

ANIME NEWS

THE DORSET ANIME FILM BOOM

Anime Screenings



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SITTING IN THE darkened theatre, feet sticking to the floor and salt assaulting your nostrils, the sound of foreign voices fill the room. The English subtitles flashing across the bottom of the screen are the only clues that you haven't stepped through the doors and across the oceans to Japan. That and the loud Somerset accents of the family two rows in front.

Anime screenings have been setting UK records in a way not seen since 'Spirited Away' and other Ghibli hits. When 'Your Name' (aka Kimi No Na Wa) hit UK cinemas in November 2016 it quickly became a hit, ranking number 14 despite only appearing in 23 cinemas nationwide. According to distributor FUNimation Films, the movie made \$108,372 on its opening day, a UK record.

The success of the critically acclaimed Makoto Shinkai picture has paved the way for a new wave of Japanese anime films to appear in UK cinemas. The film was soon followed by 'A Silent Voice' (aka Koe No Katachi) in March 2017 and the Sword Art Online movie 'Ordinal

Scale' in April 2017.

As well as national success, one Dorset cinema is leading the way in anime screenings. Cineworld Poole, in Dorset, is set to show three more anime films in the next three months, with 'Fairy Tail: Dragon Cry' in May, 'In this Corner of the World' in July, and 'Napping Princess' in August.

And it seems like this is a trend set to continue, Terry Whitehead, the Cineworld Poole General Manager explained that "Cineworld aims to screen a wide range of films in order to accommodate the varying preferences of the area." He goes on "At Cineworld Poole we've seen a real interest from the community in anime films..."

So, the local area seems a driving force for the wave of anime films, local cosplay groups have around 250 members and the Anime Society at Bournemouth University, just 3 miles down the road from Cineworld Poole, has over 500 members. The local businesses also reflect this, Bournemouth has had a "tech boom" according to local company Redweb, with companies



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1. Cosplay has taken off in Dorset, local cosplay groups have hit over 250 members and Bournemouth recently held its very own Comicon. Photo Credit: Pexels.com

2. The popularity of critically acclaimed film 'Your Name' (Kimi No Na Wa) directed by Makoto Shinkai has sparked a wave of Japanese anime films being shown in UK cinemas, after it premiered in November 2016. Photo Credit: Everett Collection Inc / Alamy Stock Photo ©FUNimation

expanding so fast that "1 in 5 jobs aren't filled yet."

Locals are enjoying the new screenings, Sam Bale lives in Poole and works at Cineworld Poole and is excited by the variation "I think it's really cool that we do them personally because... it's obviously something rather different" and according to him it isn't just Japanese anime that Cineworld Poole have been pushing, "alongside it we've done Bollywood films and we've started doing Polish films too!"

For Sam, the rise in anime films comes more from a desire for "variation" for audiences, with the amount of rom coms, action films, and thrillers that all seem to be clones of the last film that came out. Anime provides a new and exciting way to experience familiar genres.

Hannah Siobhan, who is a Supervisor at Cineworld Poole, thinks the expansion is part of a wider "trend" in Bournemouth and Poole. Bournemouth recently had its own comicon and, much like comic book films, Hannah thinks that "it's just more accepted now".

But for many, anime remains an inaccessible medium,

these screenings do not have audio description for partially sighted customers who cannot read subtitles. It is also a medium for the younger generation, with the median age of subscribers to Crunchyroll (the leading UK anime streaming service) at 18 and 75% of their users under the age of 35, according to their own statistics.

Just the prospect of having to read subtitles puts many off and whilst 'Your Name' has begun screenings of an English dub in the US, it's coming over 6 months later when much of the hype and excitement has died down.

But Hannah is determined to spread the joys of Japanese anime film as far as possible, to those that are sceptical she says "try a movie that will be so different and original to what they are used to watching... I personally love anime because it's usually so sentimental, emotional, and beautifully drawn."

Whilst the rest of the country is yet to follow the push for anime films, if Cineworld Poole can reap success, then we can expect a huge boom in UK anime...●