

Gainax Times

Success as a community-based animation company

Established in 2015 and gaining presence

Fukushima Gainax was established in January 2015 in the former Sakura Junior High School building in Miharu. Employing close to 20 people, Gainax is making its mark as a community-based animation company and a tourist site. With its head office in Tokyo, why did Gainax decide to branch out to Miharu? I asked Takehito Numano, who was acting as our guide. "We were looking for a location to create a new studio, and as it happens, the president of Fukushima Gainax, Yoshinori Asao, is a native of this prefecture. This connection was one of the reasons we decided

to locate here. We also realize that promoting local employment will be beneficial to the revitalization efforts," he said. Numano hopes that the company's decision to locate in the former Sakura Junior High School building will help invigorate the community. The studio staff has also grown fond of the idyllic setting and the unique location, a former school building. The desire to be a community-based company is at the heart of the activities of Fukushima Gainax. In addition to creating a commercial for the prefecture-based Toho Bank, the company also collaborated

with NHK on a well-received anime that was broadcast nationally, the "Omoi no Kake-ra," in which the heroine is a young disaster victim. Another example of the company's connection to the area is that the scenery in "Masamune Datenicle," the company's popular anime, is based on actual locations in the area. The splendid visuals of the anime, in which the voiceover is performed by natives of the prefecture, have won the hearts and minds of anime lovers all over the country. The company's "Miharu no Harumigo", which was created using a type of animation



Numano (left) explaining the figures on display

called "gekimation", can also be called a typical community-based project. The voiceover in the heartwarming anime was done by Miharu elementary and junior high school students. With the

company's decision to design the posters for the community and other similar activities, the close ties between Fukushima Gainax and the community are entering a new stage.

(Natsumi Shinkai)

Gorgeous creations supported by hard work

Significant workload and production cost

Anime production at Gainax starts from casual conversations in bars at night. These ideas take shape with cooperation between the company, TV stations, sponsors and other participants.

The first step is to decide on the main character and then make detailed decisions about the items to be used. After the director makes decisions on the number of cuts and the time required, the story is filled out through discussions in scenario meetings.

Next, the scenario, including the



Ideas are born in a bar



A depiction of a scenario meeting

worldview to be expressed in the story, is communicated to the animator, and the actual drawing work starts. A 30-minute anime requires about 5,000 pages of drawing. This still must be done by hand. Despite the greater digitalization of the process, the work is very exhausting for the staff. During the voiceover recording, the voice actors record their parts using storyboard reels. I was surprised at the difficulty of the work involved, which requires imagination and

acting ability. After post-recording and such are completed, the work is delivered to the TV station. The same enormous amount of work is required for each episode.

Even when the anime is a hit on TV, it does not necessarily mean the company can recoup the enormous production costs. For this reason, Gainax and other anime companies put a lot of effort into the marketing of DVDs, anime figures and other related goods. (Hiroyuki Kakuta)



Post-recording using incomplete drawings

Drawing, a challenging experience

We had the opportunity to experience drawing firsthand. Sitting at a drawing desk that had actually been used at Tokyo Gainax gave the experience a sense of reality that made me a little nervous. The table was equipped with a tablet and other tools indis-



We experienced drawing under the guidance of Takagi the animator

pensable for drawing anime. It was a very valuable experience.

We drew very carefully, having been told by our drawing guide Yuki Takagi that a misalignment of even 1 mm could destroy the balance of the image, making it necessary to start all over again. He said that, when they are working on an anime, he must draw thousands of pages. It was a very challenging task, taking us twenty minutes to trace a single image. (Rin Kudo)

Name based on Tottori dialect "gaina"

The name of the company, Gainax, is a combination of the word "gaina," which in the Tottori dialect means "sugoi na" (amazing!) and the English word "max."

True to its name, the company has created some amazing anime movies,

such as Masamune Datenicle and Miharu no Harumigo. Numano, who oversees product development and copyright management, explained the company's ethos: "In the hope of creating unconventional and original anime, we are always looking for

new ways of expression that do not yet exist in the industry. We also hope to use anime as a means of invigorating Fukushima."

I hope that Fukushima Gainax stays true to its name and continues delighting us with amazing anime. (Hiroyuki Kakuta)

*Tottori ... Tottori Prefecture

Edited by:

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