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» The highest-grossing movie (save *Titanic*) in Japanese history, Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* is a complex, superbly rendered, and wildly eccentric anime—even by Miyazaki's own standards. This epic folk pageant, set in an exquisitely detailed 15th-century world of lava-lamp deities and teeming marketplaces, posits an apocalyptic pantheism in which endangered species turn demonic. The theme recalls Miyazaki's ecological sci-fi *Nausicaä* (1984), albeit with greater graphic violence. The characters include a possessed boar who writhes like an animated plate of spaghetti, a princess who runs with the wolves, a tribe of red-eyed apes, and a forest full of toadstool sprites—not to mention an iron foundry staffed by lepers and ex-prostitutes. The mystical Shinto premise is an agreeable jumble—not understanding adds to the pleasure. Indeed, U.S. distributor Miramax scarcely familiarizes the material even with the dubbed-in voices of Minnie Driver, Billy Bob Thornton, and (being *Princess Mononoke*) Claire Danes. **V**

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