fans to go home.

Four other Bollywood stars accused in the case — Saif Ali Khan, Sonali Bendre, Tabu, and Neelam — were acquitted. They were in the vehicle that Salman Khan was believed to be driving during the hunt in 1998. Tabu and Neelam both use just one name.

Khan says he did not shoot the two blackbuck deer. The heavily muscled actor was acquitted in two related cases.



He is also known for the 1970s Japanese television series “Heidi, Girl of the Alps,” based on the book by Swiss author Johanna Spyri.

A native of Mie prefecture, Takahata was a graduate of the University of Tokyo and initially worked at Toei, one of Japan’s major film and animation studios.

Although he did not win an Oscar, Takahata won many other awards, including honors from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association and the Lorcano International Film Festival.

There was an outpouring of international mourning.

Pixar’s Lee Unkrich, director of *Toy Story 3*, said Takahata influenced Michael Arndt’s script for *Little Miss Sunshine*, a road trip comedy about a family of losers trying to survive.

“*Grave of the Fireflies* is an amazing, emotional film. And *My Neighbors the Yamadas* is incredibly charming,” Unkrich said in a tweet from his verified account.

My Neighbors the Yamadas chronicled the daily vignettes of the Yamada family, in a humorous way, evoking a comic-strip style.

Strong female characters were a Takahata trademark.

His attorney, Mahesh Bora, has challenged the conviction and sentence, and Khan will remain free pending the outcome of the appeal.

Soli Sorabjee, a legal expert, said it was normal for bail to be granted in such a case, and didn’t see Khan getting any special treatment from the court. “This has nothing to do with Khan’s personality as an actor,” he said.

The 52-year-old Khan has starred in more than 90 Hindi-language films. But he has also had a reputation as a Bollywood bad boy, known for his run-ins with the law — including a fatal car accident — and his troubled relationships with women.

His biggest Hindi films include *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam (I Have Fallen In Love)*, *Sultan (Ruler)*, *Ek Tha Tiger (There Was a Tiger)*, and *Tiger Zinda Hai (Tiger is Alive)*.

Khan spent a total of 18 days in prison in 1998, 2006, and 2007 in the poaching cases, but was freed on bail. He had been sentenced to prison terms of between one and five years in related cases before being acquitted by appeals courts for lack of evidence.

The blackbuck is an endangered species protected under the Indian Wildlife Act.

The Bishnoi, a religious sect whose beliefs include worshipping nature and wildlife, and who have long protected the blackbuck deer, expressed disappointment at the acquittal of the four other actors.

Khan has faced other charges in the past. In 2014, the Mumbai High Court acquitted him in a drunken-driving, hit-and-run case, after he was accused of running over five men sleeping on a sidewalk in 2002, killing one of them.

The judges found that prosecutors had failed to prove charges of culpable homicide.

The government of Maharashtra state has challenged that acquittal in the Supreme Court.



ACCOMPLISHED ANIMATOR. Japanese animation film director Isao Takahata, right photo, speaks about his film, *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*, beside a poster of the film during an interview at his office at Studio Ghibli in suburban Tokyo, in this February 12, 2015 file photo. Takahata, pictured in the left photo on July 3, 2007, died of lung cancer at a Tokyo hospital, according to a studio statement.

Princess Kaguya, in his adaptation, is a lively free-spirited young woman who spurns the advances of boorish samurai men, choosing to hold her own.

The ending, which is part of the original fairytale, has her taking off in an extraterrestrial canopy to the moon, still single, as the elderly couple, her doting earthling adoptive parents, watch in sorrow and horror.

Takahata was planning to do a film about exploited girls, forced to work as nannies with infants strapped on their backs. Most lullabies in Japan were not for parents singing babies to sleep, but for such young women, crying out about their suffering, Takahata had said.

Although his films were often fantasies, he was a realist, insisting, for instance, on genuine musical instruments being played that matched what was depicted on the screen. He was gentle but also a perfectionist, grilling his voice actors until the tone and character interpretations were just right.

All his stories, he said, held the message of urging everyone to live life to their fullest, to be all they can be, not bogged down by petty concerns like money and prestige.

“This earth is a good place, not because there is eternity,” he said.

“All must come to an end in death. But in a cycle, repeated over and over, there will always be those who come after us.”

Toshio Suzuki, a producer at Studio Ghibli, said Miyazaki and he were discussing a big farewell ceremony for Takahata for May 15, organized by the studio. Details were still undecided.

“There was so much more he wanted to do, it must be heartbreaking,” Suzuki said.

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Difficulty level: Medium#93287

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last issue’s puzzle

Puzzle #76421 (Easy)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

7	9	6	1	8	3	4	5	2
3	2	1	4	6	5	8	7	9
4	5	8	9	7	2	3	1	6
8	4	7	5	9	6	2	3	1
5	1	2	3	4	7	6	9	8
9	6	3	2	1	8	5	4	7
6	7	9	8	5	4	1	2	3
1	3	5	6	2	9	7	8	4
2	8	4	7	3	1	9	6	5

Wondering what’s going on this week?
Check out The AR’s Community and A.C.E. Calendar sections, on pages 12 and 14.