



ANIME

Cowboy Bebop: The Movie

It's 2071 and Earth has been abandoned for settlements on different moons and planets in the solar system. The spaceship Bepop is home to a group of bounty hunters who are seeking a terrorist threatening to wipe out the population on Mars using a deadly pathogen. This feature version of the successful anime TV series uses live-action camera angles to elevate the animation, and features a cracking score by Yoko Kanno (performed by her band Seatbelts).

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Created as a side-story from a Japanese television cartoon of the same name (screened in the UK on the digital channel CNX), *Cowboy Bebop* remains accessible to newcomers: though set in a future replete with sci-fi hardware, it's essentially a hard-boiled detective thriller in animated form. The rather meandering mystery is punctuated with satisfyingly meaty fights and a sprinkling of existential angst, the whole held together by the lanky central figure of Spike, a 'cowboy' bounty hunter whose narcoleptic languor and stork-like gait give way to lightning speed and savagery in the main set pieces. Spike brings to mind any number of American gumshoes, but the character also recalls the adventurer-cum-thief Lupin III, a hero of Japanese comics and cartoons, himself partly based on James Bond.

The film's city, Alva (ostensibly on Mars though much of the movie could be set on present-day Earth), is similarly transnational with a Manhattan-style skyline sporting prominent Twin Towers, a fight on a Tokyo Tower clone and a thriving Moroccan district brimming with African exoticism, all slatted shadows and yellow light. The setting is rendered with a polished hyperrealism which, combined with the non-cartoony animation (only the loose-limbed girl Edward approaches caricature), prompts the question why the film wasn't produced in live action; the answer seems to be to heighten the larger-than-life melodrama of the story. While there's awkward movement in many scenes, the main fights are well composed, conveying a keen sense of dramatic confrontation. The tower battle is lit by fireworks and floating lanterns, while an earlier fight takes place on an elevated train racing high over the city bay.

There's also the suggestion of a link between the film's cartoon form and its thematic content. A minor baddie, introduced playing a videogame from the 1980s, is a techno-nerd who can't tell life from virtuality. Later we discover that the main adversary, the solipsistic, solitaire-playing Vincent, thinks existence is a dream after his mind has been scrambled. The victims of a mysterious virus see glowing butterflies that swarm over the final fight – both an analogue to the doves that counterpoint live-action violence in John Woo's films and a nod to Chuang Tzu's aphorism about a man and a butterfly uncertain which one is dreaming the existence of the other.

Vincent is redeemed by recognising the girl he once loved and it's suggested the same might be true of Spike, who insists he's 'just a bounty hunter' exempt from responsibility, but is still prompted to reminisce about the girl

who gave him life and the fear of death. If this sounds corny on page, it feels less so in the mouth of an iconic *anime* character.

The pace is diluted by extraneous scenes featuring the supporting cast, presumably to satisfy fans of the original series. The film also follows the tendency of other Japanese cartoons by creating redundant action scenes with impersonal sci-fi vehicles, often as tedious as the CG monsters in live-action pictures. Despite this, *Cowboy Bebop* succeeds as a stylish, enjoyable blend of genres and formats. (The director Shinichiro Watanabe also worked on the high-quality Japanese animations *Escaflowne* and *Macross Plus*, both available in the UK on DVD.) It also offers the opportunity to hear music by Yoko Kanno, the most celebrated composer in Japanese animation, though her work here lacks the polymath eclecticism of her best scores. Like the film itself, it's polished rather than ground breaking, and there's none of the jazz bebop of the title.

Andrew Osmond, *Sight & Sound*, September 2003

COWBOY BEBOP: THE MOVIE

(COWBOY BEBOP: TENGOKU NO TOBIRA)

Director: Shinichiro Watanabe

Co-director: Yoshiyuki Takei

Unit Director: Yoshiyuki Takei

3D CG Director: Tsuyoshi Hanzawa

©/Production Companies: Sunrise, Bones, Bandai Visual

Executive Producer (Sunrise): Takayuki Yoshii

Executive Producer (Bandai Visual): Ryohei Tsunoda

Producers: Masuo Ueda, Masahiko Minami, Minoru Takanashi

Assistant Unit Directors: Satoshi Toba, Ikuro Sato,

Kiyoshi Fukumoto, Kunihiro Mori

Screenplay: Keiko Nobumoto

Based on the story by: Hajime Yatate

Storyboard: Shinichiro Watanabe

Director of Photography: Yoichi Ogami

Director of CG Photography: Katsutoshi Sugai

Colour Design: Shihoko Nakayama

Camera Operation: Anime Film, Yoshio Sugisawa, Asami Ogami,

Satoru Ichikawa, Setsuko Maruhashi, Masahiro Kumagai,

Hiroaki Yamada, Koji Suzuki, Yoshimi Kurata, Yoshinori Kitsugi,

Hiroshi Fukuda, Chizuko Tezuka, Shigemi Ogawa, Kumiko Ito, Shuichi Ito

CG Production: Studio Ipse, Tsutomu Nomoto, Hirohumi Araki,

Kouya Imamura, Youhei Miyahara, Norio Matsuda, Takahiro Shiotani,

Ryoma Matsuya, Hajime Suzuki, Junko Anzai, Makoto Shiima,

Yuji Sasada, Natsu Senno, Mitsuhiro Wada, Seishi Otani,

Toshiyuki Nanto, Yumi Honyanagi

Digital Works: Mikio Odagawa, Chappy

Special Effects: Marix, Yutaka Hoshiba, Toshio Hasegawa,

Kumiko Taniguchi, Sachi Suzuki, Toyohiko Sakakibara

Character Design/Animation Director: Toshihiro Kawamoto

Mechanical Animation Director: Masami Goto

Action Animation Director: Yutaka Nakamura

Animation Production: Bones

Key Animation: Takeshi Ito, Yasushi Muraki, Kenichi Yoshida,

Tsunenori Saito, Takashi Tomioka, Yoshiyuki Ito, Tadaaki Miyata,

Akitoshi Yokoyama, Norimitsu Suzuki, Tensai Okamura, Takeaki Bunno,

Masahiro Ando, Atsushi Hasebe, Masami Goto, Isamu Imakake,

Yoshihiko Umakoshi, Hideki Takahashi, Koichi Arai, Keisuke Masunaga,

Masayoshi Sato, Takao Abo, Masahiro Emoto, Ken Otsuka,

Hisashi Saito, Takaaki Fukuyo, Tetsuichi Yamagishi, Hiroshi Takeuchi,

Yosiharu Kudo, Hiroyuki Kobe, Tatsufumi Tamagawa, Toshiyuki Tsuru,

Hisashi Eguchi, Ichiro Itano, Shuko Murase, Hirotoshi Sano,

Shiho Takeuchi, Takashi Kawaguchi, Tomoki Mizuno,

Hiromitsu Morishita, Toshiyuki Kawano, Eiji Komatsu,

Haruo Sotozaki, Ryota Ito

Layout: Shiho Takeuchi, Shingo Takeba

Editor: Shuichi Kakesu

Mechanical Design: Kimitoshi Yamane

Art Director: Atsushi Morikawa

Set Design: Shiho Takeuchi

Display Design: Yoshinori Sayama

Title Sequence (Storyboard/Unit Director): Hiroyuki Okiura

Title Sequence (Key Animation): Hiroyuki Okiura, Tetsuya Nishio

Title Sequence (Background): Shuichi Hirata, Rei Kawano

Title Sequence (Colour Design): Yumiko Katayama

Title Sequence (Composite): Naoko Usumi

Title Sequence (Typography): Daisuke Yamada

Main Title: Toshiaki Uesugi

Music: Yoko Kanno

Music Performed by: Seatbelts

Sound Director: Katsuyoshi Kobayashi

Sound Mixer: Hiroaki Uchiyama

Optical Sound Recording: Futoshi Ueda

Digital Optical Recording: Noboru Nishio

Chief Sound Mixer: Masashi Yabuhara

Sound Effects: Shizuo Kurahashi

Voice Cast

Koichi Yamadera (*Spike Spiegel*)

Unsho Ishizuka (*Jet Black*)

Megumi Hayashibara (*Faye Valentine*)

Aoi Tada (*Ed*)

Yasuku Yara (*Hoffman*)

Kazuhiko Inoue (*Shadkins*)

Jyurouta Kosugi (*Harris*)

Kinryu Arimoto (*captain*)

Hidekatsu Shibata (*colonel*)

Yuji Ueda (*Lee*)

Nobuo Tobita (*Murata*)

Rikiya Koyama (*Steve*)

Ai Kobayashi (*Electra*)

Jin Hirao (*Antonio*)

Akihiko Nakajima (*Carlos*)

Hiroshi Naka (*Jovin*)

Tsutomu Naruki (*Punch*)

Miki Nagasawa (*Judy*)

Renji Ishibashi (*Rengie*)

Yosuke Akimoto (*crime lab group A*)

Kazuya Ichijo (*crime lab group B*)

Eisuke Yoda (*antique store owner*)

Takashi Nagasako (*Caster*)

Mickey Curtis (*Rashid*)

Takehiro Koyama (*Laughing Bull*)

Yutaka Nakano (*Pop*)

Houko Kuswashima (*female cashier*)

Masuo Amada (*robber A*)

Junichi Sugawara (*robber B*)

Ishin Chiba (*robber C*)

Katsuyuki Konishi (*robber D*)

Kujira (*lady*)

Kazusa Mural (*Riley, the journalist*)

Tsutomu Isobe (*Vincent*)

Japan 2001

115 mins

THE HISTORY OF ANIME

Momotaro's Divine Sea Warriors (Momotarō: Umi no Shinpei) Wed 13 Apr 18:30

Astroboy Sun 17 Apr 12:10

Belladonna of Sadness (Kanashimi no Belladonna) Mon 18 Apr 15:30

EMERGING FEMALE VOICES

A Silent Voice (Koe no Katachi) Mon 18 Apr 18:10 (+ intro by Dr Rayna Denison, Professor in Film and Digital Arts, University of Bristol)

Liz and the Blue Bird (Rizu to aoi tori)

Thu 21 Apr 18:15; Sat 30 Apr 17:45

The Anthem of the Heart (Kokoro ga Sakebitagatterunda) Fri 22 Apr 18:10

Maquia: When the Promised Flower Blooms (Sayonara no Asa ni

Yakusoku no Hana o Kazarō) Sat 23 Apr 17:45

ANIME AT THE IMAX

Ghost in the Shell (Kōkaku Kidōtai)

Mon 25 Apr 15:00, 21:00

Belle (Ryū to sobakasu no hime)

Mon 25 Apr 18:15

ANIME CLASSICS PART 1

Patlabor: The Movie (Kidō keisatsu patorebâ: Gekijō-ban) Wed 13 Apr 20:40; Sun 17 Apr 18:20; Thu 28 Apr 18:15

Cowboy Bebop: The Movie (Cowboy Bebop: Tengoku no tobira) Thu 14 Apr 20:45; Sat 16 Apr 20:30; Fri 22 Apr 20:40

Patlabor 2: The Movie (Kidō keisatsu patorebâ: The Movie 2) Fri 15 Apr 18:15; Thu 21 Apr 20:30; Thu 28 Apr 20:45

Steamboy (Suchimubōi)

Fri 15 Apr 20:30; Wed 20 Apr 18:10

The Case of Hana & Alice (Hana to Arisu Satsujin Jiken) Sat 16 Apr 18:35; Tue 26 Apr 20:55

Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honneamise (Ōritsu Uchūgun: Oneamisu no Tsubasa)

Sat 23 Apr 20:40

STUDIO GHIBLI

Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi)

Fri 29 Apr 18:00

This season was co-programmed by writer and academic Hanako Miyata



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Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk

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