



# An Anime That Will Make Even the Most Jaded Heart Weep



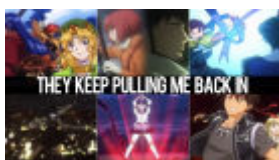
Richard Eisenbeis

Filed to: ANIME REVIEW 8/30/13 7:40am



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The thing I love about many new anime films is that they often serve to introduce me to excellent series I missed out on during the years when I didn't watch any anime. One of these is *Anohana: The Flower We Saw That Day*—a beautiful, heartbreaking story about loss.



## How a Game Got Me Back Into Watching Anime

How I ended up living and working in Japan is a long and complex story, but like many, anime was a...

And as the theatrical film of *Anohana* will be released in Japanese theaters this weekend, now is the perfect time to look back at this excellent TV series.

**Good – A Simple Supernatural Mystery**



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## ADVERTISEMENT

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On the surface, *Anohana* is the story of Menma, a girl who dies in an accident, then returns as a ghost to haunt her best friend, Jintan, five years later. The problem is, neither Menma or Jintan know why she has returned. The two are quick to latch on to the “unfinished business” school of thought and decide that they need to grant Menma's wish to get her into heaven. Of course, neither of them have any idea what this wish could be.

Thus the story is ostensibly about them trying to figure out Menma's wish and fulfill it. Of course, this is made all the more difficult by the fact that only Jintan can see Menma. Soon the two of them are forced to involve their old friends—who have drifted far apart over the five-year gap—and reopen many of the old wounds surrounding the events of Menma's death.

**Good – Young People Dealing With Loss**



So when it really comes down to it, *Anohana* is the story of how Menma's death affected her five closest friends. Even though she died when they were in elementary school, their lives all still revolve around her death—or rather how they have attempted to cope with her death. Jintan has become more and more antisocial to the point of not going to school. Poppo has dropped out of school and travels around the world searching for adventure. Anaru blindly follows the popular crowd at school—doing anything to fit in. And Tsuruko has completely devoted herself to being the constant companion to Yukiatsu, the final member of the group.



But it is Yukiatsu, who outwardly seems the most normal, that has fallen the furthest. His childhood love of Menma—and his jealousy of Jintan—has focused his life into a single obsession. And it is an obsession that cannot be maintained indefinitely nor without consequences.

So while all five living friends have gone their separate ways in order to cope with Menma's death, the very nature of her ghostly predicament requires them to be drawn together again. This in turn violently breaks down each of the friends' emotional walls and makes for a truly heartrending drama.

### Good – Families Dealing With Loss



But it is not only the five friends who have had to deal with the catastrophic loss of a loved one. Menma's parents have also had a terrible time dealing with the loss of their daughter. Menma's mother has become a recluse, secretly hating that Menma's friends are allowed to grow up while her daughter is not. Menma's father has taken the opposite stance, trying everything in his power to not be reminded he ever had a daughter in the first place. But perhaps the worst off is Menma's brother, who can barely remember her, but is nonetheless constantly neglected by his parents because of their fixation on his dead sister.

Jintan's family is hardly better off as his mother died shortly before Menma—no doubt contributing to his self-isolation. Meanwhile, Jintan's father has responded to the loss by letting his son grow up with complete freedom—which basically amounts to the freedom to do nothing.



If you haven't guessed by reading everything else so far, *Anohana* is not a happy story. Rather it is a serious look at how the death of a young child has derailed the lives of all those close to her—even years after the fact.

But that is not to say that there aren't happy moments. Nor is that to say that it isn't an uplifting and hopefully optimistic story—which it is. While the plot is filled with depressing revelations and heartbreaking drama, all the exploration of loss has a point. In the end, it is a story of love, letting go, and doing the right thing for the right reason.

### Final Thoughts



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*Anohana: The Flower We Saw That Day* is no doubt one of the saddest anime I have ever watched. But it is also one of the most uplifting. The story it tells is so painfully real—so emotionally raw—that it will cause even the most jaded heart to weep. As loss is a universal part of the human condition, I would recommend *Anohana* to absolutely anyone—but only if they were prepared to have a good cry.

*Anohana: The Flower We Saw That Day* aired on Fuji TV in Japan. It can be watched for free and with English subtitles in the United States at Hulu and Crunchyroll. The theatrical film will be released in Japanese theaters on August 31, 2013.

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spoonTRex ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 8:32am

This was the first anime that got me to break my own rule about buying anime: Don't buy unless it includes an English Dub. Not because I think an English Dub is superior, but it's the easiest way to get my wife to sit down and

actually watch a series with me, and to me, that's always a good thing. (Also, for the price of most anime, they should include a dub in there.)

This anime is so good, and so worth any cost of admission (to me) that I broke the rule and STILL got my wife to watch the entire thing (and she cried, too). LOVE, LOVE, LOVE this anime.



**Nawhdee** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 8:35am

I really wouldn't call this anime depressing. It's certainly sad, but at no point did I feel extraordinarily sad.

In fact, if I ever teared up while watching it, it was because of its incredible optimism.



**Carlos Guerrero Landestoy** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 9:29am

I cry when I saw this anime. An I also cry when I re-watched with my brother. It was painfull but I loved every second. Everybody should give it a try.



**Tamashii** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 9:39am

I cried my eyes out with this anime. This is certainly, one of the most interesting anime I've seen in recent time. As some people have said, I have to rewatch it.



**Carlos Alvarez** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 9:54am

oh god, this anime made me cry, I cant wait for the movie to be released the manga that was just revealed was really good. probably one of the best anime I've ever seen and the music in this anime was really good as well.. I just loved everything about this anime and the studio that worked on this.



**Grymnir** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 9:56am

I actually had to put this series on hold when I started watching it. It was just a bit too much to handle. Didn't really help that I tried watching it immediately after rewatching Clannad and at the same time that I started watching After Story. I really need to pick it back up and finish it one of these days.



**otakuKama** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 10:06am

I love this anime. Its able to be emotional with out being cheezy. Another great anime this show brings to mind is Toradora, I wouldnt say its as good as AnoHana though



**Citizen Snips** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 12:29pm

Great review! I can't wait to hear how the movie will make me bawl like a little kid all over again lol



**gamer604** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 1:12pm

I have watched maybe a total of 3 anime series in the past 5 years and luckily, this was one of them. It was a sad and touching story.



**VinnyHaw** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 5:06pm

Every single time I see an article on an anime from you guys....I jump right onto google and search for the first episode. I'm on episode 3 of this right now and i'm loving it. Here's a suggestion for you though. It's a little older...but Guilty Crown



**Danny** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 5:29pm

I don't know how I'd feel about watching this...it looks quite interesting but having lost my father 2 months ago I really don't know if seeing fictional characters deal with something similar will just be a numb experience or



cause me to break down again.



**Fuion** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 6:46pm

I almost cried just reading about it, I don't know how I'm going to be able to actually watch this T\_\_\_\_T



**codejinchu** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/31/13 2:09am

Damn you Kotaku I usually only go for the action anime. This really was good. Thou Popo needed a girl too. Lol



**Ryukai** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis  
8/30/13 8:11am

I'm glad you noted the stuff they put in there regarding Menma's family. Without a doubt one of the moments that hit me hardest was when Menma's brother says something along the lines of "I grew two inches this year Mum, did you even realise?".

I'm really looking forward to eventually being able to see this film subtitled and hope it does the series justice. Will we see a Kotaku review sometime next week??



**Richard Eisenbeis** ▶ Ryukai  
8/30/13 8:15am

I have my ticket already in hand and will be watching the movie tomorrow morning. So it's safe to expect a movie review next week.



**FrankieV** ▶ Ryukai  
8/30/13 12:27pm

What really got me was when menma's mother started blaming them for her dead, having the weight of that claim can't be an easy thing.



**Irohma** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis

8/30/13 8:40am

Surely one of the best shows of its season and one of the rare few in the last 3~4 years that really did something good and deep. I'm surprised to see Richard commenting on this one when I remember he said something like SAO being the smarstest show, probably one of the most absurd things I've heard in Kotaku in my 2~ years reading it.

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**Richard Eisenbeis** ▶ Irohma

8/31/13 2:28am

I stand by what I said. The first half of SAO is quite smart, looking at all the little implications of a society living inside a virtual world. The second half, is another beast all together, however.



**PixelSnader** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis

8/30/13 9:54am

So is this a recut of the series, or filling in some holes, or a prequel or sequel or something?

The plot setup sounds interesting enough for a movie, but not really interesting enough to go watch an entire series of.

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**Richard Eisenbeis** ▶ PixelSnader

8/31/13 2:30am

The movie, which I saw today, is half recut and half new epilogue and prologue. This review, however, is for the TV series.

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**PixelSnader** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis

9/03/13 12:55am

Is the movie about equally good? If so, Imma have to look for a way to watch it.



**zerovashstyle8** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis

8/30/13 4:19pm

I watched this a couple months ago and all I can say is it is one of the best I have seen. I cannot wait for the movie to come about that shows everything from Menma's point of view.

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**Richard Eisenbeis** ▶ zerovashstyle8

8/31/13 2:36am

Yeah... I saw the movie this morning. It's not from Menma's POV.

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**zerovashstyle8** ▶ Richard Eisenbeis

9/01/13 3:34am

Where did you see it at?

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**Richard Eisenbeis** ▶ zerovashstyle8

9/01/13 6:01am

A theater in Chiba.

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