

STUDIO PONOC

The New Film from Studio Ponoc
arriving Winter 2023

The IMAGINARY

The long-awaited feature film presents
“a boy no one can see”!?

Tokyo, December 13, 2022 – Studio Ponoc is delighted to announce that its newest project, the animated feature film *The Imaginary*, will arrive in cinemas in Japan in Winter 2023. Plans for release worldwide are also well underway.

The main character of *The Imaginary* is Rudger. Born from a young girl’s imagination, Rudger is a boy no one can see who lives in a world where imaginations can live and be eaten by others. *The Imaginary* is an extraordinarily touching and beautiful hand-drawn fantasy film in which Rudger and his new friends in “The Imaginaries Town” embark on an adventure no one can see at the risk of the futures and fates of those they love.

What will the world of “The Imaginaries” look like when hand drawn by the renowned artists and animators of Studio Ponoc? Why did Studio Ponoc choose to draw someone no one can see, and why now? *The Imaginary* is an entirely new animated film for everyone who loves a good tale told well.

The story of *The Imaginary* is based on A.F. Harrold and illustrator Emily Gravett’s 2014 novel “The Imaginary”, a remarkable book that garnered literary awards, winning the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) Book Award and the British Book Design and Production Award, was longlisted for CILIP’s Carnegie Medal and Kate Greenaway Medal for acclaimed children’s literature, and was highly praised in the media. Studio Ponoc’s feature film is the adaptation for which fans of the novel around the world have been longing.

Directing *The Imaginary* is renowned animator and director Yoshiyuki Momose. At Studio Ghibli Momose worked alongside legendary director Isao Takahata on several Studio Ghibli films including *Only Yesterday* (1991) and *Pom Poko* (1994), and with director Hayao Miyazaki on *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and *Spirited Away* (2001). At Studio Ponoc, Momose directed *Life Ain’t Gonna Lose*, one of the three short films in the studio’s groundbreaking anthology *Modest Heroes – Ponoc Short Films Theatre, Volume 1* (2018). His latest directorial work is *Tomorrow’s Leaves* (2021), an animated short film created in collaboration with the Olympic Foundation for Culture and Heritage.

The Imaginary is an ambitious work by the genius who Isao Takahata called “The one who will evolve animation”, and is the culmination of his 50-year career in animation.

The studio posts updates and news about *The Imaginary* on the film’s website at ponoc.jp/Rudger/en and on its [Twitter feed \(@ponoc_intl\)](https://twitter.com/ponoc_intl).

About the film

A boy no one can see, and the Imaginaries.

Meet Rudger, the boy created by the imagination of a girl who lost love.

They spend precious time together, running through a world of breathtaking imagination and a challenging reality.

One day that world of imagination is about to disappear with the arrival of a mysterious man seeking to destroy Rudger.

Studio Ponoc, the creator of *Mary and The Witch's Flower*, *Modest Heroes*, and *Tomorrow's Leaves*, presents a new fantasy blockbuster to the world!

Key facts

The Imaginary

(2023 / CinemaScope / 105 minutes)

A Studio Ponoc Film

Based on the novel "The Imaginary" by A.F. Harrold
(Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014)

Directed by Yoshiyuki Momose • Produced by Yoshiaki Nishimura

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URL: www.ponoc.jp/Rudger/en

Inquiries: www.ponoc.jp/contact/

Profiles and Comments

Author of the novel "The Imaginary" A.F. Harrold

A.F. Harrold is an English poet, performer and children's author. Born in Sussex in 1975, he began writing poetry in his teenage years. After graduating from Reading University, he became a full-time poet after trying to be a bookseller. He won the Cheltenham Literature Festival All-Stars Poetry Slam in 2007 and was Poet-in-Residence at Glastonbury Festival in 2008. In 2012, Bloomsbury published his first children's novel, "Fizzlebert Stump: The Boy Who Ran Away from the Circus (and Joined the Library)" followed by five more books in the Fizzlebert Stump series. "The Imaginary" (2014, illustrated by Emily Gravett) won the UKLA Book Award, and his sci-fi comedy novel, "Greta Zargo and the Amoeba Monsters from the Middle of the Earth" (2018, illustrated by Joe Todd-Stanton), won the Teach Primary First News Funny Award.

Comments from Author A.F. Harrold:

"I'm delighted and honoured that Studio Ponoc saw something special enough in me and Emily's novel to commit their time and talent to translate it to the big screen. I'm excited and intrigued in equal measure to see how they manage the job of squeezing a

book-shaped thing into a film-shaped thing. Knowing Studio Ponoc, though, I don't doubt that this story is in safe hands."

Director Yoshiyuki Momose

Animation Director. Born in Tokyo, Japan in 1953. Yoshiyuki Momose joined Studio Ghibli after working as Key Animator on Isao Takahata's *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), then was in charge of storyboard drawings for Takahata's *Only Yesterday* (1991) and *Pom Poko* (1994) and computer-generated portions of Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* (1997), and was a leading Key Animator of Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* (2001) and sequence director for Takahata's *My Neighbors the Yamadas* (1999). After debuting as the director of a theatrical feature with the *Ghiblies episode 2* (2002), Momose directed music videos for Capsule and Yui Aragaki, and was in charge of scene design for Takahata's final masterpiece, *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* (2013). At Studio Ponoc, he directed *Life Ain't Gonna Lose*, one of the three short films in Studio Ponoc's anthology *Modest Heroes – Ponoc Short Films Theatre, Volume 1* (2018). His latest work as director is *Tomorrow's Leaves* (2021), an animated short film created in collaboration with the Olympic Foundation for Culture and Heritage.

Comments from Director Yoshiyuki Momose:

"It is a very difficult task to materialize 'imagination', to portray 'something that has never been seen' in a film, and this is why I find it interesting – and at the same time challenging – to present it in animation. The idea of our lead character being 'a boy made by imagination' may seem constricting, but what we see from this boy's perspective is a truly vast and open world. Rudger and his friends live in 'The Town of Imaginaries' – innocent, pure, and in the moment. Rather than depict a world seen from the perspective of 'the Imaginaries' with only a sense of entrapment, I am creating a film full of abundance and opportunities for liberation, offering strength to those of us living in our era."

Producer Yoshiaki Nishimura

Founder and Producer, Studio Ponoc. Born in Tokyo, Japan in 1977, studied abroad in California. At Studio Ghibli, Yoshiaki Nishimura was involved in production of director Hayao Miyazaki's "Let's Eat at Home" series of TV commercials for House Foods (2004) and advertising of *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), *Tales from Earthsea* (2006), and *Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea* (2008). Nishimura is the producer of Isao Takahata's final masterpiece *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* (2013) and *When Marnie Was There* (2014) (each nominated as Best Animated Feature at the Academy Awards). Now the CEO and producer of Studio Ponoc, which he founded in April 2015, Nishimura produced the feature film *Mary and The Witch's Flower* (2017), the short-film anthology *Modest Heroes: Ponoc Short Films Theatre, Volume 1* (2018), and *Tomorrow's Leaves* (2021), an animated short film created in collaboration with the Olympic Foundation for Culture and Heritage.

Comments from Producer Yoshiaki Nishimura:

"It was right after I finished making *Mary and The Witch's Flower* that I picked up the original novel 'The Imaginary' by A.F. Harrold and Emily Gravett. It offered a glimpse of life that we all have experienced. It was funny and a bit scary. Most of all, it moved me. Could I make a film of this novel? I wondered if it would be possible for us to make a film that captures the essence of our present times from the perspective of a boy who is not human, not a ghost, not a robot and not an animal, but is a 'boy imagined by a human'. After thinking on it for over two years, I saw Rudger – he simply appeared. I became fascinated by what he was trying to convey, something irreplaceable. Our film *The Imaginary* is the story of Rudger, a boy who lives within imagination. It is the story of all of us around the world who live to the fullest, something that is not seen. And it is a film that says out loud that love and hope are there, always right there, beside you.



STUDIO PONOC

Please look forward to a film pushing beyond the limits of hand-drawn animation, led by renowned animator Yoshiyuki Momose and our dedicated and talented creators.”

Studio Ponoc

Studio Ponoc is the animation studio founded in 2015 by former Studio Ghibli producer Yoshiaki Nishimura (nominated for the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature for *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* and *When Marnie Was There*). The name “Studio Ponoc” comes from the Croatian word “ponoć”, which means midnight or the beginning of a new day, reflecting founder Nishimura’s goal of a new start for animation created in Japan. The studio produced and released worldwide director Hiromasa Yonebayashi’s *Mary and The Witch’s Flower* in summer 2017 as its first animated feature film and created a new production label – “Ponoc Short Films Theatre” – in 2018, releasing *Modest Heroes: Ponoc Short Films Theatre, Volume 1*, the first anthology of short animated films from Studio Ponoc comprising a grand fantasy adventure, a moving human drama of love, and an action spectacle. In 2021, the studio created *Tomorrow’s Leaves*, commissioned by the Olympic Foundation for Culture and Heritage and the world’s first animated short film inspired by the Olympic Values. The studio is currently producing several animated feature films, with its next feature, *The Imaginary*, arriving in cinemas in Winter 2023.

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