

Ghost in the Shell (1995 film)

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Ghost in the Shell, known in Japan as ***Mobile Armored Riot Police: Ghost In The Shell*** (改裝機動隊 GHOST IN THE SHELL *Kōkaku Kidōtai Gōsuto In Za Sheru*), is a 1995 Japanese animated science-fiction film based on manga of the same title by Masamune Shirow. The film was written by Kazunori Itō, directed by Mamoru Oshii and stars the voices of Atsuko Tanaka, Akio Ōtsuka, and Iemasa Kayumi. *Ghost in the Shell* was a Japanese-British international co-production that was produced by Kodansha in association with Bandai Visual and Manga Entertainment, with Production I.G serving as the animation studio.

The film's plot follows the hunt by the public-security agency Section 9 for a mysterious hacker known as the Puppet Master. With the assistance of her team, Motoko Kusanagi tracks and finds their suspect, only to be drawn into a complex sequence of political intrigue and a cover-up as to the identity and goals of the Puppet Master.

The overarching philosophical themes of the film include self-identity in a technologically advanced world. The music, composed by Kenji Kawai, includes an ancient Japanese language in a wedding song that serves as a key piece of music leading up to the climax of the film. Widely considered to be one of the greatest anime films of all time, critics particularly praised its visuals, which were achieved through a combination of traditional cel animation and CG animation. The film has served as inspiration for filmmakers such as the Wachowskis.

In 2004, Oshii directed *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, billed as a separate work and not a true sequel. In 2008, Oshii released an updated version of the original film, *Ghost in the Shell 2.0*, that features new audio and updated 3D animation. A live-action American adaptation is scheduled for a theatrical release in the United States on March 31, 2017.

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Plot

In 2029, the world is interconnected by a vast electronic network that permeates every aspect of life. Much of humanity has access to this network through cybernetic bodies, or "shells", which possess their consciousness and can give them superhuman abilities.

Major Motoko Kusanagi, an assault-team leader for the Public Security Section 9 of an unnamed post-WWII Japanese city, "New Port City", is assigned to capture an elusive hacker known as the Puppet Master. Her team, Batou and Ishikawa, use triangulation to seek out the Puppet Master. Their suspect is a garbageman who believes he is using a program obtained from a sympathetic man to illegally "ghost-hack" his wife's mind to find his daughter. Kusanagi and her team arrest him and the man who gave him the program, but discover that their memories were either erased or implanted: "ghost-hacked" by the Puppet Master.

A facility is hacked and programmed to assemble a female cybernetic body. The body escapes but is hit by a truck; Section 9 investigates and examines the body, which seems to have a human "ghost" inside—perhaps the Puppet Master himself. Officials from rival agency Section 6 visit Section 9 and explain that the body was made to lure the Puppet Master's ghost and trap it inside. Kusanagi espies the conversation and decides to disconnect her consciousness from her current body and connect or "dive into" the body and face the Puppet Master's ghost. Before she succeeds, the ghost activates the body. Section 6 storms Section 9 and reclaims the body.

The information from the body leads Section 9 to uncover the mysterious Project 2501. Section 6 claims the project was created to catch the hacker, but it was initiated before his appearance. Section 9 speculates that the project itself created the Puppet Master, who then escaped, and Section 6 now wants him back. Daisuke Aramaki, head of Section 9, suspects that the project and the Puppet Master are tools of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The escape might lead to the release of secrets that could embarrass Section 6 and the Ministry.

The getaway car carrying the Puppet Master meets another, and they split off. Batou stops the first car and realizes it is a decoy. Kusanagi follows the second car to an abandoned building in an area affected the hardest by flooding from the rains, where she is ambushed by an invisible spider-like armored vehicle using thermo-optic camouflage. Batou arrives in time to save the badly damaged Kusanagi. With Batou on guard, Kusanagi faces the body stolen by Section 6. The Puppet Master reveals himself and explains that, under Project 2501, it was created by Section 6 to hack ghosts for individuals and Section 6. While wandering various networks, the Puppet Master became sentient and began to contemplate its existence; it was troubled by the fact that it could not reproduce or die. It plans to merge with Kusanagi's ghost to experience mortality; Kusanagi would live on with its ghost. As it could not crack Section 6's attack protection, it was forced to escape in a physical body.

Batou tries to disconnect the drive, but the Puppet Master ghost-hacks him. Helicopters from Section 6 arrive with orders to destroy everyone inside to cover up Project 2501. The Puppet Master disrupts their targeting systems. As it starts merging with Kusanagi, snipers blow their heads off, along with Batou's arm.

Kusanagi wakes up in a child-sized cyborg body in Batou's safehouse. Batou explains that her original body was destroyed in the fight; he recovered her head and reattached it to the new body. Kusanagi acknowledges she is now neither herself nor the Puppet Master, but a combination of both. Batou says he will always be there for her. She leaves the house and gazes out over New-Port City.

Voice cast

Character	Japanese	English (Pseudonyms in parenthesis) ^[5]
Motoko Kusanagi	Atsuko Tanaka <p>Maaya Sakamoto (young Motoko)</p>	Mimi Woods
Batou	Akio Ōtsuka	Richard Epcar (Richard George)
The Puppet Master	Iemasa Kayumi (original) <p>Yoshiko Sakakibara (2.0)</p>	Tom Wyner (Abe Lasser)
Togusa	Kōichi Yamadera	Christopher Joyce
Chief Aramaki	Tamio Ōki	William Frederick Knight (William Frederick)
Ishikawa	Yutaka Nakano	Michael Sorich
Chief Nakamura	Tesshō Genda	Simon Prescott (Ben Isaacson)
Mizuho Daita	Mitsuru Miyamoto	Richard Cansino (Steve Davis)
Garbage Collector A	Kazuhiro Yamaji	Kevin Seymour (Tom Carlton)
Garbage Collector B	Shigeru Chiba	Doug Stone

Production

Development

Director Mamoru Oshii stated, "My intuition told me that this story about a futuristic world carried an immediate message for our present world. I am also interested in computers through my own personal experience with them. I had the same feeling about *Patlabor* and I thought it would be interesting to make a film that took place in the near future. There are only a few movies, even out of Hollywood, which clearly portray the influence and power of computers. I thought this theme would be more effectively conveyed through animation."^[6] Oshii expanded on these thoughts in a later interview, noting that technology changes people and had become a part of the culture of Japan. He commented that his use of philosophy caused producers to become frustrated because of sparing use of action scenes. Oshii also acknowledged that a movie with more action would sell better, but he continued to make these movies anyway.^[7] When Oshii went back to make changes to the original *Ghost in the Shell* to re-release it as *Ghost in the Shell 2.0*, one of the reasons he gave was that the film did not resemble the sequel. He wanted to update the film to reflect changes in perspective.^[8]

Design

Hiroyuki Okura, the character designer and key animation supervisor, designed a more mature and serious Motoko than Masamune Shirow's original portrayal of the character in the manga. Okura chose to depict a physically mature person to match Motoko's mental age, instead of the youthful twenty-something appearance in the manga.^[6] Motoko's demeanor lacks the comedic facial expressions and rebellious nature depicted in the manga.

Oshii based the setting for *Ghost in the Shell* on Hong Kong. Oshii commented that his first thought to find an image of the future setting was as an Asian city, but landing a suitable cityscape of the future would be impossible. Oshii chose to use the real streets of Hong Kong as his model.^[9] He also said that Hong Kong was the perfect subject and theme for the film with its countless signs and the cacophony of sounds.^[6] The film's mecha designer Takeuchi Atsushi noted that while the film does not have a chosen setting, it is obviously based on Hong Kong because the city represented the theme of the film, the old and the new which exist in a strange relationship in an age of an information deluge. Before shooting the film, the artists drew sketches that emphasized Hong Kong's chaotic, confusing and overwhelming aspects.^[9]

Animation

Ghost in the Shell used a novel process called "digitally generated animation" (DGA), which is a combination of cel animation, computer graphics (CG), and audio that is included as digital data. In 1995, DGA was thought to be the future of animation, which mixed traditional animation with the emerging use of computer graphics, including digital cel work with visual displays. Editing was performed on an AVID system of Avid Technology, which was chosen because it was more versatile and less limiting than other methods and worked with the different types of media in a single environment.^[6]

The digital cel work included both original illustrations, compositions and manipulation with traditional cel animation to create a sense of depth and evoke emotion and feelings. Utilized as background, filters like a lens effect were used to create a sense of depth and motion, by distorting the front background and making the far background out of focus throughout the shot. *Ghost in the Shell* used a unique lighting system in which light and darkness were integrated into the cels with attention to light and shadow sources instead of using contrast to control the light. Hiromasa Ogura, the art director, described this as "a very unusual lighting technique."^[6]

Some special effects, like Motoko's "thermo-optical camouflage", were rendered through the use of TIMA software. The process uses a single illustration and remanipulates the image as necessary to produce distortions for effect in combination with a background without altering the original illustration. The effect is re-added back into the shot to complete the scene. While the visual displays used in the film were technically simple to create, the appearance of the displays underwent numerous revisions by the production team to best represent visual displays of the future. Another aspect of the CG use was to create images and effects that looked as if they were "perceived by the brain" and were generated in video and added to the film in its final stages.^[6]

The opening credits of the film were produced by the CG director, Seichi Tanaka. Tanaka converted code in a computer language displayed in romanized Japanese letters to numbers before inserting them into the computer to generate the credits. The origin of this code is the names of the film's staff as written in a computer language.^[6]

Animation director Toshihiko Nishikubo was responsible for the realism and strove for accurate depictions of movement and effects. The pursuit of realism included the staff conducting firearms research at a facility in Guam. Nishikubo has highlighted the tank scene as an example of the movie's realism, noting that bullets create sparks when hitting metal, but do not spark when a bullet strikes stone.^[6]

Audio

Ghost in the Shell's recording was done with a high-end studio to achieve superior sound throughout the film. A spatializer was used to alter the sound, specifically in the electronic brain conversations, to modify the voices.^[6]

Composer Kenji Kawai scored the film. For the main theme, Kawai tried to imagine the setting and convey the essence of that world in the music. He used the ancient Japanese language of Yamato in the opening theme "Making of a Cyborg".^[6] The composition is a mixture of Bulgarian harmony and traditional Japanese notes; the haunting chorals are a wedding song sung to dispel all evil influences. Symphony conductor Sarah Penicka-Smith notes that the song's lyrics are fitting for the union between Kusanagi and Project 2501 at the climax of the movie.^[10] Kawai originally wanted to use Bulgarian folk music singers, but used Japanese folk singers instead.^[11] "See You Everyday" is different from the rest of the soundtrack, being a pop song sung in Cantonese by Fang Ka Wing.^[12]

The ending credits theme of the film's English version is "One Minute Warning" by Passengers, a collaboration between U2 and Brian Eno. The song appeared on the album *Original Soundtracks 1*, and was one of three songs on that album to actually be featured in a film.^[11]^[14] Andy Frain, the founder of Manga Entertainment and an executive producer on the film, was a former marketing director for Island Records, the record label that publishes U2's songs.^[3]

Releases

The film had its world premiere at the Tokyo International Film Festival in October 1995, before its general release in November.^[6] In Japan, the film was released on VHS on April 26, 1996.^[15] The DVD version was released on February 25, 2004, and the Blu-ray on August 24, 2007.^[16]^[17] A special edition was released in December 2004.^[18] The special edition contains an additional disc containing character dossiers, a creator biography, the director's biography, *Ghost in the Shell* trailers and previews.^[19]

The "2.0" version was released in theatres in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Fukuoka, and Sapporo on July 12, 2008.^[20] The film was released in DVD and Blu-ray on December 19, 2008, in Japan.^[21]^[22]

In the United States, the film was released on VHS on June 18, 1996, through Manga Entertainment, and on DVD on March 31, 1998, by Anchor Bay Entertainment.^[23]^[24] Manga Entertainment released the film on Blu-ray on November 24, 2009; this version contains the original film and the remastering, but omits the audio commentary and face-to-face interview with Oshii, which are listed on its box.^[25]^[26] Manga Entertainment and Anchor Bay Entertainment re-released the film on Blu-ray with a brand new HD film print on September 23, 2014.^[27] Its release was met with criticism for its poorly-translated English subtitles and lack of special features.^[28]

Kenji Kawai's original soundtrack for the film was released on November 22, 1995.^[12] The last track included Yoshimasa Mizuno's pop song "See You Everyday".^[29] After the release of *Ghost in the Shell 2.0*, an updated version of the soundtrack was released on December 17, 2008.^[30]

A Photo-CD of the film was released in Japan on November 20, 1995.^[31] A spin-off novel written by Endo Akira, titled *Ghost in the Shell: Burning City* (改裝機動隊灼熱の都 *Kōkaku kidōtai shakunetsu no toshi*), was published by Kodansha and released on November 1995.^[32] It was followed by a sequel, titled *Ghost in the Shell 2: Star Seed* (改裝機動隊 2: Star Seed), released on January 1998.^[33] A book titled *Analysis of Ghost in the Shell* was released on September 25, 1997, by Kodansha.^[34]

Ghost in the Shell 2.0 Re-release

An updated version of the original film, titled ***Ghost in the Shell 2.0*** (GHOST IN THE SHELL/改裝機動隊 2.0 *Gōsuto in za sheru / Kōkaku kidōtai 2.0*), was made in celebration for the release of *The Sky Crawlers* in 2008.^[35]^[36] *The Ghost in the Shell 2.0* release features replacements of the original animations with the latest digital film and animation technologies, such as 3D-CGI. It includes a new opening, digital screens and soundtrack displays, and omits several brief scenes.^[37]

The original soundtrack was also re-arranged and re-recorded. Kenji Kawai renamed the *Version 2.0* soundtrack in 6.1 Channel Surround. Randy Thom of Skywalker Sound reprised his role as sound designer, having worked previously on *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*.^[35] In the new soundtrack, the Japanese voice dialogue was also re-recorded, with some variation from the original script to modernize the speech. Yoshiko Sakakibara replaced Iemasa Kayumi as the voice of the Puppet Master.^[35]

Reception

The film was a box office hit when released in Japan and received widespread critical acclaim from film critics. It holds a 95% approval rating on the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, based on 43 reviews. The website's critical consensus reads, "A stunning feat of modern animation, *Ghost in the Shell* offers a thoughtful, complex treat for anime fans, as well as a perfect introduction for viewers new to the genre."^[38]

Niels Matthijs of Twitch Film praised the film, stating, "Not only is *Kokaku Kidōtai* an essential film in the canon of Japanese animation, together with Kubrick's 2001 and Tarkovsky's *Solyaris* it completes a trio of book adaptations that transcend the popularity of their originals and [give] a new meaning to an already popular brand." He ranked it #48 of his personal favorites.^[39] Clark Collis of *Empire* opined that the film was predictable, but praised its production values.^[40] Johnathan Mays of Anime News Network praised the animation combined with the computer effects, calling it "perhaps the best synthesis ever witnessed in anime."^[41] Helen McCarthy in *500 Essential Anime Movies* describes the film as "one of the best anime ever made", praising screenplay, an "atmospheric score", and adding that "action scenes as good as anything in the current Hollywood blockbuster are supported by CGI effects that can still astonish".^[42] Roger Ebert rated the film three out of four stars, praising the visuals, soundtrack and themes, but felt that the film was "too complex and murky to reach a large audience [...] it's not until the second hour that the story begins to reveal its meaning".^[13]

Ghost in the Shell was the first anime video to reach *Billboard's* #1 video slot at the time of its release.^[118] The film ranked as the ninth top selling anime DVD movie in 2006.^[43] It ranked 35 on Total Film's 2010 top list of 50 Animated Films.^[44] The film ranked #4 on *Wizards Anime Magazine* on their "Top 50 Anime released in North America".^[45]

Ghost in the Shell influenced a number of prominent filmmakers. The Wachowskis, creators of *The Matrix* and its sequels, showed it to producer Joel Silver, saying, "We wanna do that for real."^[46] *The Matrix* series took several concepts from the film, including the Matrix digital rain, which was inspired by the opening credits of *Ghost in the Shell*, and the way people accessed the Matrix through holes in the back of their necks.^[47] Other parallels have been drawn to James Cameron's *Avatar*, Steven Spielberg's *AI: Artificial Intelligence*, and Jonathan Mostow's *Surrogates*.^[47]

Themes

Much critical attention has been paid to the film's focus on sexuality and gender identity.^[48] Sharalyn Orbaugh has noted that the opening scene of *Ghost in the Shell* begins with the "perfect paradoxical introduction to a narrative that is all about the nature of sex/gender identity and self-identity in general in a future world where sexual reproduction has given way to mechanical replication."^[49] Motoko's female identity and appearance are countered by an autonomous subjectivity, resulting in a "male" cyborg body which cannot menstruate.^[50]^[note 1] Orbaugh describes the juxtaposition of the opening scene depicting the creation of Motoko's body and to her lack of menstruation as setting the theme of "reproductive sexuality in a posthuman subject."^[50]^[note 2]

The film depicts Motoko's identity and ontological concerns, ending with the evolution of a being with full subjectivity, through a new form of reproduction with the Puppet Master.^[50] Austin Corbett commented on the lack of sexualization from her team as freedom from femininity, noting that Motoko is "overtly feminine, and clearly non-female."^[52] In describing Motoko as a "shapely" and "strong [female protagonist] at the center of the story" who is "nevertheless almost continuously nude", Roger Ebert noted that "an article about anime in a recent issue of *Film Quarterly* suggests that to be a "salary man" in modern Japan is so exhausting and dehumanizing that many men (who form the largest part of the animation audience) project both freedom and power onto women, and identify with them as fictional characters".^[13] Carl Silvio has called *Ghost in the Shell* a "resistant film", due to its inversion of traditional gender roles, its "valorization of the post-gendered subject", and its de-emphasis of the sexual specificity of the material body.^[53]

Notes

- ↑ In the Japanese-language version, Kusanagi responds to a complaint, "there's static in your brain", with the remark that "it's that time of the month".^[51] The English dubbed version from Manga Video changes the line to "Must be a loose wire". Orbaugh described this change as "sanitized".^[50]
- ↑ Orbaugh: "The juxtaposition, in the first five minutes of the film, of her reference to menstruation with the scenes of her cyborgian replication, immediately underscores the fact that this film's theme is the problematic of reproductive sexuality in a posthuman subject."^[50]^[note 2]

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External links

- Official website (http://ghostintheshell.manga.com/) (Requires Adobe Flash Player) at Manga.com
- Official page (http://www.production-ig.com/contents/works_spf16_index.html) at Production I.G English website
- Ghost in the Shell* (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0113568/) at the Internet Movie Database
- Ghost in the Shell 2.0* (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1260502/) at the Internet Movie Database
- Ghost in the Shell* (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/ghost/) in the Shell! at Rotten Tomatoes
- Ghost in the Shell* (https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/anime.php?id=465) at Anime News Network's encyclopedia
- Ghost in the Shell* (http://www.jmdb.ne.jp/1995/ds002870.htm) at the Japanese Movie Database (Japanese)

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