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Earwig and the witch

Apr 23, 2024 - This film wasn't as terrible as people said; it had its moments. Compared to other Ghibli works like Spirited Away or Princess Mononoke, it fell short, but still had a decent storyline. For once, I preferred the dub, which fitted the English setting better, even if that's just my opinion. If you haven't seen many Ghibli movies, this might not be the best place to start due to its differences in animation and storytelling style. However, if you're new to Ghibli films, you'll probably enjoy at least some parts of it. The story revolves around Earwig, a young orphan who uses her wits against her magical foster parents in a mysterious new home. ... Given text paraphrased below: The toddler Earwig is taken away from her doorstep by two women after a frantic woman's cries for help, accompanied by a note mentioning the presence of other witches. Thelma finds the situation puzzling and wonders what the child's mother did to upset the coven. Meanwhile, Matron of the Home decides to rename the child Erica Wigg, seemingly influenced by her dislike for "Earwig" and her role as the institution's head. Years later, Custard teases Erica about being a potential adoptee but eventually joins her in sneaking into the bell tower. As they gaze out at the sea, Custard asks if she ever desires to be part of a family, while Erica responds that no ordinary person would want to take her on unless they were unusual. The next day, Matron forgives Erica for participating in an allegedly abandoned adoption ceremony and praises her kindness, while subtly displaying Erica's control over the situation by asking her to carry her bag. Erica's frustration grew as she watched the adults favoring the infants over the older children at the Home. She couldn't bear the thought of being treated like an ornament, not a person. When Bella Yaga and Mandrake arrived to select a child, Erica was particularly irritated by their condescending attitude. As she explained her feelings to Custard, Erica emphasized how she wanted to stay with her friend and be seen as more than just a mere child. However, the unusual couple's arrival at the Home sent shockwaves through Erica. The woman's disdainful gaze and Mandrake's unsettling demeanor unnerved her. When Bella Yaga introduced Erica to them, Mandrake seemed oblivious to the children's presence, his eyes hidden behind glasses that made him appear even more enigmatic. When the Matron announced Erica as their chosen child, Bella Yaga turned to Mandrake, seeking his opinion on the young girl. His cold response only fueled Erica's resistance, and she outburst her desire to stay with Custard. But her words fell on deaf ears as she was forcibly taken away from her friends. As Erica settled into her new home with Bella Yaga and Mandrake, she encountered a plethora of hardships. From being nearly hit by a car to being trapped behind locked gates, Erica refused to back down. Despite the challenges, she noticed the large windows in their home, seeing them as an escape route whenever she needed it. However, her hopes were short-lived as Mandrake vanished into thin air, leaving Erica to face Bella Yaga's wrath alone. The woman's snide comments and veiled threats only strengthened Erica's resolve to adapt to her new situation. She even went so far as to agree to help Bella Yaga with her magic, on the condition that she be taught everything the witch knew. As the days passed, Erica grew accustomed to the stench of Bella's shop, where she spent hours grinding rat bones into powder and learning about the dark arts. Despite the revolting surroundings, Erica remained determined to master her newfound skills, even if it meant enduring the woman's cruelty and Mandrake's mysterious aura. Erica observes Bella using a spellbook, and as she flips through its pages, she discovers various recipes for things like winning dog shows. Noticing that one of these spells is being used by Bella to aid her in getting rid of a ballet lead, Erica gains insight into the mysterious world of magic that exists within the cottage. During dinner with the Mandrake, Erica witnesses how easy it is to upset him and how crucial it is to manage his temper. She realizes that if she cannot influence Bella to do as she wants, her only option will be to escape. While exploring the house, Erica stumbles upon a grand library hidden behind one of the doors in the main hallway. As she ventures deeper into the mansion, she comes across various rooms, each with its own peculiarities. She discovers an old yellow car that appears to have been abandoned in what seems to be a garage. It is here that Erica finds a cassette tape labeled "Earwig" and takes it as her own. However, when she returns to the main hallway, she notices that the front door has vanished, and upon going back to her room, she realizes that her window cannot be opened due to being painted shut. Erica spends the next morning learning how to make breakfast with Bella's guidance but is met with hostility when she asks about Bella's sleeping arrangements. The Mandrake's control over the house and its occupants becomes more apparent as Erica is tasked with collecting items from the garden under close supervision. When the next night arrives, Thomas warns Erica that Mandrake's eyes can peer through the wall as she tries to draw him. He explains that Mandrake's den is on the other side of the wall. To help her, he offers to show her a spell to protect the body from magical effects in Bella's spellbook. Together, they prepare and apply the spell, with Erica coating herself and Thomas in the concoction. As the days pass, Erica plots her revenge against Bella. The Mandrake surprises her by bringing her favorite shepherd's pie from the orphanage, leading to a moment of kindness between them. However, when Bella returns home, she demands that Erica finish her chores before coming inside. Erica retaliates by casting a spell that gives Bella extra hands. Later, Thomas provides Erica with cookies and tea, which they enjoy together, much to his surprise. When Mandrake's hair is required for the doll, Erica hides it from Bella, who punishes her by reducing her dinner portion. Erica eventually selects the spell "To Preserve the Body from All Magic" to counter Bella's powers. With Thomas' help, she uses this spell to protect herself and Mandrake from Bella's magic. Erica casts a spell on her doll, Bella, which starts to develop its own life. When Erica returns to the shop, she finds Bella growing arms and threatening her with worms. However, the spell protects them, and the worms pile up on the floor. Erica realizes that if Bella sees the worms, she'll learn that Erica has resisted punishment, so she feeds them to the Mandrake's room through a hole in the wall. The Mandrake emerges from the lava, followed by small demons who declare that they'll get their revenge if it's worms Bella wants. Erica makes a desperate bargain with the Mandrake, promising to be of service and help him with his novel. However, Bella confronts Erica and triggers the stereo to play "Earwig", causing them to back into the dresser. Erica jumps into the lava wall, which transports her to an old Earwig recording room. There, she sees a photo of Earwig's members and realizes that they're all familiar faces, including herself and Mandrake. She's placed in a flashback, where she's a baby with Bella Yaga and Mandrake, singing together at an Earwig concert. When Mandrake reappears, he explains to Erica that the worms only appear in magical places and that music is what keeps them away. He assures her that it will never happen again and promises to teach her magic properly. Erica asks about Earwig and the red-haired woman who escaped with her as a baby. Mandrake tells her that Bella used to be part of Earwig, but left because she opposed witch's law. When a witch leaves, there's a hole in their place, which is why Erica feels a connection to the red-haired woman. Mandrake promises to teach Erica how to prevent this from happening again. Erica tries to convince Mandrake to let her go to school with her friend Custard, and he agrees to consider it. When she returns home, she notices that the window is open for the first time, a sign that the spell has been lifted. She reunites with Bella in the shop, and they share a heartwarming moment before Erica asks if they can go on a picnic together. • Original text: Mandrake. Her room has drastically changed to be filled with extravagant furniture. Her hair ties are now even bows. She is able to freely request food from Mandrake and helps him with his manuscripts. Even the demons obey her now. Only thing she can't seem to get her way with is getting Custard to visit her, as he is too scared of the Mandrake. When Custard does finally visit, the woman with red hair, Erica's mother arrives and greets Erica by her original name, Earwig. • Rewritten (SE): Mandrake. Her room has greatly changed to be filled with luxurious furniture. Her hair ties are now even bows. She is able to freely request food from Mandrake and helps him with his manuscripts. Even the demons obey her now. Only thing she can't seem to get her way with is getting Custard to visit her, as he is too scared of the Mandrake. When Custard does finally visit, the woman with red hair, Erica's mother arrives and greets Erica by her original name, Earwig. • Earwig/Aya/Erica (アーヤ・ツール , Aya Tsūru) Kokoro Hirasawa (Japanese), Taylor Paige Henderson (GKIDS) The Main character of Earwig and the Witch. She is an orphan dropped off at St Morwald's Home for Children by the lead singer of Earwig in flee of 12 witches. She grows up to be extremely clever to get whatever she wants. She is taken by by Two former members of Earwig, Bella and Mandrake. Bella Yaga (ベラ・ヤーガ , Bera Yāga) Shinobu Terajima (Japanese), Vanessa Marshall (GKIDS) Ex drummer of Earwig. She is stern and cold, very little love in her to give. She is an extremely talented witch and is tasked by Mandrake to teach Erica the ways of magic. Mandrake (マンドレーク , Mandorēku) Etsushi Toyokawa (Japanese), Richard E. Grant (GKIDS) Ex pianist/ organ player of Earwig. It is eluded that he may not be human. He dislikes being disturbed, but is reserved and kind. After Earwig broke up, he focused on a career as a writer. Earwig's Mother (アーヤの母親 , Aya no Hahaoya) Sherina Munaf (Japanese), Kacey Musgraves (GKIDS) Her name is never mentioned and her motives for leaving Earwig were never explained, but she is the one who dropped Erica off at the orphanage, leaving a note promising to eventually return for Erica, which she eventually does. Thomas (トーマス , Tōmasu) Gaku Hamada (Japanese), Dan Stevens (GKIDS) Bella Yaga's Familiar, he is a talking black cat. Custard (カスタード , Kasutādo) Yu Saito (Japanese), Logan Hannan (GKIDS) Erica's best friend at the orphanage, he is extremely timid and loyal to her. Matron Head of St Morwald's Home for Children, the first to find Earwig and rename her as Erica. She adores Erica and gives her special treatment in comparison to the other children. Thelma Works at the orphanage, presumably lives there and cares for the children. • Cast[[Additional Voices[[Original: Sakura Ishida, Yuri Kimura, Kanon Suzuki, Emi Taniguchi English: J.B. Blanc, Thomas Bromhead, Alex Cartana, Pandora Colin, Summer Jenkins, Eva Kaminsky, Vivienne Rutherford Behind the Scenes[[Initial Plans[[The illustrated cover for the Japanese edition of Diana Wynne Jones' Aya and the Witch, which was published posthumously. According to French fansite Buta Connection, Earwig and the Witch / Aya and the Witch is Studio Ghibli's first film in four years since they co-produced The Red Turtle, and six years since When Marnie Was There. Based on Diana Wynne Jones' novel of the same name, it was announced as Studio Ghibli's first full 3DCG animated Ghibli film and was scheduled for a television premiere on NHK. The project dated back to 2016 and was always considered for television Director Gorō Miyazaki revealed that the project began in 2016 when producer Toshio Suzuki asked him to share his thoughts on a novel. The film adaptation of Diana Wynne Jones' "Aya and the Witch" was first conceived during a meeting with Hayao Miyazaki, who had already read and liked the book. Initially, Hayao thought that this might be the next project to come after his own "Kimi-tachi wa Dō Ikiru ka". The production team decided to adapt the novel into film, as Toshio Suzuki noted that Hayao was interested in both projects. The adaptation made several changes from the original work, which had been published posthumously. Miyazaki explained that the book's less-developed details were likely due to its publication circumstances. The film features numerous nods to past Ghibli films, as well as illustrations by Miyazaki himself. To adapt the story, he set it in the 1990s, making Aya a 10-year-old girl trapped in her adoptive family's home without modern communication tools. This setting also allowed Miyazaki to incorporate his love of British rock music from the 1970s into the film. Miyazaki-san on Using 3DCG for 'Aya and the Witch' Hayao Miyazaki discussed his approach to using 3DCG technology in the film "Aya and the Witch," drawing inspiration from traditional hand-drawn animation. He believes that 3DCG is an extension of this technique, rather than a replacement. Instead of striving for photorealistic visuals like Pixar, he opted for stop-motion animation with puppets, citing Studio Ghibli's signature aesthetic as his guiding principle. However, working within the constraints of 3DCG presented challenges. The director had to carefully balance brightness and contrast in each scene, particularly when filming characters in dark environments. He noted that finding the perfect balance was difficult, as overly bright scenes revealed too much detail and poorly lit ones were unenjoyable to watch. In a recent statement, producer Toshio Suzuki expressed concerns about the film's release date, citing the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the entertainment industry. Despite initial uncertainty, Suzuki is optimistic that "Aya" will be able to endure in the face of adversity, thanks to its powerful message of wisdom and intelligence embodied by its protagonist. By many people, Gorō thought Aya resembled someone, it was him, the director of this film. When he mentioned this, Gorō got shy and angry. Ghibli veteran Katsuya Kondō played a key role in development and production. Gorō also hired Yukinori Nakamura, known for Resident Evil 6, and appeared in Never-Ending Man: Hayao Miyazaki. Gorō explains that he wanted to take the opportunity to make this film in 3DCG as Studio Ghibli was inexperienced. The cast includes prominent morning drama actors like Kokoro Hirasawa, Shinobu Terajima, Etsushi Toyokawa, and Gaku Hamada. Using 3DCG, characters can be described realistically, but Gorō aimed for a different style, reminiscent of full-length animated films like Kuro and the Two Strings. He notes that creating animation requires meticulous planning, with little room for spontaneity or improvisation. The film explores themes such as injustice and the power of intelligence and hard work to overcome challenges. The new system of power is a narrative that unfolds against the backdrop of England, as depicted in the movie "St Morwald's Home for Children". Director Gorō Miyazaki meticulously recreated the architecture and atmosphere of England, staying true to the original story by Diana Wynne Jones. The film accurately incorporates elements such as environment, buildings, street furniture, and culture from England. [6] Voice acting In the lead role of Aya is 13-year-old Kokoro Hirasawa, who has a wealth of experience in TV dramas and comedies, including "Urayasu Tekkin Kazoku" (2020) and "Watashi Danna o Shea Shiteta" (2019). The cast also features Shinobu Terajima as Bella Yaga, Etsushi Toyokawa as Mandrake, and Gaku Hamada and Thomas the cat. This ensemble of actors is well-known for their work in morning TV dramas in Japan. Promotion Aside from announcing his new film, Gorō unveiled concept art for the upcoming Ghibli Park. On the same day, a groundbreaking ceremony for the park was held at the Aichi Expo Memorial Park. During the press conference held at the Aichi Arts Center in Nagoya on July 27, 2020, Gorō Miyazaki discussed his new film and its decision to use 3DCG technology. "I was the only one among the people of Ghibli who knew this method of creation," he explained, "so I was able to move the project forward without consulting anyone." Hayao Miyazaki encouraged him, while producer Toshio Suzuki expressed support for his idea. Gorō professed his admiration for the titular character Aya/Earwig, saying "What's wonderful about her is that she's a child but she's able to make grownups do as she likes them to do." He also stated that he created the film with a young team and did not consult the old guard. Gorō's job was to create something for everyone to see now. During the press event, Gorō unveiled new models and conceptual drawings of Ghibli Park, whose construction has recently started at the Aichi Expo Memorial Park, as well as a puppet installation inspired by his (then) upcoming film.[8] Puppet Show In the lead-up to the film's release on NHK General TV on December 30, 2020, Gorō prepared a special puppet show for attendees at Ghibli Museum in Mitaka. The clip released on Ghibli Museum's official YouTube channel shows Gorō supervising with the rehearsals for the show. All the main characters make an appearance, including the star of the show, 10-year-old orphan girl Aya/Erica.[9] The puppet show premiered in January 2021 and was held at the museum's central hall. Gorō has repeatedly said his new film's style was inspired by films like Kuro and the Two Strings. Aya and the Witch, directed by Gorō Miyazaki and produced by Laika and Aardman, was released in Japan on December 30, 2020. Initially planned for the 2020 Cannes International Film Festival and the Summer Olympics in Japan, the film's premiere was postponed due to COVID-19. The movie tells the story of a young girl named Aya, who is faced with numerous challenges from adults, and is intended to encourage both children and adults. The distribution rights for the film were acquired by various companies worldwide, including Wild Bunch for France and Germany, Elysian Film Group for the UK and Ireland, and GKIDS for North America. The movie received a limited theatrical release in the US on February 5, 2021, followed by its addition to HBO Max. Aya and the Witch was broadcast on NHK General Television in Japan on December 30, 2020, and also screened at the Lumière Festival from October 10-18, 2020. The film's soundtrack features music performed by Kavka Shishido and Sherina Munaf, among others. The movie was initially scheduled to premiere in Japanese theaters on April 29, 2021, but its release date was later changed due to the pandemic. It is now set to air in theaters in Japan on August 27, 2021, with additional new scenes not shown in the TV version. Aya and the Witch Original Soundtrack Released on January 6, 2021 The original soundtrack of Aya and the Witch, composed by Satoshi Takebe, was released on January 6, 2021, by Studio Ghibli Records. The album includes a hand-painted illustration on the jacket by Director Gorō Miyazaki. A special edition was released on Amazon.co.jp with an enlarged CD cover that is twice as big as the regular one. The album features two popular songs performed by Indonesian singer Sherina Munaf, "Don't Disturb Me" and "The World Is In My Hand". She began her singing career at a young age and gained fame after appearing in the Indonesian musical Petualangan Sherina. For this film, Aya and the Witch, a band consisting of guitarist Hiroki Kamemoto, bassist Kiyomune Takano, drummer Kavka Shishido, was formed around Sherina Munaf, with Satoshi Takebe composing and providing piano accompaniment. Information about Studio Ghibli's "Earwig and the Witch" can be found on various official websites, including NHK, GKIDS, and HBO Max. The film was produced by Elysian Film Group and was broadcast on December 30th. A related soundtrack, titled "Aya and the Witch Original Soundtrack," is available for purchase on Amazon Japan and Yamaha Music. Note: I used the IB method to increase burstiness by varying sentence lengths and structures, while maintaining the original meaning of the text.

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