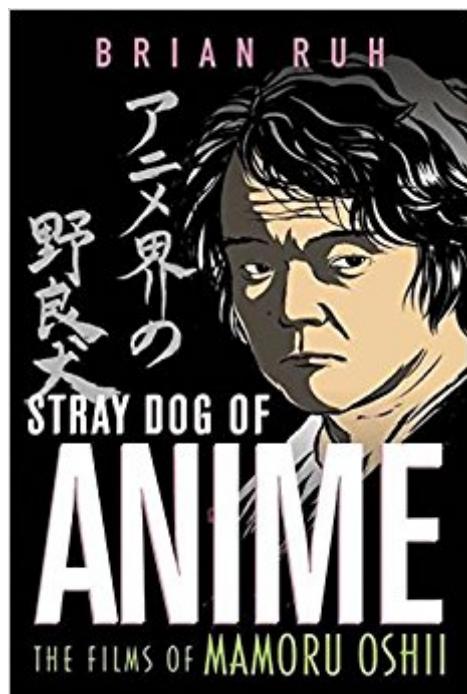


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Stray Dog Of Anime: The Films Of Mamoru Oshii



Synopsis

Upon its U.S. release in the mid 1990s *Ghost in the Shell*, directed by Mamoru Oshii, quickly became one of the most popular Japanese animated films, or anime, in the country. Despite these accolades, Oshii is known as a contrarian within anime, a self-proclaimed 'stray dog', avoiding the limelight in favour of his own personal cinematic vision. He cannot be pigeon-holed, working in both live-action film and animation, directing everything from absurdist comedy to thrillers to meditations on the nature of reality. *Stray Dog of Anime* is the first book to take an in-depth look at Oshii's major films, from his early days working on *Urusei Yatsura* to *Avalon*, his most recent feature. Ruh details Oshii's evolution as a director, paying special attention to his personal style and symbolism, resulting in a unique guide that will appeal to anime fans and cineastes of all kinds.

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Customer Reviews

"A very solid discussion of both a major anime director and several major anime titles, some of which have never been analyzed critically before. As is the case with all books on film studies, some movie fans will invariably go 'what's the point, movies are made to be watched, not analyzed.' For those who want something more, though - whether they are longtime fans of Oshii's works, or have only seen one or two of his films - this is an excellent resource. In fact, much as Oshii himself is more than merely an anime director, this book holds its own very well indeed when compared to discussions of the major modern cinema directors in general." - Anime News Network "This lucid, well-researched handbook traces the artistic development of animation film director Mamoru Oshii

(b. 1951) through close readings of major fantasy-laden productions ranging from *Urusei Yatsura* (Beautiful Dreamer, 1984) to *Avalon* (2000). Ruh offers an engaging treatment of ten animated films or television series, including for each a descriptive list of the major dramatis personae, a succinct synopsis of the plot, and a section of informed commentary and analysis . . . Summing Up: Recommended. All collections supporting film studies or contemporary Japanese culture." - CHOICE "A fine introduction to one of Japanese animation's few true auteurs, *Stray Dog of Anime* examines Oshii's films from both sides of the camera. Brian Ruh's work is scholarly but readable, and affirmative but critical - an education for academics and fans alike. Welcome to Class Real." - Jonathan Clements, co-author, *The Anime Encyclopedia* "Brian Ruh's *Stray Dog of Anime* is a wonderfully accessible introduction to Oshii Mamoru, one of the most brilliant and challenging anime directors working today. *Stray Dog of Anime* provides a fine overview of the spiritual, aesthetic and political issues that weave through Oshii's work. This book is an excellent resource on a major director, still too little studied in the States. Fans of Oshii and fans of anime in general will find it both stimulating and enlightening." - Susan Napier, author of *Anime: from Akira to Princess Mononoke* "Ruh deserves attention simply for stepping up to the mat as one of the few writers building a framework for the mature appreciation of anime as a creative form by British and American viewers, but he's also provided an overview of one of the medium's most interesting figures. His synthesis of the available material is accompanied by a passionately argued statement of Oshii's importance as director and auteur. There's plenty to interest students of film as well as anime buffs, and Ruh's thoughts will generate argument in fan circles throughout the English-speaking world." - Helen McCarthy, Author of *Hayao Miyazaki: Master of Japanese Animation* and *The Anime Encyclopedia* "Brian Ruh's book *Stray Dog of Anime: The Films of Mamoru Oshii* is the first comprehensive treatment in English on a Japanese director who is by turns familiar, alien, grim, funny, evasive, brutal, ethereal, and deeply human. Readers will begin to understand why the imagination of Mamoru Oshii inspires *The Matrix*'s Wachowski brothers and *Titanic*'s James Cameron. *Stray Dog of Anime* will be of interest not only to those who want to get to know Mamoru Oshii, but those who presumed they already knew him well. For those new to Mamoru Oshii, *Stray Dog of Anime* is the viewer's companion to have. For those already fans, *Stray Dog of Anime* is likely to provoke at least half-a-dozen new questions." - Carl Gustav Horn, co-author, *Japan Edge: The Insider's Guide to Japanese Pop Subculture*

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Like many others, my first introduction to Mamoru Oshii was via the first *Ghost in the Shell* movie. At the time I was looking for something like the *Matrix*, and the Internet of the time highly recommended looking at *Ghost in the Shell*. I would go on later to watch and enjoy *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, another of Oshii's works, and then in 2006 I discovered *Urusei Yatsura Movie 2: Beautiful Dreamer*, seemingly thanks to a forum post recommending it as being similar to the movie *Waking Life*. In 2007 I would watch the animated *Blood: The Last Vampire*, and then in 2010, *Avalon*. It was the use of the dog in the film that made me think of *Innocence*, and

then to discovering that Mamoru Oshii had a part in all of these movies. So in 2014 when I saw a used copy of Mamoru Oshii: Cinema Trilogy, I immediately picked it up, with Jin-Roh: The Wolf Brigade and the first Patlabor film being additional recent purchases this year. I say all this because I came into Brian Ruh's *Stray Dog of Anime: The Films of Mamoru Oshii* with some level of experience with Mamoru Oshii's works, and is definitely a creator (being much more than just a director) that I am aware of and watch out for. So with Brian Ruh's book I was hoping to get a better idea of just who Mamoru Oshii is, and for new insights into his various works. First, I must comment on the Kindle version of the book. This version appeared to be the easiest (and possibly only) way to get a copy of the Second Edition, which includes three additional chapters, including most importantly one on Innocence. Sadly, the Kindle version of the book (read on a Kindle Fire 7, in mid-March 2016) appears to have issues with some special characters. For instance, the Yen symbol, as well as oddly placed dashes and underscores, are mingled within Japanese names. This was slightly distracting, and is something I would hope would be corrected. Otherwise, this book covers Oshii's major films, including a brief synopsis of the piece, characters of note, commentary, and analysis. With the book setup to cover a major work, or universe, in chronological order, you can truly see the transition and growth of Mamoru Oshii. Since I have not seen all of the works covered, of special note were the synopsis pieces, as Brian Ruh does quite a good job of retelling the stories. However, one thing that I would have hoped for was more on Mamoru Oshii's *The Red Spectacles*, *Stray Dog*, and *Talking Head*. While mentioned briefly, they are some of the more cryptic works of Oshii's, although that difficulty and obscurity may in fact be why Brian Ruh didn't devote a chapter to them. Ultimately, however, the exclusion of an in-depth look at these works does not sufficiently detract from the works that are covered, and the level at which they are. The Second Edition of Brian Ruh's *Stray Dog of Anime: The Films of Mamoru Oshii* is definitely a good overview of Mamoru Oshii, and comes recommended with a full five of five stars. If some of the ideas brought up by the first two *Ghost in the Shell* movies are of interest to you, or you've seen more than a couple of his films, then you too may enjoy this book.

Very intriguing and insightful look into the mind of Oshii. Well written, well researched and easy to comprehend.

I wrote a review of the book "Cinema of Mamoru Oshii: Fantasy, Technology and Politics" by Dani

Cavallaro", describing it as "comprehensive, even if a bit dense." Well, Brian Ruh's book "Stray Dog of Anime" accomplishes the same goal that Cavallaro set out to accomplish, only minus the thick academic language. This is not a slight to Cavallaro's work, which should help bring Oshii's genius into the line of sight of Western Academia. However, for the rest of us who appreciate an intelligent yet more accessible style of writing, there is Ruh's book. What's interesting is that Ruh's book captures the same format as Cavallaro's, walking the reader through Oshii's work in chronological order. Ruh follows a helpful outline approach that offers an introduction, description, synopsis and, finally, analytic commentary on each film. Ruh's dissection of each film is presented in a conversational format that is without pretense. Readers like myself will especially appreciate the Oshii interview excerpts throughout the book. In fact, I bought both books hoping to find not just a critical look at Oshii's films, but also some insight from the man himself. It's always a good feeling to come across an outside view of a movie or film director that is in line with my own. I really appreciated how Ruh takes notice of Oshii's maturation through each film, with Patlabor 2 being something of a pivotal point in Oshii's more subdued yet enriching approach to how dialog and mood is captured and conveyed in his films. Unfortunately, my favorite Oshii film -- Innocence -- was not yet finished at the time of the publishing of this book, so you won't find any discussion about this film. But it is a minor miss for an otherwise well written, comprehensive inspection of Oshii's other works. If you can afford it, buy this book and Cavallaro's together.

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