

Animating anime: Jordan Bayes talks Vinland Saga, Boruto and Hatena Illusion



by Victoria Davis 2 weeks ago

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Anime is no longer a world for only Japanese animators. Indiana-based animator Jordan Bayes talks about breaking into the business and his work on Vinland Saga, Boruto and Hatena Illusion.

With the rise in popularity of American-created anime shows like [Cannon Busters](#) and [Castlevania](#), anime is no longer a world for only Japanese animators. The art form is becoming **increasingly more diverse**, inclusive and accessible. [Jordan Bayes](#) is a small-town animator from Marysville, Indiana who has managed to break into the business of animating anime within a year, working on popular shows like *Boruto*, bizarre comedies like *Kedama no Gonjiro* and newly released anime like [Hatena Illusion](#) and *Vinland Saga*.

Hidden Remote sat down to talk with Bayes about how he managed to get his foot in the Japanese animation door, what working on iconic shows like *Boruto* means to him and some of his favorite scenes to animate, from torture sequences in *Vinland Saga* to adorably cheesy scenes in *Hatena Illusion*.

Hidden Remote: What got you into animation in the first place? Was it something you went to school for?

Jordan Bayes: It's actually an interesting story. Five years ago I was graduating college to go on and be a lawyer and I didn't have the courage to come out and say, "This isn't what I want to do with my life." So for the next six months, while I was waiting for law school to begin, I got really into anime

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and decided I wanted to draw my own comics and do my own animation.

Some of my earliest memories are of watching *Dragon Ball Z* on Toonami. So, I got involved with Dragon Ball Reanimate, where fans reanimate a *Dragon Ball Z* episode, and I did a really terrible animation but I loved everything about it. The day before I was supposed to go to law school, I called my dad and told him I couldn't do it, and that I wanted to do animation.



Hidden Remote: Even before you started working on anime shows like *Boruto* and *Hatena Illusion* and *Vinland Saga*, your own personal animations such as *30-Year-Old Magical Girl*, *Magic Mariel & The World Tree* and your illustrations have a sort of distinct Japanese animation style. Is that a design taste you've always had?

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Bayes: Oh yeah, that's all of my inspiration growing up. I watched Disney and all that, but what my friends and I really cared about was coming home from school and watching *Sailor Moon* and *Gundam Wing* and *Yu Yu Hakusho*. Then I'd go and make doodles of that stuff. To me, that was everything. I just love what shows Japan produces, both for the art and thematics. It's more allowed to be for an older audience.



Hidden Remote: You graduated just this past May from animation school and have already worked on four or more anime television series just since September. How were you able to get involved with these projects knowing no Japanese and living in a small Indiana town?

Bayes: There is no guide on how to get a job in anime. But I think there's a lack of giving beginners a chance in the Western industry that there isn't in Japan. There are many people on Twitter that work on the production of different anime, specifically on there to recruit animators.

I started tweeting at foreign animators in Japan and eventually, someone was kind enough to allow me to join an animation discord server. I followed a lot of people on Twitter who work in animation production who were searching for animators and started sending them tweets, using google translate, as crazy as that sounds. One of them got back to me and they worked for Wit Studios.

That's how I got onto *Kedama no Gonjiro* and when I began not-so-subtly asking to work on *Vinland Saga*. I'm a huge *Vinland Saga* fan. I've got Yukimura's manga and I love the anime *Planets*. I was so glad that I got to work on [*Vinland Saga*] after *Gonjiro*. That's definitely the biggest show I've worked on so far.





Hidden Remote: What I found interesting about you wanting to work on *Vinland Saga* is that *Kedama no Gonjiro*, *Hatena Illusion*, and even *Boruto* to a certain extent, they all have a very colorful, magical theme that also in *Magic Mariel & The World Tree*. But *Vinland Saga* is very realistic and very dark. Was that a strange transition?

Bayes: Honestly, that's more my interest—realism and dark and gritty stuff. My favorite anime series is *Berserk*...that's more my wheelhouse of what I'm interested in. I love the journey that Thorfinn goes on and the deep characters. I love Askeladd and I love the end of this season where Thorfinn comes to a realization about not understanding his feelings about Askeladd the way he thought.

One of the scenes I animated for was a torture scene with Askeladd and I love that kind of complexity of emotions that characters convey in a series like that. I was also happy to be able to animate Thorkell, who is the fan-favorite character and the creator's favorite character.

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Hidden Remote: Since you have an affinity for these darker, more realistic anime themes, what was it about *Hatena Illusion* that made you want to animate for the show? Do you also have a soft spot for the more colorful, upbeat anime having worked on those kinds of animations for a while?

Bayes: I think that's definitely an element of it. For *Hatena Illusion*, I think the colorful characters are really cute and the parts I got to animate were so fun and so different than what I'm used to getting to animate, even on *Gonjiro* or *Boruto*. There's a part in the middle with the maid and the butler and her kind of spinning around, talking about the boy and the girl getting together...then she clasps her hands and comes up really close to the screen and the way that cut came out is so nice.

It's the one I most want to add to my demo real right now. That scene turned out exactly how I wanted, so it's like getting to see me on the screen.



Hidden Remote: *Boruto* was your most recent animation. What made you want to animate for that show other than its popularity?

Bayes: *Naruto* means a lot to me. To middle school me, that was the thing—reading *Naruto* and importing Japanese DVDs of *Naruto* so I could watch it and be ahead of everyone in America. So getting to animate the main character of *Boruto* was so fun. I did more work on *Boruto* than any of the other shows I've done by far, but just to say I've been a part of this series that I loved as a kid means a lot to me.

Hidden Remote: Was there anything unique about working on this show that was different from the other projects you've done?

Bayes: This actually a different kind of animation situation where the creators were looking for someone to help them find other foreign animators to help out on *Boruto* and asked me to help find some. So in my spare time, I went around to animators I knew online from Europe, and Indonesia, and the States, and asked them if they would like to participate in *Boruto*. So there were four or five of foreign animators I recruited working on this show with me.

It was a much more collaborative than experience than normal. So many of us worked so hard and getting to see our work out there in the streaming world felt like the first big thing for me.



Hidden Remote: Going from being a huge anime fan to now getting to animate for these shows, do you think it's given you a bigger appreciation for the work that goes into making these shows? What's been the best part of this experience so far in the first year?

Bayes: Definitely. When you have a week to turn in 15 shots, you're pulling like three all-nighters. You see a lot of people talk about, "This show used to be so good, and the animation has gone downhill." But, to me, being a part of it, it's not like those people weren't working their butts off.

One of the biggest things for me is wanting to be remembered for something after I'm gone, so to be a part of something like *Hatena Illusion* or *Vinland Saga*, where these are highly rated shows... to be able to look back on that, with my name in the credits on these shows, it makes me so happy.

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Hatena Illusion, *Boruto* and *Viland Saga* are now streaming on Funimation, Viz, and Amazon. Will you be watching? Drop us a line in the comments below!

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