



Hidden Remote



Directing Dubs: Erica Mendez talks writing and directing *I Want To Eat Your Pancreas* anime



by Victoria Davis 2 days ago

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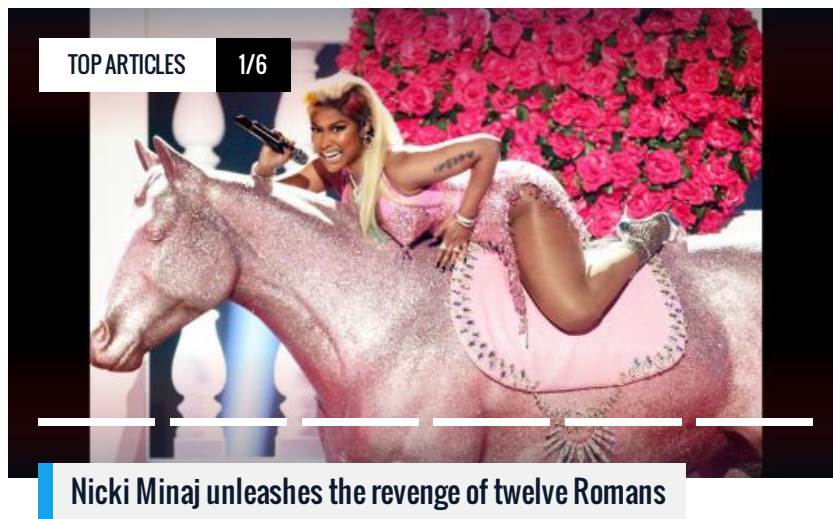


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*The animated feature of Yoru Sumino's *I Want To Eat Your Pancreas* is releasing into U.S. theaters this week and Hidden Remote had an exclusive interview with the anime's English dub director, Erica Mendez.*

American voice actress Erica Mendez is most popularly known in the anime universe for her role as Retsuko in *Aggretsuko*, Kenya Kobayashi in *Erased*, Gon Freecss in *Hunter x Hunter*, and Tsubaki Sawabe in *Your Lie in April*. While she's also credited with script writing for *Dragon Pilot* and *Little Witch Academia*, Hidden Remote recently interviewed Mendez about her most immersive project yet— writing and directing Shin'ichirô Ushijima's *I Want To Eat Your Pancreas*.

Mendez has been voice acting for the past six years, but this project was her first for taking on the role as director. Having also been hired as a writer for the film, Mendez spent a month putting together the English script for *I Want To Eat Your Pancreas* and dedicated another month to directing voice dubbing for this slice-of-life anime film.



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The film is being released into theaters across the country this week, Mendez's dubbed masterpiece showing **Sunday, February 10**.

Based on the novel by Yoru Sumino, *I Want To Eat Your Pancreas* is not a film about cannibalism or zombies. On the contrary, it's a first-love story which follows the unconventional relationship of two high school students— a reserved and unnamed male protagonist with no interest in the lives of others, and a popular girl named Sakura Yamauchi (voiced by Erika Harlacher).

Suffering in silence from a pancreatic disease, Sakura befriends the apathetic character, "Me" (voiced by Robbie Daymond) after he

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comes across her hand-written journal, "Living With Dying."

Having gone from a novel, to a manga, to a live-action and now to an anime film in the last four years, Hidden Remote interviewed Mendez about bringing the story to life once again, getting to work with her long-time voice acting friends Harlacher and Daymond, and her comical connection with the character, "Me."

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Hidden Remote: How did you first get started with voice acting? Was it something you knew you always wanted to do?

Erica Mendez: It started off as a hobby for me when I was a young teen. I've always loved cartoons and video games though and acting was something I'd been interested in but I was just too shy to do anything like that on stage. So, when I found out about voice over, I was like, "Oh my gosh, this sounds like the coolest thing."

I mean, not to say you don't have people watching you. I've been in a room where on the other side of the glass there's like ten people and you can see them, very clearly. So you still have to

have the mindset of, “Ok, I have to ignore all these people that I know are watching my every move.”

Hidden Remote: And why anime? Were you a fan of the genre before getting into voice acting or was it an acquired taste?



Mendez: I've love anime since I was little—before I even really knew what “anime” was. I used to watch *Speed Racer* and *Astro Boy* with my dad when I was younger. I really got hooked on the genre in my early teens. I remember forcing myself to watch *Dragon Ball Z* to impress some girls at my school—who knows why—but that’s kind of when I learned that I’m really not into that kind of anime. I love the slice-of-life stuff more than anything.

Hidden Remote: Is that what drew you to be involved with *I Want To Eat Your Pancreas*?

Mendez: Well when I first saw it posted on Twitter, I remember seeing the title and being like, “What the heck is this?” But the image they posted of Sakura with her back turned and the cherry blossoms falling around in the back... I looked at it and just thought it was so beautiful. When I learned it wasn’t a zombie film —like I originally thought it was— it turned out to be that slice-of-life story I love so much.

I was already working on one script for another company and didn’t want to take on anything else because script writing is really taxing. But then, load an behold, Bang Zoom! came to me asking if I wanted to write the script for *Pancreas* and I immediately said yes. So, I didn’t have any life while I was writing two scripts at once but it was something I just needed to do and it was a painful month but it was so worth it.

It’s not the most pleasant experience, watching an anime for the first time in Japanese and then reading the English translation from a separate script. But the movie still made me cry. I knew immediately that this was a powerful thing...If I’m continuously crying after seeing something once, that’s how I know it’s good.



MORE: Should fans be excited for the anime adaptation of I Want To Eat Your Pancreas?

Hidden Remote: How did you end up going from a writer to being a director with this anime?

Mendez: Every time I would go in for a voice over job at Bang Zoom! while I was still writing Pancreas, I'd be like, "Hey so, who's directing this?" and they said, "Actually we don't know yet." So as a total joke I was like, "Ha! Wouldn't it be funny if I directed it because I know the most about it?" and they're like, "Wait, do you want to?" That went along for like a week or two and then the studio said that everyone was rooting for me to get the job so we just jumped right in.



Hidden Remote: This story has a lot of little details that add up to more important life lessons by the end. Was it difficult fitting all the messages of the novel, and the original Japanese film (⊗) into a dubbed version?

Mendez: There's so many intricacies to the movie and, because of the way Japanese language works, some things are translated so vaguely which is difficult when the themes in this film are so complex. There was still so much I didn't fully understand and I couldn't pick up the light novel because it wasn't out yet. But I did do that after the fact.

I really wish the novel had been available when I was writing the script because there's so much in between everything that happens. And as I'm reading it now, so often I'm like, "Well, this would have been nice to know."

Hidden Remote: It seems like there's also a lot more to the character of "Me" and a lot that's going on internally that isn't verbally expressed.

Mendez: Yeah, I noticed that right away and I'm only on the third chapter. But oh my god there's so much going through this guy's head. The biggest challenge in the dubbing medium in general is making sure each character has their own voice and writing in a specific way for a specific character—like if they have vocal ticks or an accent. You need to make sure each character has a voice of their own.

You also have to make sure the characters are likable, if they're supposed to be likable. "Me" can easily be that guy that you just don't like because he's the Debbie Downer of the group, so we had to make sure that he was at least somewhat enjoyable or, at the very least, you get to like him at the end of it all. We actually had to tone down Kyoko's character a bit because a lot of her dialogue was super obsessive and clingy with Sakura.

In the novel, "Me" actually has a pretty refined dry-sense of humor which seems to help make him more likable. Does that character feature show up at all in the film?

Mendez: I added a bit more sneakiness to him in some places. In my personal life, I think I'm a lot more like "Me" than anyone else. I make quick remarks about things that may not be very nice to people but I don't mean it in a mean way. It's just sort of my personality and how I try to make people laugh. Obviously it doesn't always work, but I think that's what "Me" is trying to do in the story at some points. But then again, he doesn't really like people, so maybe not.



Hidden Remote: This film has gone from a novel, to a manga to a live-action in less than four years and now it's become an anime film and the dubbed version is almost like a fifth medium for this story. Was there any extra pressure making this script really shine?

Mendez: A lot of my mindset, especially at the end, was just making sure everything made some sort of sense because it gets into this weird, almost dream reality. Just the ideologies and meaning behind "I want to eat your pancreas," had a tangibility to it that I wanted to try and portray. But at the same time it can be very confusing if you're not paying super close attention. So, that was my biggest challenge with it, in the end section particularly.

I've been writing for anime for about two years now and I'm still learning so much about it. I wasn't an English major so I don't know how I convinced people to let me write for this stuff.

Hidden Remote: On that note, do you think you did well, as a first time director, bringing this dubbed anime movie together?

Mendez: I honest feel like I was going on auto pilot the entire time. It was such a surreal experience to me. I think I was very fortunate though that I had great voice actors in the main cast who knew what they were doing.

I've always had a hard time expressing my thoughts so I was kind of panicking going into the director's role where I'd have to guide people that way. But I was so lucky to have not only experienced voice actors, but people who I've actually been friends with for years now be on this cast. So it was a lot easier to connect with them in their mind space.

Hidden Remote: Now, I don't know Erika Harlacher personally but from interviews I've seen, [⊗] her personality seems to fit Sakura so incredibly well.

Mendez: Yeah she's pretty much in that pocket, I think. But the funny thing, on the opposite end of the spectrum there is that Robbie is completely not like "Me" at all. Erica's voice sessions were always like, "Yay, we're having fun!" and the flow into each line was very natural. But with Robbie, he really had to reset his personality to do this role, which he did amazingly.

Normally, Robbie's very loud and enthusiastic and just really high energy when he voice acts, which makes him a super fun guy to work with. But he couldn't do that with "Me" because that's the polar opposite of what the character is. There's such a drastic difference between them so watching him say something funny and go on a crazy tangent off recording, then go straight into being a super serious character was mind-blowing to me. I have no idea how he does that.



Hidden Remote: It's awesome that both Erika and Robbie were able to find ways to fall into their characters in different ways.

Mendez: I mean, even if it wasn't a glove at first, it pretty much ended up fitting perfectly soon after that. When you start your first session, you have to set yourself into the character and the production people will be in the room just to make sure everything works right. But with this film, everything fell into place really quickly. It was really cool and both Erika and Robbie made my job easier, which was nice because I was so nervous.

Hidden Remote: Is directing something you'd like to keep on doing in addition to the voice acting?

Mendez: I definitely like acting better. That's my true passion. I also write, which that came before directing anime. Right now I'm just in a tiny corner of the voice over world which is that ⊗ anime genre and video game side. Because directing isn't fully where my heart is, if I'm going to direct and take time away from other work for me, it's got to be something I'm really interested in.

I am really lucky that this project came up because it could have went to anyone else. You never expect to get to direct something that so perfectly matches what you're interested in.

Hidden Remote: Was there a moment during production that made this process particularly memorable or unique, other than being a first-time director?

Mendez: Getting to direct something I wrote was really cool for it being my first one. Working on other people's scripts, you don't always know what they're thinking but this was all in my own head space so that made it more fluid. I do also get to do a little acting in the movie with the background characters. I think I have like six lines total.

Hidden Remote: What should people be really excited about with the anime version of this story? What is something you hope they take away from the film?

A lot of Sakura's character is "live your life to the fullest." This movie makes you realize just how beautiful anime can really be and why people enjoy it so much. It's a very touching and thought-provoking film about these two characters who are very different and learn so much from each other based off their differences and live experiences.

Honestly, I wish that people in our society now were more like the characters in this story, where they'd put away their differences and just get along. You work through those differences because you're people, and people should care about each other.



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Are you planning on seeing *I Want To Eat Your Pancreas* in theaters this week? What are you most looking forward to in the film? Leave your thoughts in the comments below.

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by Tony Smejek 2 days ago

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Avengers: Endgame TV spot shows a dark environment yet determined team of post-snap superheroes. They appear to be prepping in an almost A-Team-like fashion.

Avengers: Endgame will soon be upon us in April and with it came a Superbowl TV spot that dropped via [Marvel Entertainment](#). The Russo brothers tweeted, "[Turn on your TVs...](#)", so I'm sure upon seeing this fans eagerly took heed. Although the footage was short, I think the purpose was to set the mood as opposed to being quantity content-focused.

By seeing [Nebula and Tony Stark](#) doing their tinkering, Steve Rogers gritting his teeth (or whatever you call it), a target practicing Natasha Romanoff, and an obvious single-file line-up of heroes, I couldn't help but to seriously feel the A-Team theme song playing in my head. Even the letter "A" makes it all the more appropriate.

Nebula And Tony's Project

When I saw Tony and Nebula putting their nose to the grindstone, I couldn't help but think of Tony back inside a cave in the Middle East, welder goggles on, working away with Doctor Yinsen. I recall Black Sabbath playing in the background. Wouldn't that be something if Marvel Studios took a nod by replaying that during Tony and Nebula's scene?

Looking Up To The Heavens And Hope

Speaking of the above, this leads me to think that Tony and Nebula may have been busy repairing their ship, the Benatar. The rest of the Avengers are seen in a field, looking into the sky. Could this mean Tony and Nebula made their return to Earth to join up with the remaining earthbound heroes? The first trailer showed Stark in the abandoned ship, so it would be a wonder how he got back to Earth, yes?

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Will The Guardians Use Stark's Tech?

There are some things to consider here. The two remaining Guardians are Nebula and Rocket, right? Both of which utilize technology rather heavily. Rocket is big on making things go boom with his gadgets and Nebula is MADE of such things. Since Nebula and Stark were left together on Titan, maybe he upgraded her body parts? With Rocket's affinity for artificial appendages, I'd gather that Stark would have no problem providing the talking raccoon with his desires.

Thor Sniffing Out Thanos?

In *Avengers: Infinity War*, Thor was the last to make contact with the Mad Titan via the Stormbreaker weapon. With that, Thanos immediately transported to an unknown planet that looked quite peaceful. There is a scene where Thor is overlooking what seems to be a green landscape, peering out from some tunnel entrance.

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You see, Thor's new weapon seems to be capable of transporting from one place to the next. It could likely be a mobile bi-frost enabler. I am thinking Thor may have gotten a hint as to where Thanos took off. He may have seen into the portal briefly before it closed. That said, he could have used Stormbreaker to follow him there.

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Avengers: Endgame releases on April 26. How did **the TV spot** make you feel? Did it convey the mood within you to give you a ray a hope of success for The Avengers?



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