



# The Vanguard of Animation

Adventures involving a castle in the sky, friendship with strange creatures living in a forest and a little witch who flies in the sky – most children brought up in Japan would be able to give the titles of these movies upon hearing just a little about the story. This is testimony to the extent that Hayao Miyazaki's animated movies: *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (Tenku no Shiro – Rapyuta, 1986), *My Neighbor Totoro* (Tonari no Totoro, 1988) and *Kiki's Delivery Service* (Majo no Takkyubin, 1989) have captivated Japanese children.

Miyazaki's popularity extends beyond Japan. *Spir-*

*ited Away* (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi, 2001), a story about a girl caught up in a bizarre spirit world, won the Golden Bear (First Prize) at the 2002 Berlin Film Festival, and the 2003 Academy Award for Best Animated Feature. Miyazaki's work in broadening the scope of expression through animation is widely recognized overseas and in 2005, at the Venice International Film Festival, he became the first Japanese to receive the Honorary Golden Lion award for professional achievements.

Miyazaki's eagerly-awaited new work (*facing*), *Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea* (Gake no Ue no Ponyo) will be released this summer. While his previous work, *Howl's Moving Castle* (Hauru no Ugoku Shiro, 2004), was a grandiose depiction of a parallel universe, this latest work is the heartwarming story of the interaction between Ponyo, a fish that longs to become a human being, and a five year-old boy named Sosuke. Miyazaki declares that he gets back to the basics in this work, doing all the drawing himself of the complicated motion involved in the waves. A story set at sea, something that he had always wanted to do, it is sure to strike a chord with his many fans around the world.

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**ABOVE:** Miyazaki with his Honorary Golden Lion award received at the Venice International Film Festival in recognition of his professional achievements.