23.
Re-written songs, musics, and dubbing for anime / 1 United States

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For me, if the relationship between anime and music can be characterised by one singular emotion, it's nostalgia. It lies at the heart of how I relate to the soundtracks and opening/ending themes accompanying anime; an almost tangible "feel" that in many cases seems to linger crisp and clear in the mind long after memories of the film or series it was attached to have slipped into the nebulous haze of the past. At its best though, audio and visual go hand in hand—mutual partners that seem to have sprung into being almost simultaneously, a joyous rhapsodic relationship that seems to command you physically to the karaoke booth…

Growing up as one of the so-called Pokémon generation, I'd obviously had many contact points with Japanese culture in my youth, but I can still very clearly remember the anime series that made me a full-on convert to the medium: *Code Geass*. Hailing from the UK, the show's clever sci-fi spin on a world of aristocratic nobles and their endless political machinations obviously appealed to something in me, but looking back now, it's the show's first opening theme—*Colours*, by the perennially successful pop-rock five-piece FLOW—that seals it's timeless appeal. Every bit as flamboyant, elegant and dynamic as the show itself, this was the gateway to a lifelong love affair with anisong.

As I consumed assorted anime series at an ever-increasing pace, I quickly realised that FLOW had many classic anime themes to their name, chief among them the likes of *Eureka Seven* and *Naruto*. They had even turned out a rendition of the classic *Dragon Ball Z* theme *Cha-La Head-Cha-La*. In this way, anisong artists become like old friends; familiar acquaintances delivering the promise of time well spent in good company. Suffice to say, I was hooked.

1. Introduction

On a purely mechanical level, the act of dubbing implies a simple act of transference of linguistic content from one language into another. Dialogue is re-recorded by new actors and replaces the original. Viewers are able to enjoy the pleasures of the visual content without recourse to reading subtitles, and in this manner are offered an experience more authentically akin to that offered to viewers of the original. And yet, this question of authenticity is inherently complicated by the kinds of semantic and cultural shifting that occur within this interchange between languages and the manner in which they are auditorily conveyed.

Japanese animation first arrived in the United States in the 1960s with television series like *Tetsuwan Atom ('Astro Boy')*, *Mach go go go ('Speed Racer')*, and films such as *Saiyūki* ('*Alakazam the Great')*. However, in seeking to better match this inherently Japanese content to the perceived tastes of American audiences, the audio components of these animations were often radically altered, encompassing not only newly recorded English dubs to replace the original Japanese dialogue, but often a wholesale transformation of the accompanying sound effects and music. Studies such as those by Hideko Haguchi (2014) have rightly attributed a great deal of primacy to the musical accompaniment to anime, citing films such as *Akira* (1988) as an example of a film's soundtrack becoming a core component in its overall appeal. And yet, in viewing an animated production not as a static, complete form, but as something fluid and open to alteration *post facto*, it is possible to problematise the capacity

for a close-reading of that cinematic text to encapsulate its essence in its entirety. Audiences are viewing (and hearing) not one singular object, but merely one facet of many possible guises that object may assume. If an animated film or television series can reoccur on foreign shores with new dialogue in a new language, and with a new soundtrack too, to what extent does it still occupy the same aesthetic space as its original incarnation?

In seeking to better understand the effect these kinds of alterations would have on the original content, I would like to consider two central themes. Firstly, with an eye to historical context, I will showcase what ways Japanese animations were re-musicalised in the United States with totally new music, and how the overall sonic landscape has been modified in certain products. By examining a number of key case studies, I will observe how the re-musicalisation of anime often went hand in hand with a concerted effort at marketing animated cartoons from abroad (here, namely, Japan) toward particular, designated audiences. Secondly, in considering how voice acting (enunciation, emphasis, etc.) in the US has differed and still differs from voice acting in the original Japanese versions of anime, I will look to the sizeable body of discourse that has captured the often heated fan narratives around the relative merits and faults of English language dubbing, and question why this dimension of anime's transference from Japanese to non-Japanese (here, specifically, US-American) audiences provokes such a visceral response. To these ends, this chapter will therefore examine changing trends in the re-dubbing and re-soundtracking of Japanese anime for American audiences, from the 1960s through to the present day. This analysis will focus on some of the key rationales behind these changes and how they reflected changing consumer tastes in the United States. As the 1980s and 1990s gave way to the 2000s, anime's popularity among growing niches increased in the country and the differences between the Japanese and English versions began to converge; reflective of a burgeoning fan desire for authenticity and fidelity to the Japanese original. This would have a direct impact on the type and style of aural changes deemed necessary in contemporary anime consumption, leading us closer to a potential answer to the two considerations raised above.

In their iconic work *Composing for the Films*, Adorno and Eisler note that in considering the auditory element within audio-visual content, familiarity invariably becomes a substitute for quality (Adorno and Eisler, 1994: XXVI). As viewers—and perhaps more importantly, as listeners—audiences look for a sense of warm, comforting reassurance in the music and voices that accompany on-screen action. Thus, despite their apparent status as auxiliary or appendage-like components, even slight alterations to the soundtrack or vocal dub can fundamentally alter the way audiences respond to the overall aesthetic texture of a piece of visual content. Within this binary diametric, what is familiar is "good", what is unfamiliar is "bad". It is a diametric, however, that holds the capacity for change. Within the broad sphere of Anglophone audiences, and more specifically, within America, some may seek out the unfamiliar intentionally; longing for its freshness as well as the stimulation and challenge of approaching something outside their comfort zone. In time, perhaps through a preference for viewing with subtitles in tandem with the original audio, this may ultimately become more "familiar" to these audiences than hearing the dialogue in their native language. Others, conversely, may wish to respond to the exoticness of the unfamiliar, but remain tethered to the auditory comfort offered by familiar English-language dubbed dialogue. While this chapter is not intended to present an exhaustive overview or comparison of content alterations or shifts within the anime medium's wider aural aesthetics, it will nevertheless aim to provide vital insight on an aspect central to the history of anime's migration from Japan to the United States.

2. Penetrating the US. From the de-Asianisation of anime's Japanese origin to the thrill of the extreme and the exotic

The earliest attempts to bring Japanese animated content to the US-American market are typically dated back to 1961, when a trio of feature-length films by production studio Tōei Dōga opened to US audiences on the big screen (Otmazgin 2014: 59): Hakujaden ('The Legend of the White Snake', by Taiji Yabushita, Tōei Dōga 1958), which was released in the United States as *Panda and the Magic Serpent* in 1961, *Shōnen sarutobi sasuke ('Magic Boy'*, Akira Daikubara & Taiji Yabushita , Tōei Dōga 1959), and *Saiyūki* ('*Alakazam the Great*', by Taiji Yabushita & Daisaku Shirakawa, Tōei Dōga 1960). The last of these three has since become particularly notable for the dramatic changes made to it in its transposition from Japan to the US. Numerous scenes were edited, as were character names: Sun Wukong becoming the titular Alakazam, while Zhu Bajie became Sir Quigley Broken Bottom. However, it was on an auditory level that the distributor American International's efforts would hold particular nuance in gauging popular tastes of the time. In an attempt to better fit the film to the appetites of American youngsters, Ryōichi Hattori's (1907-1993) original Japanese soundtrack was swapped out for an alternative effort by bandleader Les Baxter (1922-1996), best known as an arranger and composer for swing bands. The result would ascribe to many of the worst "bad habits" of Hollywood film scoring of the day. In a prime example of what Adorno and Eisler would term "Birdie sings, music sings", the score would imitatively illustrate on-screen visual cues with cliched accompaniments; in essence, "music cut to fit the stereotype" (Adorno & Eisler 1994: 12-3). On the voice-acting front, teenage heartthrob and pop sensation Frankie Avalon (1940-) would take the lead role of Alakazam, while narration was supplied by Sterling Holloway (1905-1992), famous as the original voice of Walt Disney's *Winnie the Pooh* animation. This big-name casting was indicative of the US distributor's large marketing budget and heavy promotion for the film, but would ultimately prove futile; the film flopped, pigeon-holed as little more than a 'kiddie matinee' flick (Craig 2019:17), and a decade later would score the dubious honour of becoming the only animated entry in *The Fifty Worst Films of All Time* (Medved and Dreyfuss 1978).

Otmazgin's account of the United States' first flirtations with the technical logistics of bringing Japanese animation to the country's shores resound with mentions of "local taste", as if it were to be something savoured on the palette; either gulped down with relish or spat out in distaste. But taste is about more than whether audiences like or dislike something, it is about fostering and developing a palatability for it that remains in place over the long-term. As such, it is telling that after the self-evident re-writing of stories to better suit domestic audiences, it is to the replacement of "the background music with new or familiar tunes" that Otmazgin turns next in consideration of better priming a piece of anime for American tastes (Otmazgin 2014: 61). The concept of "localisation" is premised on a presupposition that within the processes of globalisation that see televisual and filmic content circulate within an international marketplace, there lies a fundamental necessity for degrees of alteration to better match the material to the needs of the country in question, and that certain elements are in more specific need of alteration than others.

The role of music within this equation is an important one. On one level, it occupies a specific, functional capacity. While many early Japanese animated movies tried to match Disney's style of 12-frames-per-second "full animation", televised material were often defined by their "limited" animation, in which character movements were often restricted to defined action scenes, or their mouth opening and closing as they speak. In this context, the role of music and sound were absolutely essential for injecting a sense of emotive "dynamism" into a "still or partially still image" (Steinberg 2012: 25). But if music's role was solely limited to this

mechanical impartation of movement to static animation, then why the necessity to change what already existed in the Japanese version? When *Astro Boy* began broadcasting on American television, the show would take a curiously mixed approach to re-musicalisation. The opening theme would retain the same iconic melody across both Japanese and English versions, but the English version would feature lyrics that were a notable departure from a literal translation of the Japanese. The very first episode features a visual gag in which a character pushes buttons on a computer console in time to Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*—this is retained across both versions. But in the very next scene, the more gentle, orchestral tones of the Japanese soundtrack are swapped out for generic, "elevator-music" style instrumentation in the US version. Changes of this nature, characterised by a tendency away from orchestrated classical music toward generic (US-style) "cartoon music" would persist to a greater extent in subsequent US localisations such as *Speed Racer*.

What were the primary drivers behind this kind of selective approach to re-musicalisation? One possible answer lies in the concept of viewer "skill"—just as it is possible to expect dialogue dubbed into English to be a necessary step to serve the needs of children who do not yet have the capacity to read subtitles (Cubbison 2005: 46), is it also possible to envision a kind of auditory literacy in which certain types of music are deemed more appropriate to young audiences than others? This re-envisioning of Japanese animation's sonic palette as responsive to the corresponding development in viewer taste hinges on notions of familiarity and what both a Japanese audience and an American one, respectively, would have grown up expecting their animated content to sound like. Thus, for a Japanese animated show transposed onto US-American screens and now operating within a mixed sphere of domestic and international content, a sonic "re-clothing" would see it better apparelled to merge seamlessly into the midst.

The second, and perhaps more convincing answer, is that re-musicalisation was almost entirely a response to functional necessity; namely, that due to the extent of edits and re-dubbing made to animations from Japan when brought to the US, new soundtrack material was needed to supplement silent "dead spots" left in the productions. This is a key point: While these moments were left silent, they were not "dead", rather, in Japanese narrative styles, these silent moments invariably are infused with deep rhetorical meaning – meaning that was lost when these moments were filled in with noise. While, as I have shown earlier in the case of *Alakazam the Great*, the results of these kinds of alterations could often prove to be financially disastrous, in other occasions, the gamble could more than pay off. For the US localisation of sci-fi series *Battle of the Planets*, adapted from the Japanese series *Kagaku ninjatai Gatchaman* ('Science Ninja Team Gatchaman' by Hisayuki Toriumi, Tatsunoko Productions 1972-1974) in 1978, 5 million US dollars were spent "acquiring the rights, commissioning new animation, editing, dubbing, and rescoring", but would see an impressive return of 25 million US dollars in domestic pre-sales of the show. What is striking about *Battle of the Planets* is that ostensibly, the show's scripts were not based on the Japanese original at all; rather, the American staff would simply "make up" the story and dialogue based on what they saw and assumed to be happening on screen (Ruh 2010: 35). As controversial as this might initially sound, it serves as a reminder that the localisation process, and the role of "audiovisual translation practitioners" within it, in fact remains fundamentally one not of translation, but of "adaptation" (González 2007: 260).

In relation to Japanese animation in the United States, the 1980s would be marked by two corresponding trends; firstly in the sheer volume of science fiction animation adapted for the US market, and secondly, an American audience that was becoming increasingly aware of its status as "adaptation". These changes can be seen as happening under a broader mantle of "maturation" (Clements 2017: 133), taken not only in the sense of the industry's coming of

age, but also its audiences'. Americans who were children in the 1960s and 1970s, growing up with aforementioned series like *Astro Boy* and *Speed Racer*, were now in their 20s and 30s, and looking for content that tackled more adult themes, with higher production values to match. Indeed, organised anime fandom had existed in the US since 1977[1], with the "formation of the first fan club created expressly to promote Japanese animation to American fans" (Otmazgin 2014: 59). For these fans, 1985 would come as a watershed moment, when Hayao Miyazaki's (1941-) *Kaze no Tani no Nausicaä* ('*Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind',* by Hayao Mizazaki, Topcraft 1984) would find itself at the mercy of one of the most dramatic re-envisioning processes to date. Released under the moniker *Warriors of the Wind* by New World Pictures, who marketed the film as a boyish sci-fi adventure in the vein of big budget Hollywood epics such as *Dune* (1984), *Warriors of the Wind* stands as a strident case study in how a rising adherence amongst US distributors toward genre-driven trends would see localisation go above and beyond questions of mere taste. With more than twenty minutes cut from the film's duration and a heavily re-written storyline (Ruh 2010: 32, 47), as was the case with *Battle of the Planets*, the soundtrack was also forced to change to re-accommodate these edits. In a striking example, the deletion of the film's title sequence sees the accompanying music trimmed from a 95-second segment to a 15 second snippet that plays over the film's title card before harshly and artificially fading out.

While *Warriors of the Wind* would represent one of the most high-profile and controversial cases of American localisation during the 1980s, the practice was similarly rife within the field of televised anime adaptations, chief among them the long-running series *Voltron* (1983-85) and *Robotech* (1985) (Ruh 2010: 35). The success of the *Star Wars* franchise from the late 1970s onwards had opened the floodgates to a torrent of material from American distributors eager to cash in on a corresponding sci-fi boom. Anime proved an ideal fit to this *modus operandi*, yet the demands of American television networks—which required a certain number of episodes for a series to be syndicated (Ruh 2010: 36)—meant that two or more unrelated anime would often have to be bolted together to make up the episode count. In the case of *Robotech*, American production company Harmony Gold would combine three separate series—*Chōjikū yōsai Makurosu* ('*The Super Dimension Fortress Macross'*, Artland / Tatsunoko Productions 1982-83), *Kikō sōseiki Mospeada* ('*Genesis Climber Mospeada'*, Artmic / Tatsunoko 1983-84) and *Chōjikū kidan Southern Cross* ('*Superdimensional Cavalry Southern Cross'*, Tatsunoko 1984). Bringing the total episode count to 85, through virtue of all three of these shows being originally produced by Japanese studio Tatsunoko, a certain degree of visual homogeneity between them was maintained.

In fashioning them into part of the *Robotech* assemblage the re-musicalisation of the *Macross* episodes would provide a unique challenge, given the centrality of music itself to the show's plot, which combines robots and battle sequences with romance and pop idol performances (Galbraith 2014: 14). As opposed to simply maintaining the Japanese melodies and attaching English-language lyrics, as the *Astro Boy* opening theme had done back in the 1960s, *Robotech* replaced the entire stable of *Macross* songs wholesale; essentially transposing the show's concept of pop music from a Japanese consensus to an American one. In this instance, music's presence within the audio-visual symbiotic relationship can be shown to have clear value above and beyond its auxiliary role of providing an auditory background to the onscreen action. In *Macross*, music operated in clear tandem with the plot and visual content of the show and thus could not be easily edited into absence as in the case of *Warriors of the Wind*. Moreover, the episodic nature of *Robotech* as a series—and the fact that many of its songs

[1] To give a general sense of comparative scale in relation to anime fandom's formative years in the US, early anime conventions such as Yamatocon in 1983 and Project A-Kon in 1990 typically attracted attendee figures ranging from 100-400. In 1991, AnimeCon in California attracted 1000 attendees. (Middaugh 2019)

would appear numerous times over its duration—would ensure that the familiarity inherent in the catchy, chorus-driven nature of pop lyrics and melodies was a core component in creating maximum impact for the show's audiences. In a canny gamble suggesting that, if you didn't love what you heard on first hearing, you probably would after being exposed to it week in, week out, Harmony Gold understood that the reinforcement strategies of familiarity inherent in pop music could serve as the perfect fanfare for fronting up anime. Harmony Gold would subsequently bring a second science fiction series to the US in 1985 with *Captain Harlock and the Queen of a Thousand Years*; combining footage from the Japanese series *Uchū Kaizoku Captain Harlock* ('*Space Pirate Captain Harlock',* Tōei Dōga 1978-79) and *Shin Taketori Monogatari: Sennen Joō ('Queen Millennia*', Tōei Dōga 1981-82). Here, they would trade in the lushly orchestrated feel of the original Japanese *Captain Harlock* opening theme – which is analysed in further detail in this handbook's Introduction and Chapter 9 – for a bombastic disco-styled replacement, dramatically altering the serious, adult tone toward expectations of something far more playfully adventurous. These capacities for popular song to re-orientate the visual content it is attached to are in many ways one of the most exciting aspects of re-musicalisation, highlighting as they do clear potential for the visual media and pop industries to work in tandem toward a "cinema of attractions" that thrives on "both visual and audio seductions" (Mundy 1999: 227).

1994's *Street Fighter II: The Animated Movie* (by Gisaburō Sugii, Group TAC / SEDIC / Sony Music Entertainment) remains to this day one of the most strikingly overt examples of attempts to capitalise on this trend. The movie would serve as a timely adaptation of the popular video game instalment which had achieved immense popularity in the US since its 1991 debut in arcades (Henderstot & Lapetino 2017: 16). The film's original Japanese-language version had gone on to become one of Japan's top five highest-grossing films in 1994 (Fitzpatrick 1995: 80), and featured a predominantly electronic/orchestral soundtrack composed by Yūji Toriyama and Tetsuya Komuro (the latter better known as the musical tycoon behind Japanese label Avex and pop talent such as Namie Amuro). No doubt sensing an opportunity to cash-in on the pre-existing fanbase and consumer awareness the *Street Fighter* brand name was at that time enjoying in the US, the North American 1995 direct-to-video release by SMV Enterprises took the decision to replace the original soundtrack completely. The replacement soundtrack was especially notable because in stark contrast to the style of the original, it opted largely for an alt-rock grunge feel that combined hit singles from well-known US rock acts like Korn and Alice in Chains alongside soundalike tracks created by composers Cory Lerios and John D'Andrea. The strategy evidently paid off, with the home video release going on to sell over 500,000 copies and the success of the *Street Fighter* movie acclaimed by Billboard magazine as indicative of anime finding a "mainstream niche" (Goldstein 1996: 71).[2] This dualism captures the essence of US-American anime fandom at the time; calling attention to the cult-like appeal of the medium, whilst simultaneously acknowledging the spread of that appeal to numbers approaching genuine mass-market cut-through.

The trend toward "cult" and "extreme" audiences would also manifest in the kinds of material used to promote anime to English language audiences at the time. Trailers from anime distributor Manga Entertainment used the music of Swiss death metal band Celtic Frost to accompany sequences of violence, action and pain; emphasising the most spectacular

[2] It is worth briefly commenting on the definition of "mainstream" in relation to anime here. In contrast to the typical modality of a mainstream media property, where its appeal to a mass-market audience is inbuilt throughout every stage of its production cycle, with anime, the site of original origin in Japan adds a further dimension. Was the property mainstream in Japan to begin with, and does this "mainstream-ness" morph as it moves to the US? Even if an anime travels via mainstream channels of distribution (such as a US TV network), its ultimate end-point may remain comparatively niche.

elements as part of a concerted effort to elicit desire in their target audience (McCrea 2008: 21). Much like the alt-rock/grunge soundtrack for *Street Fighter II*, the association of anime (or at least, with certain types of anime, and in the eyes of a certain European or North American viewership) with loud, aggressive guitar music presumed a very particular niche as the core audience for these kinds of anime. In essence, companies such as Manga Entertainment and SMV Enterprises were not only acting as distributors for Japanese animated content, but as kinds of culturally attuned curators; "dressing up" and fashioning their output to better satisfy the expected familiarities of their customer base. They were not merely acting as brokers between producer and consumer, but rather, marking out the parameters of that ecosystem itself in a manner that would echo the "If you like this, you'll love this…" recommendation systems utilised by the likes of Amazon and Netflix in subsequent decades.

What is interesting about these changes is that they arguably did not try to mask the Japanese origins of the animated content (indeed, it was the extremity and exoticness of their Japaneseness that was core to their appeal), but rather, it was deemed necessary to further boost these metrics, even though the methods employed were in fact thoroughly un-Japanese. In this respect, it is possible to view these efforts as wholeheartedly in-authentic to the original source material, but authentic in the sense that they were consistent to the brand image these distributors presented to their audience. Crucially, these attempts to exotify soundtracks toward an extreme feel were not done in isolation—many of the accompanying English dub tracks were littered with expletives not present in the original; the "uncensored" 1996 English-language release of *Violence Jack* (Ashi Productions / Studio 88 1986-90) being a particularly notable example. Ironically, many of these "American" dubs were in fact British, done in a Welsh recording studio in Cardiff by British actors attempting American accents (Sevakis 2016a). If anything, this would signify the degree to which American-sounding voices had by this point become the de-facto expected standard within the Anglophone audience for anime.

3. Dubbing standards - What characterises a 'good' effort?

The question of standards opens up an uneasy tension in regards to dubbing; one in which subjective and objective expectations must to a degree be reconciled in order to apply some form of measurable criteria. In discussing "dubbing standards", Chaume lays out a spectrum that ranges from "coherent translation" and "equivalence to source text" to "credible acting" (Chaume 2007: 215). Other models have also been suggested: In Pellitteri's *The Dragon and the Dazzle*, these take the form of five modes of adaptation. These are philological, passive, incongruous, Depneumatization and Extraction/interpolation. Of these, the mode of incongruous adaptation holds particular interest precisely because it involves editing of the source material co-existing with material that has remained unchanged. This could involve, for example, Japanese places or place names being passed off as other geographic locales, or the editing of dialogue to avoid mentions of death and killing (Pellitteri 2010:404-13). These kinds of change offer a useful clarification of the kind of coherence Chaume mentions, whilst also acting as a showcase for the kinds of creative liberties taken during the adaptation process.

Judged by these standards, few of the dubs produced by the likes of Manga Entertainment in the 1990s could be judged as "good" efforts; taking, as they did, considerable liberties with the source script and instead injecting it with expletives in order to create a more extreme feel. The passage of time, however, suggests moving beyond simple metrics of good and bad, and

instead focusing more on the level of added value. Just as many "cheesy" films from the 1980s are now cherished as guilty pleasures, many of these dubs are now re-watched with a keenly ironic eye and enjoyed as a comic snapshot of the past. Rare dubs are treated as collector's items and their inclusion on re-releases is marketed as a key selling point. For viewers watching the classic 1989 Streamline Pictures English-language dub of *Akira* (by Katsuhiro Otomo, Tokyo Movie Shinsha 1988), they are no longer viewing the "Japanese" *Akira* by-proxy, but instead, are giving themselves over wholesale to the pleasures encapsulated in the Americanised re-working of it, almost to the extent that it seems to escape the presence of the original version entirely. For many viewers, relative merits of subtitles vs dubbing aside, their preference for Japanese or English audio will largely depend – as part of a universal trend informed by generational, nostalgic and cultural values – on which they viewed the anime in first (Manion 2005: 7). Thus, for a generation of fans, the old American dub of *Akira* will remain *the* definitive version of *Akira*.

At the heart of this discussion lies the perceived dyscrasia between the original Japanese settings of many series and the injection of Americanness into the aural environment recreated in the US dubbings, regardless whether the translation to English is culturally faithful or not. In the case of *Akira* however, it is worth noting that despite its Tokyo setting, its post-apocalyptic nature shifts this real life locale into a world of statelessness (Adachi 2012:149). Therefore, in this imaginary world which is othered not only from Japan but also from reality, the question of re-voicing its characters takes on a new dimension of nuance. Moreover, it is worth noting that the re-dubbing of an anime into US-English does not simply pre-suppose a binary of two versions: Japanese and American. Rather, as the case of *Akira* highlights, multiple English dubs can exist - with the creation in 2001 of a new US-English dub by Animaze/ Pioneer that recast every role from the previous 1989 Streamline Pictures dub and updated the audio quality to match modern production standards. Notions of artistic process would increasingly become more prominent within the US dubbing community, with voice actor Johnny Yong Bosch (1976-) – who played Kaneda in the 2001 dub of *Akira* – making distinctions in an interview with *Anime News Network* about how "miscellaneous roles" might typically be played flat so as not to make them stand out too much, or that voiceover might draw on the actor's "real feelings" to colour a performance with emotion (Chapman 2018). By the late 2000s, this focus on emphatic emotionality in US-English dubs would represent a far cry from the exoticised, expletive-laden excesses in the previous decade.

The "creative" experimentation of companies like Manga Entertainment and 4Kids in the 1990s would in many ways represent a last gasp for wholesale tampering with anime audio-tracks in an attempt to "add value". In its place, an increasing consolidation of localisation efforts would see a new, standardised approach put forth by companies like Funimation who would engineer a shift away from the targeting of sub-niches or the children's market. They envisioned a singular, cohesive fanbase for which anime itself—as medium—represented the shared interest. For this new, defined market demographic—anime fans—authenticity, and the familiarity with all that entails, would become the new byword for quality. Re-musicalisation would become almost entirely limited to the re-dubbing of Japanese lyrics in anime opening and ending themes into English, drawing from a stable of consistent voice actor talent who were capable of doing this alongside their core duty of re-dubbing the show's dialogue. Not only would this save significant financial outlay which previously would have to have been spent on creating a new soundtrack from scratch, but also allow viewers—perhaps for the first time—to better consider the true "cultural odour" (Iwabuchi 2002: 94-5) of anime on an auditory level as well as a visual one.

4. Authenticity above all. The divisiveness of dubbing against a backdrop of consumer choice

Detailed studies of Japanese dubbing practice and voice actors (seiyū) such as those by Yamasaki (2014), Heinst (2017), Denison (2017) and Ishida (2021) capture, with a fine degree of granularity, much of the inner workings of a system that is covered in further detail within Chapters 4 and 21 of this handbook. Fundamental to a comprehension of voice acting talent in Japan, however, is a sense that the profession developed in lock-step with the composite booms, trends, and promotional activities of the wider anime industry as a whole. Chief among these are the development of a so-called "sweet voice" amongst female voice acting talent that forms part of a wider vocal style within Japan (Starr 2015). I would argue that the identification of vocal styles as belonging to particular national identities remains fundamental to the parsing of audio language tracks as attached to their corresponding visual component. A Japanese audio track may operate within a "Japanese style", and an English audio track may do so in an "American style", but it is possible to also conceivably see them both as functioning within a broader "anime style" of voice acting which has, through creative cross-pollination and attempts to imitate the original, given rise to its own transnational consensus of how an anime *should* sound.

This section looks to the contact points between Japanese and English language audio tracks and observes how fan obsession with notions of authenticity has been a key driver in many of the trends observable in the American voice acting system that would become synonymous with English language dubbing of anime from the early 2000s onward. As inter-lingual grey zones, it is not in the Japanese language or the English language itself that significant sites of meaning can be found, but rather in the spaces inbetween; the areas of tension or friction that become charged with meaning precisely because they draw attention to their opposition with each-other. Viewing anime in this manner—as "poly-" (Oóhagan 2007: 244) or "multi-" (Sell 2016: 272) semiotic texts—suggests that just as many anime are originally adapted from manga and take on new meaning in this transfer, re-dubbed or re-soundtracked anime must be treated as other versions of the original, with their own set of semiotic resonances. Sometimes this is inherently problematic: if the target language cannot easily convey what is being said in the original, or if the auditory element does not easily match to the visuals, then the sense of the adaptation being a comfortable fit is lost. An English-language dub that sounds grossly excessive to one fan may sound totally natural to another. Indeed, for an American fan that understands no Japanese and does not enjoy reading subtitles (for them, reading on-screen text may not even compute with their idea of viewing in a televisual or filmic setting) then a dub is their only access point to the show.

There are two major implications at work here. Firstly, even within the same cultural system (ie. American viewers, American dubbing), concepts of excess may vary in line with more distinct socio-cultural perceptions; for example, perceptions may vary between California and New York, or even at a level within these locales. Secondly, and perhaps more crucially, is the question of whether the viewing of a piece of media with subtitles is seen as a somehow inferior experience to relying purely on the audio dialogue? Namely, that subtitles require a technical and cognitive ability above and beyond "normal" viewing; ie. reading quickly whilst simultaneously enjoying the images. Wrapped up in this too, the question of any given expectation that an Anglophone viewer *should* have to make extra effort if they wish to consume media outside of the most influential language in the world (English).

Much of the conversation surrounding the multiplicity of *potential* audio channels in which to consume a piece of anime content is driven by technological change. As the popularisation of the DVD format in the early 2000s opened up the possibility for commercial releases of anime to contain both subtitled and dubbed versions of anime, the discourse surrounding the

relative merits and faults of the two incarnations of the same property intensified amongst the rapidly swelling US fandom for anime. The existence of both on one disk would, at first glance, profit consumer choice by allowing the viewer themselves to pick which they preferred (whereas before they would have to factor this into their purchasing decision, buying *either* the subtitled or dubbed VHS cassette of the show). In reality however, the side-by-side existence of the two incarnations, along with the sheer number of anime shows being translated and brought to the US market, ensured this discussion became a fundamental element in the linguistic make-up of topics that would define fan discourse during the decade. Fans could, at the touch of a button, switch between Japanese and English audio and make their own minds up as to which sounded "better" to their ears. As such, it is not surprising that a sizable body of academic work on anime from the mid- to late 2000s can be found covering this area. Cubbison, for example, utilises the summary of criteria provided by Mark Betz in relation to European film to outline the key points of contention relating to dubbing as:

> National language, temperament and acting style
>
> Voice/body incongruity and infidelity
>
> Illusion of reality and spectator identification
>
> Authenticity of the filmic text
>
> (Betz 2001: 5; cited in Cubbison 2005: 49)

While it is the last of these areas that specifically mentions authenticity, it is in fact authenticity that lies at the heart of all four areas of contention. As Cubbison goes on to illustrate, the majority of anime fans' strongest complaints around US dubbing rest on the kind of changes that breach the English language version's veracity – a trueness to real-life – in comparison to a seemingly more "professionalised" Japanese original. This, of course, runs counter to industry accounts that many of the concerns viewers have with the unnatural "overly-perfect diction" of US dubs are often just as present in Japanese voice acting (Sevakis 2016b). What is important here is not whether it is possible to objectively judge if Japanese voice acting talent is "better" or, indeed, more professionalised than its American equivalent. Indeed, Heinst's study affirms that it is not technical skill that defines the Japanese voice actor system, but their popularity with fans (Heinst 2017: 21) – driven by factors such as the popularity of the characters they have voiced throughout their career, physical appearance and style, as well as associated activities such as whether they are also popular singers (often of the opening / ending themes for the anime they act in). Rather, it is to understand why these kinds of opinions in relation to English-language dubbing became so fundamentally ingrained within anime fandom outside of Japan and what this suggests about the relationship between the viewer and the motivations present in the kind of content they choose to consume.

Just as the so-called "Pokemon generation" (Clements & McCarthy 2015) helped prime an entire cohort of American viewers to a Japanese aesthetic sensibility (even if they did not at the time realise what they were watching was explicitly Japanese in origin), subsequent decades of anime "priming" have ensured that the practises of viewing, listening, and comprehending the semiotic codes contained within anime—whether in subtitled or dubbed format—are no longer specialised skills, but rather, have bled out into a sense of cultural knowledge shared in common. These "global flows'' would act as part of a broader process of deterritorialization in which identities and social relationships would reconfigure themselves against a backdrop of late modernity, both Japan and the US circulating and compressing as

their cultural product flowed into each-other (Pellitteri 2010:34). Thus, whereas in the past US distributors felt the cultural changes entailed by re-soundtracking or re-dubbing an anime were necessary aids to comprehension, now, these changes are deemed unnecessary. The US anime distributors of today are in essence playing to the converted. Speed of access has replaced authenticity as the key metric of fan satisfaction precisely because authenticity, through the gradual aligning of producer output with consumer demands, is now no longer a question for debate, but rather a bare minimum standard that has become so ingrained as to become invisible for all but the most studious of audiences.

In the prior sections of this chapter, I examined how earlier changes to the music and dialogue of anime locaised for English audiences were often necessitated by needs to match what TV networks or distributors deemed to be their audience's taste. As the anime industry greeted the new century however, this concept of taste would become far more concrete as its locus shifted from a broad, ill-defined mass market and orbiting "cult" groups toward a defined and specific image of anime fandom. Whereas in the past it was the "culturally odourless" potential (Iwabuchi 2002: 94-5) of localised anime which made it so readily adaptable to foreign markets, increasingly, fans would come to seek out and value the cultural odour of anime precisely because it was so "Japanese". Bloem's (2016) in-depth study of the changes made in the US localisation of *Rurōni Kenshin*, *Naruto*, and *Pokemon*—long-running series that defined a new generation of anime fans in the late 1990s and early 2000s—highlights how these kinds of audience's expectations were now key in shaping how these shows were localised. Whereas earlier efforts to bring anime to the US had been very much a case of US distributors leading and audiences following, now this equation was reversed, with distributors far more likely to prove responsive to an increasingly demanding fan audience.

A core part of this dynamic rests on the concept of knowledge, or rather, knowledge of what is *not* there so that what remains can be measured against it. For the knowledgeable fan, they become more than simply a viewer, taking on a degree of agency as a kind of everyman critic and embodying an instinctual reflexivity to what they consume. Even if they do not know Japanese (or know enough that they feel enabled and justified in suggesting where the dub has gone wrong), listening to the English audio will begin to feel "wrong" because they "know" and are cognitive of the fact that its origins are distinct from the rest of the audio-visual package. I would argue that this kind of instinctual palatability or development of "connoisseurship" (Clements 2013: 175) is not only a literal understanding of the contents of the show (e.g. plotline, character descriptions, and so on), but also an inferred feeling. For those fans who "graduate" from watching dubbed anime and start watching the Japanese original with English subtitles (assuming, of course, that the English subtitles faithfully translate the nuances of the original), the experience becomes more than just *watching* anime; it becomes a process of learning, in which the more they listen to the Japanese dialogue, the more their sense of familiarity alters, until it is the Japanese that feels familiar, as opposed to their own native tongue. This semantic shift is important, because while it obviously cannot shift *what* audiences are actually hearing, it can fundamentally alter *how* they perceive it when it enters our ears. Indeed, in one study of fans' preference for watching anime with either Japanese audio with subtitles, or with the English dub, many vociferous fans marked their loathing for the dubbed option by "scratching out the word dubbing with bold pencil strokes or putting huge "x's" over it" (Manion 2005: 11). Thus, by choosing the Japanese original fans are not only making a pointed act of "choosing Japanese", but are actively rejecting the English.

While these actions may on the surface seem amusing, it represents a wholesale shift in the value structures conveyed by a piece of anime; in which fans define themselves in relation to the object of their fandom not only in what kinds of content they consume, but the manner in

which they consume it. The fundamental question remains one of authenticity, in which anime (defined as animation originating in Japan) must remain as "pure" and untainted as possible in its journey to American audiences; in other words, "when fans seek subtitles rather than dubbing […] they are looking for a purer form of Japanese culture" (Manion 2005: 12). To those viewers not fluent in Japanese, a certain degree of "handling" is inevitable in this translation: it becomes a kind of necessary evil. But whereas subtitling represents a lighter—by definition—"sub"-sidiary touch, dubbing is almost aggressive in its visibility, not only erasing the Japanese original, but forcing the viewer to contend audibly with a "non-Japanese" body. In an equation in which authenticity and Japanese-ness become interchangeable as descriptors, the highly palpable injection of auditorily embodied American-ness is offensive precisely because it waters down the singular asset which the viewer values most about the original.

Is it possible to envision an alternative to the very human injection of the kinds of semantic and cultural shifts that lead to an American dub feeling exaggerated even to the ears of some American viewers themselves? Is a machine-like, hyper-literal perfect translation possible, one in which every essence and nuance of the original Japanese voice acting is conveyed to the English viewer, and in which the language—and only the language—changes? Chaume's account of the 2004 Berlin Languages and the Media conference provides an attempt to answer precisely this kind of question, with the presentation of a voice conversion technology called ReelVoice by the company VoxWorks Technologies, Inc. This new technology purported to be able to "morph any voice into another voice" in an attempt to allow the imitation of the original voice actors by the dubbing staff. Dialogue is recorded in the target language (i.e. English) and the software would then manipulate variables such as the pitch of the voice to better resemble that used in the original language (i.e. Japanese). Conversely, this attempt at more authentically replicating the qualities of the original voice track in fact only served to focus audience attention more closely on the nature of the audio as opposed to its content. The artificial, machine-like quality of the tweaked-vocals felt imitative and, ironically, more "foreign" than if the vocals had been left untreated. Instead of making the dub feel less exaggerated, it instead felt more so, calling attention to its status as a translation and ultimately breaking the immersion of the audience with the content itself. As Chaume concludes, "The imitation itself resulted in a foreignising device which deviated from the (implicit) norms of acting in the dubbing target culture" (Chaume 2007: 213).

Chaum's highlighting of implicit norms of acting gets closer, perhaps, to the realities of what must happen in the process of transitioning a piece of auditory content from one language to another. It can be argued that one of the fundamental tensions between the English language and Japanese is in the distinction between stress accent in English (ie. the relative emphasis or prominence given to a certain syllable in a word), and pitch accent (where one syllable in a word or morpheme is more prominent than the others) in Japanese. It is also worth considering whether the US-English used in anime dubs is in fact "authentic" to American speech itself, of the kind used on an everyday, conversational basis. It is useful here to envision a series of nested Englishes inhabiting each-other as part of a continuum of accents (Wells 1982: 470), in which the kind used in anime dubs is not only American in nature, but a specific kind of American English particular to dubbing media content.

I would argue that the above points are ultimately moot; distinctions around stress accent/pitch accent would rule out the use of any kind of English, not only US-English, while a kind of US-English which attempted to match Japanese pitch accents as opposed to stress accents would feel unnatural in the same manner as ReelVoice technology. Likewise, a view toward a more authentic kind of US-English also overlooks the fact that a dub script is ultimately, precisely still that; a script, and not the kind of unfiltered, unshaped dialogue

found in a fly-on-the-wall documentary. All these concepts suggest potential avenues, potential alternative modes of anime dubbing, but also overlook the reality that like any accent, inflection or "style" of spoken language, the dubbed US-English accompanying anime is inherently informed by what has come before; in thrall to a process of professional practice, cultural values and change that occurs over a period of decades, not instantly; something that can not only be observed by listening to the difference in the kind of US-English in anime dubs from the 1980s and 1990s vs. those from the present day, but also in comparing the way TV newsreaders speak or film actors speak in content from the 1930s and 1940s vs. the present day.

With this in mind, I would conclude that the question of exaggeration in American dubbing of anime lies not within some implicit and inherent quality of the dubbing style itself, but rather, in the specific qualities of anime fandom itself and its own specially orientated barometres of quality. And yet, the overwhelming force of fan fervour for authenticity has led to US dubbing talent to push toward their own kinds of imitative practice that, while not quite as extreme as the mechanical kind illustrated in the case of ReelVoice above, nevertheless looks to the Japanese precedent as an example of how things "should" sound. Smith sees the role of English-language voice actors in this respect as not only enacting the literal translation of Japanese into English, but also "translating the speech patterns" of the Japanese voice actors. Citing the American voice actors working on the English dubs of Studio Ghibli films, he notes how they will often "admit to listening to the original Japanese version as a guide for their delivery", and are subsequently praised for their performances (Smith 2016: 140). For Smith, these performances are difficult to classify: when a performance is "good", is it due to the original delivery, or the interpretation put on it by the US voice actor delivering the revoicing in the English language? This lends a curious invisibility to the act of performance itself, in which it is possible to suggest the performance only becomes "visible" on its own merit when it deviates from its silent mimicry of the original, and that the more "invisible" the performance, the better it actually is.

5. Parity and disparity - Creative steps in the alignment of Japanese and US versions

This sense of "inhabiting" a pre-established form can be traced all the way back to the Japanese original, with Shunsuke Nozawa noting how Japanese voice actors are often seen to reside "inside" the anime role they are playing, or as one voice actor puts it, "I would prefer not to be seen" (Nozawa 2016: 175). Attempts to achieve this kind of interiority or physical embodiment of the role occur in interesting ways in English-language efforts to re-create a Japanese "style" within American dubs. In an interview with *Anime News Network* Editor Zac Bertschy, the voice actor Liam O'Brien (1976-)—who plays the role of Gaara in the English dub of *Naruto*—recalls how the specific expectations and stylistic affectations of anime dubs can often create humorous disconnects when voice actors who primarily work with anime turn to non-anime projects. As an example, he specifically mentions the very particular way an actor will vocalise an intake of breath to signify physical exertion, and how the expectation of how this noise *should* sound is very different outside the tightly stylised world of anime dubbing (Bertschy 2015).

Another notable instance of English dubs working to achieve a degree of parity with the Japanese original includes the use of female actors playing the roles of youthful boys; or, more specifically, the use of a voice actress in the English dub when a voice actress is used in a similar manner in the Japanese original. Notable examples include *Pokemon*'s Ash Ketchum (Satoshi in the Japanese original), who is played by Rika Matsumoto in the Japanese original

and Veronica Taylor in the English dub. In the animated adaptation of *Naruto*, the titular role is played by women in both incarnations: Junko Takeuchi (in Japanese) and Maile Flanagan (in English). While it is worth pointing out that this technique is by no means limited to anime (Nancy Cartwright has famously provided the voice of Bart in *The Simpsons* for over 30 years), as with the other cases of utilising the Japanese audio as a guide for the English version, by ensuring that the English dub retains the "essence" of utilising female acting talent for young male roles, while the exact enunciation and emphasis may differ, some semblance of the feel of the original is retained.

Despite this, efforts to remain true to the Japanese original can often prove unwieldy. One of the most common incidences of this revolves around how to render Japanese honorifics (-san, -kun, -chan) and the corresponding respectful language within naturally inflected English dialogue. In some cases, the order of the characters' names are simply changed, as they were in the English dub of *Bleach* (2004-2012), where lead character Ichigo Kurosaki—referred to frequently as "Kurosaki-kun" (the family name plus the informal suffix to indicate younger men or boys) in Japanese—becomes simply "Ichigo" (the given name, which is highly informal and rarely used in Japanese, outside of the small circle of family and close friends). Sometimes, even a dub that is for the most part highly acclaimed for the quality of the performances delivered by the English voice actors—such as that for the series *Cowboy Bebop*—"loses" something in the process of translation (and by extension, its English vocalisation), leading to skewed characterisation. In particular relation to the series' central female character Faye, the English dub was unable to convey the "strong femininity" captured in the specific "lexical choices of pronouns" utilised in the Japanese language of the original performance (Hiramoto 2013: 72-3), resulting in a tonal shift that saw the English version of Faye envisioned as "largely masculine" by critics instead, despite the fact the visual femininity of her on-screen presence remained unchanged. It also presents an interesting conundrum regarding the capacities of dubbing; namely, if visually charged representations of femininity or masculinity cannot easily be changed during the re-packaging process of animated content, does the auditory channel provide an alternate, somehow easier way of implementing such changes?

Creative strategies to side-step the issue of rendering material relating to respectful speech patterns can sometimes prove immensely controversial. In episode seven of the anime *Prison School* (2015), the subtitles presented a largely literal translation of the original Japanese audio in which a conversation between two characters hinges around the precise use of Japanese honorifics and respectful language:

> You keep talking to me like we're on equal terms, but I'm a 2nd-year. You have to address a superior more politely.
>
> (Faithful subtitles)

However, on the release of the corresponding English dub for this episode, the line was changed entirely:

> Do you have a stick up your ass? Or are you one of those dumb-ass Gamergate creepshows?[3]
>
> (Re-adapted dubbing in English)

[3] In this line, the term "Gamergate" refers to a controversial social media movement centering around sexism and progressivism in video game culture.

The abusive language in the above line—"dumb-ass", "creep-show"—calls attention to how an English dub may not only present sonically as "American", but also linguisticaly; something which expletives and slang terms often prove key indicators for. Where artificially inflated foul language once proved to be a key lure for fans to the exotic appeal of anime, it now repels as inauthentic. To this extent, it is worth commenting on the fact that a dub in the English language does not necessarily equate with an "American dub"—or rather, that the conflation between these two can in itself give rise to a further friction. Though rare, in a very few select instances, efforts have been made to address this issue. For example, Studio Ghibli's *Kari-gurashi no Arrietty* ('*Arrietty'* by Hiromasa Yonebayashi, Studio Ghibli 2010), an adaptation of the beloved British tale *The Borrowers*) was released with an American dub in the US, and a British dub in the United Kingdom. Studio Ghibli would also receive notable acclaim for the video game franchise *Ni no kuni* (lit. *'Second Country',* 2010), a collaboration with development studio Level-5 and publishers Namco Bandai which utilised a Welsh accent for the character Mr Drippy in the English dub.

The transnational flow between Japan and the US can also go both ways. *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust* (2000) is a notable example of where an anime project, conceived with a pre-existing American fanbase primarily in mind, was released theatrically with only an English dub in existence. Even on its release in Japan, the English dub remained intact, and the film was presented with Japanese subtitles. Going on to gross the equivalent of over 150,000 US dollars it earned the unusual honour of becoming the highest grossing ever Japanese film not in the Japanese language (Patten 2004: 341).

In a similar manner, Japanese anime studio Gonzo would create a pre-emptive trailer for their project *Afro Samurai* (2007), garnering the interest of American actor Samuel L. Jackson, who would go on to play the lead role. Gonzo would directly hire two screenwriters—Christine Yoo and Derek Draper—to "Americanise" the script toward local tastes. Because the Japanese creators had conceived of a US audience from the off, they would also bring in American rapper RZA to provide the soundtrack for the series; a move that would further add to the "authentically" transnational feel of the production. While aspects of the show's narrative would be held up to critical scrutiny, the project was generally well received (with particular nods to the merits of the soundtrack) and the spin-off made-for-TV movie *Afro Samurai: Resurrection* (2009) would go on to win an Emmy award for "Outstanding Individual Achievement in Animation" (Otmazgin 2014: 62).

6. From re-dubbing to 're-singing' - Music's role in a digital age

The singling out of the music as one of the redeeming features of the *Afro Samurai* project presents an opportunity for us to return to the theme of music, and how its universality often affords it an opportunity for creative licence when - as I have shown above - there may be less room for manoeuvre when it comes to dubbing and the rendering of dialogue across the borders between Japanese and English. Utilising the technological facilities of the DVD medium to their maximum, much of Funimation's early success as an American dubber and distributor of anime hinged on their adherence to the rejection of the previous either/or model of animated VHS releases in the previous decade where customers were forced to choose between a dubbed or subtitled release. Instead, they would offer *both* in one package.

This extended to the opening and ending theme songs, and popular shows such as *Fruits Basket* (2001) and *One Piece* (1999-) were chief among these, the latter in particular notable because Funimation's faithful English dub of the opening theme replaced the excretable "One

Piece rap" that had helmed prior company 4Kids' efforts at bringing the long-running series to the US. Efforts such as these were seen as indicative of Funimation's *modus operandi* in the early 2000s, motivated more by "fan criteria" than by the whims of TV executives (Cubbison 2005: 54). The existence of popular YouTube channels such as "LeeandLie" (with over 1.64 million subscribers) that thrive on recording English language cover versions of popular anime songs further testify to the fact that as long as fans are still offered freedom of choice—as in the case of Funimation and the audio options presented by the DVD medium—the prospect of English language re-envisionings of anime music is not inherently frowned upon.

This crucible of creative possibility would reach its logical conclusion with the release of the phenomenally successful *Kimi no na Wa* (*'Your Name'* by Makoto Shinkai, CoMix Wave Films 2016) for which the Japanese rock group Radwimps would provide the entirety of the soundtrack. Following the initial success of both the film and the accompanying music, the band would re-record the entirety of the soundtrack into English, showing a keen awareness for the film's potential to make it big internationally, as well as the capacity for this success to act as a platform for their own musical efforts globally. As with earlier efforts to render Japanese opening and ending themes into English, the quality of the end-result is debatable. The act of dubbing (or perhaps more appropriately, "re-singing") Japanese opening and ending themes for anime into English is not without its own set of caveats and potential pitfalls. The English lyrics often feel like a clumsy fit to the melody of the Japanese original; what works when conveyed in the Japanese phonetic syllabary feel unnecessarily squeezed and rushed when sung in English. And yet, despite this, Radwimps' own re-envisioning of their soundtrack was warmly received by fans. In this instance, despite the ostensible dangers in re-soundtracking the film, its authenticity remained resolutely intact. The language of the lyrics may have changed from Japanese to English, but crucially, it was still Radwimps singing and thus, it remained comprehensively and authentically Japanese in nature. The existence of the English language soundtrack would feed directly into release strategies for the film outside of Japan. Early screenings of the film included the English dub, but maintained the Japanese language songs. Then, as the movie was rolled out to an ever-increasing number of screens, the English dub in tandem with the English soundtrack was also presented as a viewing option. By the time of *Your Name*'s physical release, viewers could select whichever iteration of the movie's audio options they so wished. Limited Editions of the release even contained the original Japanese soundtrack on a bonus CD, indicative of, if anything, the centrality of the film's music as a core part of its appeal.

Both in the realm of cinema releases and—more and more importantly—in the realm of home streaming, release strategies would take an increasingly central role in the relationship between Japanese and English versions of anime. In 2014, a presumed US audience for *Space Dandy* (helmed by *Cowboy Bebop* creator Shin'ichirō Watanabe) was deemed a *fait accompli* to such an extent that the English-language version of the show—dubbed by Funimation and first aired on US channel Adult Swim's Toonami block—aired a whole day in advance of its original Japanese air-date. Meanwhile, Funimation's dominance of the US dub market, as well as the rise of streaming services such as Crunchyroll as the predominant legal means for fans to keep pace with new anime content as it aired in Japan, would culminate in the launch of the streaming service Funimation Now, which as part of its subscription bundle included the promise of "simuldubs". These simuldubs would see Funimation work on and upload English language dubs within weeks, and sometimes even days, of the original Japanese broadcast, allowing fans who preferred dubs to no longer feel as though they were following a weekly series at an overly slower pace than those viewing the subtitled version. This pairing of new technological advancement with a desire to meet the bespoke needs of anime fans would mirror Funimation's earlier championing of the DVD format; easing the tired subs vs dubs debate by acting as a meditator interested in providing both sides what they wanted most.

Come 2017, in a sign that the anime industry had become a wholly willing advocate of the often-used phrase "thinking globally, acting locally", a deal that valued Funimation at around 150 million USD saw the company acquired by Japan's Sony Pictures Television Networks (Ressler 2017). With the bringing of the American dubbing and distribution company under the arm of Japanese corporate giant Sony, the efforts toward viewing synchronicity aimed for under the simuldub project had now been mirrored within the corporate sphere, with Japan taking a direct and active interest in the transformation of its creative output abroad.

7. Conclusion

Ultimately, the discourse around re-dubbing and re-soundtracking remains defined not just by the simple existence of a variety of versions of the same piece of media content, but in tandem, a variety of audience responses to said media. As detailed above, this multiplicity can exist as a backdrop for tensions both creative and commercial in nature, but should also be taken as evidence that it is the comparisons afforded by this multiplicity that arguably breeds this tension, not the existence of multiple versions themselves. Looking to the current experiences of anime fans outside of Japan is to present a picture in which comparative ease of access—certainly in contrast to the past—now trumps all other concerns. Those individuals that began as fans and viewers of anime are now those working in "official" capacities in the industry itself, inherently tuned in to the tastes of a market that—while still not quite "mainstream"—has become sizable enough to attract the kind of multi-million dollar deals highlighted by Sony's acquisition of Funimation.

The aural environment of any given anime plays out as a rich, multi-layered tapestry of component elements, of which this chapter has sought to focus the reader on both the utility and circumstance of a number of key case studies. Whether in the form of American dubbing, accents, intonations, emphasis or lexicon, each calls to question the embodied vocalisation of cultural change - the sheer process of transposition between a site of origin and a point of consumption. In the music utilised to accompany anime too, opportunities for change and the swapping of one piece of content for another not only reveal telling insights about pre-supposed audiences, but how these pre-suppositions shift back and forth as part of a delicate balancing act with consumer choice. As questions of auditory authenticity to the original rise increasingly to the fore, the desires of fans become intermingled with the practises of dubbing companies, re-envisioning both the process and end-product on its route to American shores.

Further research within this field could look toward sonorities related to sound effects; taking the aural dimension beyond that of the vocal and musical, and extending it to the technicalities of Foley and other sounds added to the US versions and/or subtracted from the Japanese versions. As part of the wider palette of auditory elements that make up the finished animated package, as consumed by the viewer/listener, all these may be considered in tandem; a soundscape or aural environment that not only changes with the times, but retrospectively acts as a kind of sonic time-capsule, a freeze-frame of the values and priorities of the cultural-flow of anime from Japan to America at the time in which it was created.

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