

# 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*** (攻殻機動隊 GHOSH IN THE SHELL *Kōkaku Kidōtai Gōsuto In Za Sheru*)) is a 1995 Japanese animated science fiction film based on the manga of the same name by Masamune Shirow. The film was written by Kazunori Itō and directed by Mamoru Oshii and stars the voices of Atsuko Tanaka, Akio Ōtsuka, and Iemasa Kayumi. *Ghost in the Shell* was a Japanese and 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 CGI animation. The film has served as inspiration for filmmakers such as the Wachowskis. In 2004, Oshii directed *Ghost In the Shell 2: Innocence* which was billed as a separate work and not a true sequel. In 2008, Oshii released an updated version of the original film titled *Ghost in the Shell 2.0*, featuring new audio and updated 3D animation. A live-action adaptation starring Scarlett Johansson was released in the United States on 31 March 2017.

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## Plot

In 2029, with the advance of cybernetic technology, the human body can be "augmented" or even completely replaced with cybernetic parts. Another significant achievement is the cyberbrain, a mechanical casing for the human brain that allows access to the Internet and other networks. An often-mentioned term is "ghost", referring to the consciousness inhabiting the body (the "shell").

Major Motoko Kusanagi is an assault-team leader for the Public Security Section 9 of "New Port City" in Japan. Following a request from Nakamura, chief of Section 6, she successfully assassinates a diplomat of a foreign country to prevent a programmer named Daita from defecting.

The Foreign Minister's interpreter is ghost-hacked, presumably to assassinate VIPs in an upcoming meeting. Believing the perpetrator is the mysterious Puppet Master, Kusanagi's team follows the traced telephone calls that sent the virus. After a chase, they capture a garbage man and a thug. However, both are only ghost-hacked individuals with no clue about the Puppet Master. The investigation again comes to a dead end.

Megatech Body, a "shell" manufacturer with suspected close ties to the government, is hacked and assembles a cybernetic body. The body escapes but is hit by a truck. As Section 9 examines the body, they find a human "ghost" inside its computer brain. Unexpectedly, Nakamura arrives to reclaim the body. He claims that the "ghost" inside the brain is the Puppet Master himself, lured into the body by Section 6. The body reactivates itself, claims to be a sentient being and requests political asylum. After the Puppet Master initiates a brief argument about what constitutes a human, a camouflaged agent accompanying Nakamura starts a diversion and gets away with the body.

Having suspected foul play, Kusanagi's team is prepared and immediately pursues the agent. Meanwhile, Section 9 researches "Project 2501," mentioned earlier by the Puppet Master, and finds a connection with Daita, whp Section 6 tries to keep from defecting the country. Facing the discovered information, Daisuke Aramaki, chief of Section 9, concludes that Section 6 created the Puppet Master itself for various political purposes. This is why Section 6 is desperately trying to reclaim the body.

Kusanagi follows the car carrying the body to an abandoned building. It is protected by a large walking tank. Anxious to face the Puppet Master's ghost, Kusanagi engages the tank without backup and is nearly killed. Her partner Batou arrives in time to save her, and helps connect her brain to the Puppet Master's.

The Puppet Master explains to Kusanagi that he was created by Section 6. While wandering various networks, he became sentient and began to contemplate his existence. Deciding the essence of humanity is reproduction and mortality, he wants to exist within a physical brain that will eventually die. As he could not escape Section 6's network, he had to download himself into a cybernetic body. Having interacted with Kusanagi (without her knowledge), he believes she is also questioning her humanity, and they have a lot in common. He proposed merging their ghosts, in return, Kusanagi would gain all of his capabilities. Kusanagi agrees to the merge.

Snipers from Section 6 approach the building, intending to destroy the Puppet Master's and Kusanagi's brains to cover up Project 2501. The Puppet Master's shell is destroyed, but Batou shields Kusanagi's head in time to save her brain. As Section 9 closes in on the site, the snipers retreat.

"Kusanagi" wakes up in a new cybern child body in Batou's safehouse. She tells Batou that the entity within her body is neither Kusanagi nor the Puppet Master, but a combination of both. She promises Batou they will meet again, leaves the house and wonders where to go next.

## Voice cast

Character	Japanese	English <p>(Pseudonyms in parenthesis)<sup>[5]</sup></p>
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."<sup>[6]</sup> 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.<sup>[7]</sup> 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.<sup>[8]</sup>

### 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.<sup>[6]</sup> 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 an Asian city, but finding a suitable cityscape of the future would be impossible. Oshii chose to use the real streets of Hong Kong as his model.<sup>[9]</sup> He also said that Hong Kong was the perfect subject and theme for the film with its countless signs and the cacophony of sounds.<sup>[6]</sup> 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.<sup>[9]</sup>

### 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 stored as digital data. In 1995, DGA was thought of as a new type 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.<sup>[6]</sup>

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."<sup>[6]</sup>

Some special effects, like Motoko's "thermo-optical camouflage", were rendered through the use of TIMA software. The process uses a single illustration and manipulates 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.<sup>[6]</sup>

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.<sup>[6]</sup>

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 created sparks when hitting metal, but do not spark when a bullet strikes stone.<sup>[6]</sup>

### 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.<sup>[6]</sup>

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 Classical Japanese in the opening theme "Making of a Cyborg."<sup>[6]</sup> The composition is a mix of Bulgarian harmony<sup>[10]</sup> and traditional Japanese notes; the haunting chorales 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.<sup>[11]</sup> Kawai originally wanted to use Bulgarian folk music singers, but used Japanese folk singers instead.<sup>[12]</sup> "See You Everyday" is different from the rest of the soundtrack, being a pop song sung in Cantonese by Fang Ka Wing.<sup>[13]</sup>

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.<sup>[14]</sup><sup>[15]</sup> 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.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Releases

The film had its world premiere at the Tokyo International Film Festival in October 1995, before its general release in November.<sup>[6]</sup> In Japan, the film was released on VHVS on April 26, 1996.<sup>[16]</sup> The DVD version was released on February 25, 2004, and the Blu-ray on August 24, 2007.<sup>[17]</sup><sup>[18]</sup> A special edition was released in December 2004.<sup>[19]</sup> The special edition contains an additional disc containing character dossiers, a creator biography, the director's biography, *Ghost in the Shell* trailers and previews.<sup>[20]</sup>

The "2.0" version was released in theatres in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Fukuoka, and Sapporo on July 12, 2008.<sup>[21]</sup> The film was released in DVD and Blu-ray on December 19, 2008, in Japan.<sup>[22]</sup><sup>[23]</sup>

In the United States, the film was released on VHVS on June 18, 1996, through Manga Entertainment, and on DVD on March 31, 1998, by Anchor Bay Entertainment.<sup>[24]</sup><sup>[25]</sup> 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.<sup>[26]</sup><sup>[27]</sup> Manga Entertainment and Anchor Bay Entertainment re-released the film on Blu-ray with a brand new HD film print on September 23, 2014.<sup>[28]</sup> The release was met with criticism for its poorly-translated English subtitles and lack of special features.<sup>[29]</sup>

Kenji Kawai's original soundtrack for the film was released on November 22, 1995.<sup>[13]</sup> The last track included Yoshimasa Mizuno's pop song "See You Everyday"<sup>[30]</sup> After the release of *Ghost in the Shell 2.0*, an updated version of the soundtrack was released on December 17, 2008.<sup>[31]</sup>

A photo-CD of the film was released in Japan on November 20, 1995.<sup>[32]</sup> A spin-off novel written by Endo Akira, titled *Ghost in the Shell: Burning City* (攻殻機動隊灼熱の都市 *Kōkaku kidōtai shakunetsu no toshi*), was published by Kodansha and released on November 1995.<sup>[33]</sup> It was followed by a sequel, titled *Ghost in the Shell 2: Star Seed* (攻殻機動隊2: Star Seed), released on January 1998.<sup>[34]</sup> A book titled *Analysis of Ghost in the Shell* was released on September 25, 1997, by Kodansha.<sup>[35]</sup>

### Ghost in the Shell 2.0 re-release

An updated version of the original film, titled *Ghost in the Shell 2.0* (GHOSH IN THE SHELL / 攻殻機動隊 2.0 *Gōsuto in za sheru / Kōkaku kidōtai 2.0*), was made in celebration for the release of *The Sky Crawlers* in 2008.<sup>[36]</sup><sup>[37]</sup> *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 2.0 screens and holographic displays, and omits several brief scenes.<sup>[38]</sup>

The original soundtrack was also re-arranged and re-recorded. Kenji Kawai remixed 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*.<sup>[36]</sup> In the new sound track, 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.<sup>[36]</sup>

## Reception

The film was a box office hit when released in Japan and received widespread critical acclaim from film critics. It holds a 96% "Certified Fresh" approval rating on the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, based on 45 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."<sup>[39]</sup>

Niels Matthijs of *Twitich Film* praised the film, stating, "Not only is *Kokaku Kidotai* 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." (note that 2001: A Space Odyssey is not actually an adaptation). He ranked it #48 of his personal favorites.<sup>[40]</sup> Clark Collis of *Empire* opined that the film was predictable, but praised its production values.<sup>[41]</sup> Johnathan Mays of Anime News Network praised the animation combined with the computer effects, calling it "perhaps the best synthesis ever witnessed in anime."<sup>[42]</sup> 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".<sup>[43]</sup> 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".<sup>[19]</sup>

*Ghost in the Shell* was the first anime video to reach *Billboard's* *#1* video slot at the time of its release.<sup>[44]</sup> The film ranked as the ninth top selling anime DVD movie in 2006.<sup>[44]</sup> It ranked 35 on Total Film's 2010 top list of 50 anime films.<sup>[45]</sup> The film ranked #4 on *Wizards Anime Magazine* on their "Top 50 Anime Released in North America".<sup>[46]</sup>

*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."<sup>[47]</sup> *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.<sup>[48]</sup> Other parallels have been drawn to James Cameron's *Avatar*, Steven Spielberg's *AI: Artificial Intelligence*, and Jonathan Mowstow's *Surrogates*.<sup>[48]</sup>

## Themes

Much critical attention has been paid to the film's focus on sexuality and gender identity.<sup>[49]</sup> Sharalyn Orbaugh has noted that the opening scene of *Ghost in the Shell* begins with the character's reproductive 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.<sup>[50]</sup> Motoko's female identity and appearance are countered by the opening scene depicting, resulting in a cyborg body without reproductive organs which cannot menstruate.<sup>[51]</sup><sup>[note 1]</sup> 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."<sup>[51]</sup><sup>[note 2]</sup>

The film depicts Motoko's identity and ontological concerns, ending with the evolution of a being with full subjectivity, through a new form of procreation with the Puppet Master.<sup>[51]</sup> Austin Corbett commented on the lack of sexualization from the union of freedom from femininity, noting that Motoko is "overly feminine, and clearly non-female."<sup>[53]</sup> 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 an 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".<sup>[14]</sup> 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.<sup>[54]</sup>

## 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".<sup>[52]</sup> The English dubbed version from Manga Video changes the line to "Must be a loose wire". Orbaugh described this change as "sanitized".<sup>[55]</sup>
- 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."<sup>[51]</sup>

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