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## Curtain rises on Tokyo International Anime Fair

By AKEMI NAKAMURA  
Staff writer

From popular TV series and unreleased work to cutting-edge production technology, everything the domestic animation industry has to offer will be at the 5th Tokyo International Anime Fair 2006, from March 23 to 26 at the Tokyo Big Sight.

The fair, one of the largest of its kind in the world, is sponsored by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and anime-related businesses in Japan. Consisting of a trade fair, events and the Tokyo Anime Award competition, the annual show will provide an opportunity for not only anime fans and professionals, but the general public to enjoy and learn about the newest in animation.

"This anime fair started (in 2002) to publicize Japan's animation to the rest of the world and promote the animation industry in Tokyo, where there are many anime-related businesses," said an official of the Tokyo International Anime Fair Executive Committee.

The organizers expect 100,000 visitors from around the world during the four days. Last year,

83,966 people, including 726 buyers from China, France, South Korea and the United States, visited the fair.

With an expanded exhibition area in response to the increasing number of visitors, more than 220 Japanese and over 40 foreign firms will have booths to showcase their latest and unreleased products. In addition, various activities, including performances featuring popular anime characters, are planned.

During the first two days, the event is a trade fair and open to only businesspeople. They will see many yet-to-be-released productions by participating companies and have access to the latest information and trends regarding the animation industry in Japan, South Korea, China and the U.S. at symposiums with business leaders and internationally well-known animators as panelists.

The fair opens to the general public March 25 and 26. Comic and anime fans will be able to learn about animation production at workshops given by professional scriptwriters, character designers, mu-

sic or art directors. They will also have the chance to buy merchandise at the Anime Bazaar corner, where more than 15 firms will be selling anime character goods.

To entertain comic enthusiasts and families, there's the Anime Sound Experience Museum, a special exhibit this year. Visitors will be treated to demonstrations by popular voice actors, theme songs of popular anime TV programs and sound effects. They can also do voiceovers for roles in animation productions.

For children, there will be performers wearing popular anime character costumes at the Kids Corner. On the main stage in the Big Sight hall, there will be shows featuring hit anime programs.

One of the major attractions at the fair is the Tokyo Anime Award competition, which has two categories — one for commercial animation products such as TV series, films and DVD or video works that were aired or sold in 2005, and one an open competition for young animators and students. Winners of prizes in each category will be an-



SHOWN ABOVE is one of the on-stage events held during the Tokyo International Anime Fair 2005 at the Tokyo Big Sight last spring.

nounced during the awards ceremony March 25.

Last year, "Howl's Moving Castle," a megahit feature film directed by Oscar-winner Hayao Miyazaki and produced by Studio Ghibli, won the Animation of the Year award in the commercial category. The Open Entries Grand Prize for general and student entrants went to "The Demon," a work by Shin Hosokawa, who created it as a graduation project when he was a graduate student.

This year, the number of submissions for the open category jumped to 235 from 114 in 2005. Of the 235 projects, 115 are from 19 countries, including 46 from China, 23 from South Korea and 14 from Germany, according to the organizers.

The popularity may be attributed to the fact that the award plays an important role in nurturing new talent. Some of the prize-winners in the open category from previous Tokyo anime fairs went on to win awards in Japan and overseas, and have been involved in larger projects.

In addition to the compe-

tion, the fair, which aims to help young creators develop successful careers, provides opportunities for aspiring creators to display their work and establish business contacts.

One such forum is "Creator's World," where 13 groups of talented animators will display their latest or representative work on large screens and as still pictures at their booths.

"This is a big chance for me to introduce my work to more people, which will help me expand business contacts" in the anime industry, said Yasuhiro Yoshiura, 25, who will exhibit his latest 23-minute work, "Pale Cocoon." He won a notable entry prize in the 2003 open category with "Aquatic Language," which he produced himself.

Yoshiura, who started creating animations when he was at college, said it is important to learn how people react to his work in order to improve it, adding that he hopes to open a booth for businesspeople at the fair next year for more market opportunities.

"My goal is to create animation work that is entertaining, that people have never seen before, that will move them and last forever," he said.

For another of the 13, Makoto Hanabusa, 35, who works as an art director at anime and film production company Shirogumi Inc., a booth at Creator's World provides him with the chance to display work that fully reflects his individuality.

"When I work on (anime) projects (with other creators) at the company, it's difficult to fully express my personality (in the projects). So what I produced for this exhibit shows the real me," he said, noting that one of the characteristics of his work is an amalgamation of science fiction and characters that look wired but cute.

"(To have a major success) it is important to meet businesspeople who like your work or characters. I expect this fair will offer me such a chance," he said.

The animation fair will help introduce such young animators and animation



## 東京国際アニメフェア2006 Tokyo International Anime Fair 2006

products to the marketplace, said Hajime Hirota, a researcher at the Digital Content Association of Japan. However, domestic animation firms need to advance overseas as the domestic market may not expand, due to Japan's shrinking population, he said.

The annual market of Japan's animation industry is estimated at about ¥200 billion, according to Hirota.

"I think (Japanese animation) production firms

should learn about the demand (for animation products) overseas and come up with a strategic approach to boost the presence of Japanese animation worldwide, he added.

The fair is at Tokyo Big Sight's Exhibition Halls Nos. 1, 2 and 3, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., March 23 to 25; it will open at 10 a.m. and close at 4:30 p.m. March 26. Admission tickets, including consumption tax, are ¥1,000 for adults, ¥500 for high-school and junior high-school students, free for elementary students, preschoolers and senior citizens aged 65 or older, disabled people and their caregivers.

For more detailed information about the fair and access to the venue in Japanese or English, visit its official Web site at <http://www.taf.metro.tokyo.jp/>.

### Outline of the 5th Tokyo International Anime Fair

**Location:** Tokyo Big Sight  
3-21-1, Ariake, Koto-ku, Tokyo  
(Nearest station: Kokusai Tenjijo Seimon on the Yurikamome Line)  
**Dates and times:**  
Business days — 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., March 23 (Thurs.) and 24 (Fri.)  
General public days — 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., March 25 (Sat.)  
10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., March 26 (Sun.)  
**Admission:** Adults — ¥1,000  
High-school and junior high-school students — ¥500  
Elementary students, preschoolers, people aged 65 or older, disabled people and their caregivers — free



THE VENUE for the trade fair is crowded with visitors during the Tokyo International Anime Fair 2005 last spring. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE TOKYO INTERNATIONAL ANIME FAIR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

# Tokyo International Anime Fair 2006

<http://www.taf.metro.tokyo.jp/>

**Business Only**

March 23 (Thu.) and 24 (Fri.), 2006

**Open to Public**

March 25 (Sat.) and 26 (Sun.), 2006 Venue: TOKYO BIG SIGHT

Adults: 1,000 yen (including consumption tax) High School and Junior High School Students: 500 yen (including consumption tax)

\*Admission is free for elementary students, preschoolers, people aged 65 & over, disabled people and their caregivers.

\*Only trade-related parties can enter on business days. Those under the age of 18 years cannot enter the venue except for the area known as the Anime Bazaar corner (admission is free).

✂ Please show this coupon at the ticket office for a  
\*2006 March 25-26 only  
**100 yen**  
discount on entrance fee  
(50 yen for students)