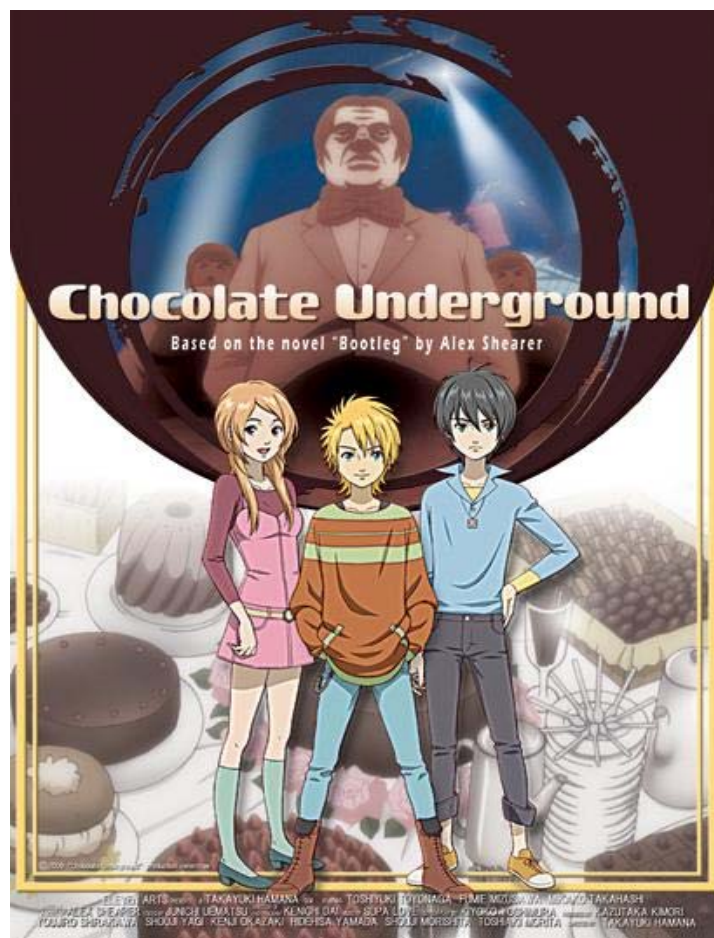


Chocolate Underground

87 min / Color / 16:9 / 2009 Japan

A Film by

Takayuki Hamana



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Chocolate Underground

Introduction

A corrupt administration announces its plans to enforce the “Chocolate Prohibition Law.” Armed with courage and friendship, two young boys take a stand against the tyrannical regime. This premise, taken from popular English writer Alex Shearer’s novel *Bootleg*, captivated readers across the world. The book was published in Japan with the new title *Chocolate Underground*. 12,000 copies have been sold to date, proving the story’s accessibility to a broad range of audience interests. And now, it will be released as an animated theatrical film!

The production was headed by Production I.G. and Trance Arts, the dynamic duo also responsible for making “The Prince of Tennis.” The film is directed by Hamana Takayuki (Library War) and the character design is handled by Takayuki Goto (Ghost in the Shell: S.A.C.). Together, they take the fundamental story and transform it into something new. The animated *Chocolate Underground* is sure to leave your mouth watering!

STORY

The story takes place, ostensibly, in an imaginary modern-day country. The “Good for You” political party that rose to power without electoral consent has instituted a “Chocolate Prohibition Law!” All food and drink that involves chocolate, along with nearly every other enjoyable treat has been outlawed by the new administration.

Enter Huntly and Smudger, two young boys who used to hang around Ms. Bubby’s sweets store just to catch a glimpse of the lovely Louise. Since the new law was passed, the store, once a lively place, had become destitute. Louise tips off the boys to a fledgling business involving the distribution of bootlegged chocolate. As they make their way to the secret mine of chocolate ingredients, they come across a mysterious code.

After successfully decoding the cipher, the boys enter the illegal dealer’s headquarters. Inside, they are pleasantly surprised by the commencement of a Chocolate Party! Hunter and Smudger are blissfully reunited with the taste of chocolate again. But the party is abruptly cut short by the presence of the Chocolate Police. As people flee in all directions the boys’ friend Div is captured by the officials!

Unforgivable! All he wanted was a bite of chocolate! What is so wrong about that? Huntley, Smudger, and Louise decide to embark on their own chocolate bootlegging venture. With their combined talents, knowledge and passion, will they be able to reclaim the “Fun and Beautiful” world they once inhabited?!

Chocolate Underground

TECHNICAL CREDITS

-STAFF-

Director Takayuki Hamana
Music SUPA LOVE
Lighting Director..... Kenichi Dai
Production Designer..... Seiko Akashi
Special Effects Toshio Hasegawa
Original Story Alex Shearer
Editor Junichi Uematsu
Script Writer Kiyoko Yoshimura

- CAST -

Huntley Toshiyuki Toyonaga
Smudger Fumie Mizusawa
Blades Tatsuo Suzuki
Luise..... Mikako Takahasi
Mrs. Bubby..... Hiroko Mori

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KEY STAFF/CREW

Alex Shearer (Novel)

(1949-)

Alex Shearer started his writing career as a scriptwriter. His credits include *The Two of Us* (1990), *Delta Wave* (1996), and *Wilmot* (1999). In 1999, his novel *The Greatest Store in the World*, was screened as a feature length TV film on Christmas Eve by the BBC. The work was nominated for the 2000 BAFTA Children's Award. Additionally he has written more than a dozen books for children and adults including *The Hunted* and *The Speed of the Dark*, both of which were short-listed for the U.K.'s prestigious Guardian Children's Fiction Prize.

"Bootleg"

The children's novel *Bootleg* was published in Britain in 2002. It portrays a dystopian country where a new political party has instituted stringent rules in hopes of improving the health of the nation. When chocolate gets banned, 13-year old entrepreneurs Smudger and Huntly begin making and distributing chocolate in secret. The official police, or Chocolate Troopers, attempt to capture them and send them to Rehabilitation Camp to be hypnotized, but they successfully incite a revolution against the government. The story has seen great success in television, film, and manga adaptations.

In 2002, *Bootleg* was adapted as a 3-part miniseries for children commissioned by the BBC. Paul Smith oversaw the composition of the screenplay. It won the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Award for best Children's Drama (2003) and the Logie Award for Most Outstanding Children's Program (2004). Noting the story's wide spectrum of appeal, the UK Sunday Express Review noted, "Bootleg is a rarity: a children's drama that's also for grown-ups."

In Japan, the story was renamed *Chocolate Underground* and first debuted in the popular girls' magazine, *Margaret*. It appeared in monthly installments as a serial manga drawn by Aiji Yamakawa. The novel itself, translated by Mizuhito Kanehara saw instant popularity among everyone from middle schoolers to Japanese "Office Ladies." Simultaneously, the story was aired on the internet as a serial 3-minute anime series lasting 13 episodes. They were also accessible through mobile phones and the whole campaign was sponsored by Gana, a popular candy company. Most recently, the novel served as the basis for the Japanese animated film, *Chocolate Underground* which was released on January 7, 2009.

Production I.G. (Production Company)

Production I.G has produced a number of acclaimed feature films, OVA (original video animation), TV shows, and videogames. For their storytelling and quality of animation, *Ghost in the Shell* (1995, directed by Mamoru Oshii, N. 1 in US Billboard Top Video Sales Chart 1996), *Jin-Roh: The Wolf Brigade* (1999, directed by Hiroyuki Okiura, Jury's Special Prize at Fantasporto 1999), and *Blood: The Last Vampire* (2000, directed by Hiroyuki Kitakubo), have earned critical accolades in Japan and all around the world. *Innocence*, directed by Mamoru Oshii in 2004,

has been the first Japanese animation feature ever to compete for the Palme d'Or at the Festival de Cannes.

Filmography:

The Sky Crawlers (2008): Toronto International Film Festival Official Selection, Best Character Design Award (Tokyo Anime Awards)

Tokyo Marble Chocolate (2007): Grand Prize for Feature Film (Seoul International Cartoon & Animation Festival)

Kill Bill Vol.1 (Animation Segment) (2003)

Sakura Wars (2001)

Neon Genesis Evangelion the Movie: Death and Rebirth, The End of Evangelion (1997) : Popularity Award (Japanese Academy Award)

Ghost in the Shell (1995): International Fantasy Film Award (Fantasporto), Best Theatrical Feature Film (World Animation Celebration), Best Screenplay (Yokohama Film Festival)