



Ghost in the shell movie... worth watching?

WARNING: Fanboy hat firmly on. We may disagree on specifics but this is my vision.

The characters

While this is an origin story for Motoko there is a lot of material to at least glance at the other characters and what their motivations are.

Batou is the most interesting character in the movie, which is totally different than the character looks, acts and behaves in the anime. He is not a fully cyberized ranger as he's in the anime... he has his own eyes for the first half or so in the movie but, at the same time, this is what makes the character more relatable as he struggles with his humanity more so than the major does... her memories were wiped out, his weren't. He remembers life before he lost his eyes, major doesn't remember life without a cyborg body.

Chief (Aramaki) serves as the shield of Section 9 but, at the same time, is the father figure for the major and the one who goes to bat for her when things go to shit.

Togusa (Han in the movie) is the most human member of section 9. The movie doesn't highlight it enough, since Major is the first one to get full body enhancement, but in the anime he is the foil to the major, Batou and other members of Section 9 as he is not cyberized at all... honestly, I was expecting more of that and it'll be interesting to see how much he changes in a future live action sequel.

Ishikawa is heavily underutilized, other than the joke of the cyber liver and the assault team, what does he really do?

Saito is almost the same... there is one scene where he uses his sniper enhancements in a counter sniper mission, other than that he's a regular Section 9 grunt.

The one character that is exclusive to this movie is Ladriya. I'm still trying to

figure out what her role is, other than making sure there is more than one token woman in the good guys' team

Kuze in the movie is a combination of Kuze from 2nd Gig (who he is and his prior story with the major) and the Puppet Master from the original movie (how he controls technology for his own ends).

In World General notes

In this video play special attention to the director's interview.

Anime Chronology (in order of release)

1. Ghost in The Shell
2. Ghost in The Shell 2: Innocence
3. Ghost in The Shell Stand Alone Complex (The laughing man)
4. Ghost in The Shell Stand Alone Complex: 2nd Gig (The Individual 11)
5. Ghost in The Shell Stand Alone Complex: Solid State Society
6. Ghost in The Shell: Arise
7. Ghost in The Shell: Arise - Alternative Architecture
8. Ghost in The Shell New Movie

All these entries are animated.

If you've seen entries 1 - 8 you'll find some homages to the different versions of Ghost In The Shell:

The cyborg creation scene is straight out from the first movie. I particularly love the fact that they used actual props for the skeleton and other physical props and physical action scenes. This could have been a CG only movie that would have been no different than the animated movies (particularly The New Movie). Compare the movie cyborg assembly with that of the 1995 movie:

Spider Robot fight straight out of first movie. Same thing, this is a straight homage to the original movie.

Kuze, his story and his relationship with the Major is modified from Stand Alone Complex 2nd Gig. I have to admit, I prefer the story as told in the TV show (2nd Gig, Episode 11: Affection, shown below) but it's not quite the same story and it blends itself well with the story and ideas as told in the film.

The story of why the Major become a cyborg is original to the movie, even though it has similarities with 2nd Gig and Arise even if the movie shows an entirely different story of her parents being killed by terrorists. 2nd Gig has the major and Kuze being severely injured in an accident as children and receiving some of the first fully prosthetic bodies, Arise has the major being fully cyberized at birth because of a chemical spill accident that killed her parents.

The Cyberization in the anime is much different than the cyber enhancement in the movie and, in a way, it's closer to Ghost in the Shell: Arise in terms of where the story is but not in how many people have been fully converted to prosthetic bodies (most of them are in the military and don't own their own cybernetic bodies, the government does; Only after the second episode of Arise that the major becomes the owner of her own body).

This maybe an attempt to address cultural difference between Japan and the rest of the world in terms of acceptance of technology and its impact on society. Western cultures are more reticent to technology than Japanese people and cultures and this has an impact on the way that people perceive and relate to technology (for different takes on human versus cyborg/robot see [Vexille](#) and [Appleseed](#))

Physical props

One of the things I was most pleased with was the choice of using physical props and not turning the movie in to a CG only monstrosity. no, I don't have anything against CG but there are instances where physical props just work better.

Themes

I also like the way they've addressed some themes of the franchise:

The soul and how technology affects it...

There's an early scene between president of African Federation and the guy from Hanka robotics that speaks to a central theme of the movie and the franchise as a whole. What's the impact of technology in the world? Different pieces of the franchise answer it differently... from the ambivalence of the original movies to the more political and philosophical take of the second gig series and movie to the "in progress" feel.

The movie takes a different approach. The technology used in the major and Batou's bodies is neither good nor bad but it's dependent on how it's used. Hanka Robotics wants to use it for war and considers it a tool to be discarded at all cost when it stops being useful.

Is there a ghost in the shell?

In the movie the major suffers memory glitches where her old memories refuse to go away as if her ghost is pulling her to the truth and despite the technological efforts Hanka Robotics makes to keep her memories suppressed (see what happens when she stops taking her medicines). The concept of soul is also addressed multiple times and from different angles... in the beginning the president of the African Union explicitly speaks about the effects of technology on the soul... it's way more "in your face" than the anime where the subject is the underlying sub-text of the entire franchise

What does it mean to be human when surrounded with technology?

The effects of technology in the human... and how we react. I think the closest visual for New City is Los Angeles from Blade Runner, a cleaner version but still filled with in your face advertisements everywhere that points you to the technologies they want you to consume.

Corporate ownership of the world?

As in most cyberpunk futures companies control most, if not all, the world, develops the technology/technologies that the characters in the show uses (and something that became a plot point for at least a season of Stand Alone Complex). But I believe the take of the movie has to do with western companies and how they try to control things instead of the huge Japanese conglomerates that control multiple aspects of life in Japan.

Memories as a malleable and controllable thing.

In different ways than the original movies and the series, the Live Action movie takes a more western approach where the company uses drugs to block the major memories instead of programming the memories of the cyberbrain... whether the ghost approves of the change or not.

Biggest beef

My biggest beef with the movie doesn't come until near the end when the Major is given information about her former life she makes it to her former home and meets her mother... at the end of the movie she visits her own grave and leaves with her mother... right before the ending of the movie that goes back to a movie/series like conclusion.

That doesn't jive with the rest of Ghost in The Shell. In the 1995 movie it was never an issue and in the anime it was treated differently and it was never considered directly. Yes the major is a fully cyborg, yes there are stories of how she became a cyborg and why but they are not a central point of the story and they are never fully resolved... even in 2nd gig where the story is told completely we never know if the major is the girl of the story.

Too neatly packed when it didn't need to be... again, a westernization of something that may or may not be a real issue.

Overall

I think it's a good attempt and I'm sad that there will be no further movies in the franchise. Whitewashing was a non-issue to me and it did not detract from the movie experience. I've looked again at some of the areas where I had issues, particularly with under utilizing some of the characters but in an origin story it's always hard to give everyone equal time.

8.5 out of 10

If we change the ending it would be a 10