

# The phenomenal effect on science fiction movies

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Through spectacular style and ground breaking special effects, techno soundtrack, costumes and mind bending philosophy has broken out of the "hardcore niche Science Fiction" mould into a mainstream accessible box office hit claiming a gross of 456. 4 million dollars... and that's just for film one. On its opening debut the film was released in 2849 cinema's across the states "a saturation release" it achieved the biggest ever opening gross over an Easter weekend.

It was number one at the box office for a further two weeks and stayed in the top ten for a further three months. The film was an enormous hit in Britain also. With such a "good" looking film it was no surprise it was a hit, but it was such a big hit outperforming films with twice its budget. Anime or "janimation" in its most basic form is simply an animated feature or short produced in Japan<sup>1</sup>. The word "anime" itself is in popular theory derived or 'loaned' from the English word animation.

It should be noted that anime is not a genre but more of a communications media, much like when people use the word "Hollywood". Anime, unlike conventional western animation is not solely for children. This does not mean there isn't anime for children, but more a larger percentage produced for young adults to adulthood. <sup>2</sup>It is in popular belief that anime's entrance into the American mainstream was in 1988 with the release of "Akira" and later with the popular release of "Ghost in a Shell". At this point anime had in the western world a very "niche" market.

However, anime thanks in part to American globalisation has now far less of a "niche" market. Originally in a western sense, anime appealed to a young

male sub-culture. Usually seen as " non-mainstream" or Arty (watched and read by art students). But now, due to popular youth cartoons such as " Pokemon", " Digimon" and " Yu-Gi-Oh! " anime has been brought to a wider audience. Hollywood, seeing Anime's new found popularity have " cashed in" and have incorporated its style into American cartoons (such as " Jackie-Chan adventures" and " Power Puff Girls") but also into Movies.

Warners Matrix Franchise has an excellent example of this through the release of the " Animatrix". The " Animatrix" started as a TV program idea but because of practicality was changed into nine short films. Warner drip fed it to the " audience" through the official Matrix website. Eventually it was released on Warner Home Studios DVD packed with extras. Unlike most high budget short films they were not shown at any high brow film festivals but rather on the net to " plugged-in" fans. The website could be seen possibly as an internet art house cinema.

Using many different styles of Japanese animation, the Wachowski's have opened up anime to a much broader audience who may (or may not) have had any ideas about anime. The other most recent movie that Hollywood has " piggy-backed" the anime culture is Quentin Tarantino's fourth film " Kill Bill: Volume One" in which a chunk of the movie has been done in " rough Anime" the rest of the movie was in motion. Anime's most recent attempt to hit the movies in Big Budget was " Final Fantasy: the spirits within". Sadly although beautifully animated was not a big box office success mainly due to its storyline.

American Globalisation vs. Japanese Anime and cultural identity could easily be elaborated through Warners Matrix franchise. American Big business will try and cash in on anything that will make a profit and it seems anime is the flavour of the month. Japanese anime is part of Japan's cultural identity but has now been integrated into American omni-culture and maybe has lost its "niche" heritage. Ironically as it may seem anime originated from American cartoons such as early Disney and Warner characters, for example " Betty Boop".

But have since then changed into a different style. One could argue that American Artistry is simply regurgitating itself although anime has gone a long way since its roots. The original audience for the Matrix franchise was for a more "niche" audience of science-fiction fans. It has now evolved to a far greater audience of all ages and sexes (from its original male audience of "geeks"). Warner has targeted their audience through distribution and a epic marketing campaign.

Using the internet Warner has got to "plugged-in" fans though the use of an expansive website for the franchise. Many "fan sites" have appeared since the Matrix's release generating lots of below-the-line free marketing. Larry and Andy Wachowski, directors of the Matrix franchise worked semi-independently although they are reliant on Warner Brother's money for international distribution and marketing. The extensive merchandising for the Matrix franchise; which entails DVD's, posters, figurines, comics, mobile phones, sunglasses and a soundtrack for each movie in the trilogy.

Warner realised the audience of "plugged-in" fans and so creating a good "word of mouth" campaign on the internet with clues and trailers. The internet now being the most powerful word of mouth haven has created huge fandom for the Matrix and Anime as a whole and a franchise. The whole notion of the Matrix is a geek's "wet dream", slick cyberpunk characters with twists of net couture's finest action, martial arts and philosophy. Allowing both intelligent audiences and "immature gun-ho" audiences to have an amazing cinematic experience.

Through the use of a soundtrack for each of the movies (except the Animatrix) Warner have acquired a new audience for the Matrix Franchise. Using popular youth bands and composers (such as "Rage against the Machine" and Jonathan Davies) Warner can almost advertise their film in music magazines where the soundtracks will be reviewed. The soundtracks of the movies are slightly different to the average soundtrack due to the music not only being from (or in) the movie but also groups who have been influenced by the "Matrix phenomenon".

Warner has really pulled out the stops on how the "Matrix franchise" has not only influenced how action movies are made but also how music soundtracks are an important part of the marketing influence. The opening track, Marilyn Manson's is an anti consumerism rant "Rock is dead" and paints an aural portrait of dystopic society. Ominous sirens permeate the Propellerhead's drum 'n' bass track "Spybreak"; mournful piano alternates with hard shiny beats on Rob D's "Clubbed to Death"; and Meat Beat Manifesto fills "Prime

Audio Soup" with enough bleeps to make one imagine being trapped inside a motherboard from hell.

It may sound dismal, but the friction permeating this compilation of techno, grindcore and heavy metal is energizing enough to make fans of these genres feel the same unity as a clandestine community of hackers. The Matrix's sit most comfortably in the Science Fiction genre in that its major theme deals with the dystopic future, artificial reality and Technology. All the concerns of today's present society.