

Batou and Motoko Kusanagi are reunited once again on the hunt for a mysterious hacker.



## Ghost in the Shell: Solid State Society

**PULLING STRINGS** The long-awaited follow-up to 2nd GIG finally hits DVD

**Studio** Manga Entertainment **Certificate** 15 **Price** £20 **Release** Out now

**T**wo years have passed since cyborg Major Motoko Kusanagi resigned from Section Nine, a mysterious organisation that battles cyber-crime and terrorism in futuristic Japan.

Batou and Togusa are investigating a series of mysterious suicides when Batou crosses paths with the Major, who has also been following the odd deaths. The deaths are being attributed to a wizard-class hacker known only as the Puppeteer, who can hack into the cyberbrain of anyone he chooses. No one knows who he is, but the Major is Batou's prime suspect.

Featuring the same slick animation and stunning soundtrack as the Stand Alone Complex and 2nd GIG TV series, Solid State Society is a sci-fi treat for all



anime fans. There are plenty of references to the original films and even the inclusion of the Major's most famous line: 'The net is vast and infinite.'

The story is complex and multi-layered, providing a meditation on the perils of a futuristic society where the aged are kept alive by machines and children can be cybernised with just their parent's permission. There's plenty of action and this is definitely a series to ruminate over as the identity of the Puppeteer is never really revealed.

The double-disc DVD set features plenty of extras, including a stunning English dub, one of the best produced in recent years.

**RATING**

## Also look at...

Wacky comedy adventures and spooky goings on in a haunted castle



### Excel Saga: The Complete Collection

**Studio** JC Staff

**Certificate** 15

**Price** £20

**Release date** Out now

**RATING**

Filled to the brim with weird and wacky parodies, this 26-episode series will have anyone in stitches. The story follows the attempts of the ideological organisation ACROSS to take over F City.

ACROSS only has three members: the titular Excel, who's a hyperactive woman; Hyatt, a Martian princess who dies at least ten times each episode; and the megalomaniac Lord Illpalazzo, for whom Excel would do anything. Added to that is Excel's dog and emergency food supply, Menchi, who sings the ending credits.

Yes it sounds insane and for the most part, it is. Excel is very rarely successful in her missions. This boxset sees the return of US distributor ADV Studios' wacky Vid-Notes and an English dub, which actually manages to be better than the stellar Japanese original. If you only buy one comedy series this year, it really should be this one.



### Moon Phase: Phase One

**Studio** JVC/Shaft

**Certificate** PG

**Price** £20

**Release date** Out now

**RATING**

Hapless photographer Kouhei Morioka is travelling in Germany taking pictures for an occult magazine - unfortunately his psychic abilities mean all his photos contain ghostly apparitions. While taking pictures of a castle, he sees a girl who instantly captures his imagination, a young vampire named Hazuki.

Trapped in the castle, Hazuki begs Kouhei to break the barrier and then attempts to bite him and make him her slave. Unfortunately, things don't quite work out that way and she ends up following him to Japan.

It's a silly series with supernatural overtones, which breathes new life into the classic anime love story. The art is nicely done and when it comes to the opening theme, Neko Mimi Mode, you will either love it hate it. Moon Phase is a good enough watch, worthy of attention with plenty of action and comedy. ●