

## A Review of 'A Silent Voice'

### **An anonymous submission from a student in TY**

'A Silent Voice' is an anime film produced by Kyoto Animation and directed by Naoko Yamada. It is based on the manga of the same name by Yoshitoki Oima. It was released on November 20<sup>th</sup> 2017 in the USA and it has gone on to become something of a cult classic. The film is a drama that dives deep into the effect of bullying, social anxiety, self-loathing and seeking redemption. The film accomplishes all of this in a beautiful, heart-warming, while simultaneously heart-breaking, tale.

Set in an unspecified city in Japan, it starts with the main character Shoya Ishida, (also known as Sho). He is about to kill himself at the beginning but decides against it. He was thinking about how he used to bully a deaf girl named Shoko Nishimiya and feels terrible about it. This begins Yamada's redemption arc with Shoya befriending Shoko. He even learns sign language to do so. They become friends and the two grow an inseparable bond and ultimately they are able to help each other overcome their fears and issues together.

#### **The Pros:**

'A Silent Voice' has many things going for it in terms of the parts it does right. For starters, the studio did a fantastic job on the animation. It is very expressive and gorgeous to look at. The locations are well developed and look very real and detailed. The expressiveness of the animation is what impressed me the most. Shoko doesn't talk much, yet she still comes across as one of the best developed characters in the film. One of my favourite scenes is when she is very upset. Everything, but her legs, is obscured by a wall. When her little sister Yuzuru asks her what's wrong, she doesn't answer but waves her legs aggressively to show that she is upset.

The cinematography is another part of the film that impressed me and is one of the film's greatest strengths. Shoya has social anxiety and, as a result of this, the focus is often on the ground to emphasise that he "*has trouble looking people in the eyes.*" Blue Xs also cover the faces of those that Sho is too afraid of and doesn't believe that he deserves to connect with. The Xs fall off people's faces when he makes a connection. These extra touches really help me see what the main lead is thinking and I don't think the film would have been as good without it.

The music is also very fitting for this film. Most of the score of the film is done on piano. It fits nicely with the pacing and tempo, that being slow for the most part, but during moments of tension it gets very fast. This really helps instil the feeling the scenes are trying to convey when I watched it.

A major strength with this film is its excellent lead characters. They all feel extremely credible and real. They are far more than a single character archetype or trope. Shoya's shy behaviour around others contrasts well with how he acts around his family. This helps in establishing him as a real person. I just wish the film had achieved the same result with some of its side characters.

### **The Cons:**

This movie is almost perfect. Unfortunately, I still have some problems with it. Firstly, the opening song 'My Generation' by Peter Dinklage is a fast-paced rock song that feels out of place. This is especially obvious when compared to the rest of the score which fits perfectly in with the tone and pacing of the film.

Also, 'A Silent Voice' is slightly too long at 2 hours and 9 minutes. While the film is very engaging, it could easily have done with some scenes being removed. There is a scene in the latter half of the movie which feels very awkward and out of place. It is never mentioned again and it doesn't add anything to the film so I think the director should have cut it. Doing so would keep the movie under two hours which would go a long way to fixing this problem.

The supporting cast of this film are not very well developed and come off as very trope-ish. One example of this is Nagatsuka who is Shoya's best friend. He has no other personality traits or characteristics to redeem him. As a result of this, he is very forgettable.

### **Final Thoughts:**

Despite its flaws, 'A Silent Voice' is still one of the best, if not the best, animated films to come out in recent years. Its beautiful animation and captivating story really entrance the viewer. While slow to start, the film quickly picks up the pace and towards the end delivers a really gut-wrenching scene. I give 'A Silent Voice' a 9.4 out of 10. I would recommend this film to anyone who is a fan of animation, (especially anyone looking for a brilliant romantic drama). If you are, then this is the film for you. Be warned, you will need some tissues.