

Mark Whelan's Movie Picks

Akira (1988--Japanese) Directed by Katsuhiro Otomo. 124m Rated R



Exalted upon release, Katsuhiro Otomo's sprawling adaptation of his own manga—Japanese comic—catapulted the genre of Japanese Animation (or *anime*) into the stratosphere. A technical marvel, **Akira**'s medium deemed suitable to depict a vivid post-apocalyptic Neo Tokyo on the brink of nuclear annihilation.

As violent as it is visually arresting, **Akira** pulls no punches in its representation of societal decadence. Motorcycle gangs, corrupt politicians, religious fanatics, and militaristic police corrode the deteriorating urban settings of Neo Tokyo.



Akira's unconventional story structure dares us to draw our own conclusions. The enigmatic and convoluted nature of its screenplay is an asset and a demerit to the film's emotional undertones. Otomo constructs an unsettling, cryptic, and often aloof environment for his characters to partake. However, it is this mystifying entanglement of character, story, and cutting-edge visuals that have etched **Akira** into the monuments of film greatness...animated or otherwise.

Mark Whelan
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