

Your Name: Sequel

Artist's Statement

As an artist, the process of creation, whether it involves creating oil paintings, making original films, or composing music, has always been about bringing ideas to life. My experience in creating *Your Name: Sequel*, a short film based on the 2016 film *Your Name* by director Makoto Shinkai, was no different, and bringing my most impulsive and boldest ideas into reality with this film became a significant turning point in my life that influenced my long-term career plans and future aspirations.

The story began in the fall semester of my junior year, when I took 82-279: *Anime - Visual Interplay Between Japan and the World* with Dr. Kiyono Fujinaga-Gordon. The class covered iconic Japanese anime and culture and was perfect for Japanese anime fans and culture enthusiasts like me. The final project required integrating class anime discussions and external research to produce a creative work and thereby explore the course themes through various formats. For instance, Computer Science majors could create a Japanese culture promo website, and art majors could draw a cyberpunk manga. As a BXA student studying film, art, and music, I decided to take on the challenge of writing a sequel script to *Your Name*, the final film that we watched in the course.

When *Your Name* was first released in 2016, I got to watch it in the theater. Revisiting the film in 2023 in the course, I discovered hidden details and found a deeper understanding of the characters' emotions, which sparked a strong desire to write a sequel for the story and fueled my creative inspiration and enthusiasm. I have always ranked *Your Name* as my top anime film for its novel and captivating plot and Makoto Shinkai's brilliant direction. His uniquely detailed art style and the touching music by Radwimps in his works are truly inspiring and admirable.

After finishing the script, I had an impulse to turn it into a short film. With Dr. Fujinaga-Gordon's approval, I assembled a team of seven students, crossing various majors and acting backgrounds, for the project. Despite some challenges during filming, the experience taught me valuable lessons about collaboration and the filmmaking processes. I got to experience the hardships, responsibilities, and sense of duty that come with being a screenwriter/director. It taught me that filmmaking is a collaborative process, requiring the unity and collective effort of team members. This experience inspired me to continue exploring filmmaking, creating better and more innovative films for my future endeavors in this field.

While planning to shoot the film, my initial intention was to write my own version of *Your Name*'s open ending in order to give the protagonists a happy resolution. After exploring more Japanese anime films (e.g. *The Wind Rises*, *A Silent Voice*, *5 Centimeters per Second*, *Bubble*, etc.), I was fascinated by their depiction of fate and destiny, particularly focusing on characters' yearning for deep, pure love and the fixation on and regret over fleeting emotional experiences. In those films, as perhaps in life, protagonists often experience a brief, unforgettable, love-at-first-sight-like encounter with a stranger followed by abrupt separation that leaves them longing for that special, striking, yet transient feeling. As a response and answer to this longing, I sought to extend through my film a comforting, hopeful embrace to all those who believe in love. In this

embrace, my message is that, even if these brief encounters are destined, through our own great efforts we can fight against fate, change the course of destiny, and preserve the connections that we hold most dear.

In addition to the above findings, upon watching Japanese romantic animes like *Your Name*, I realized that certain emotions are conveyed more effectively through actions than through words. In my sequel, the protagonists did not explicitly confess their love to each other; instead, they used cryptic actions to convey their yearning, such as writing out their thoughts on each other's palms. I believe this resonates with the definition of implicit love. After enduring the pressures of society and the monotonicity of living day after day, it's easy to forget the feeling of missing someone, to lose track of how to express true emotions, and to forget the sensation of reuniting with a loved one after a long separation. I hope my film can help each one of you rediscover those moments and inspire enough reflection that allows you to explore and understand your heart and desires.

In your life, who is at the other end of your knot? Who is the figure you are striving to pursue during half-light (twilight)? Whose name is written stroke by stroke on your cheek, palm, and wherever you look?

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- Crystal Hu