

Vexille



CGI
Vexille is just the latest in a long line of films which push the boundaries of computer generated imagery (CGI). You'd think given the Japanese love of technology that they were responsible for the first full-length CGI film - actually that honour lies with Pixar's *Toy Story* back in 1995.



AVAILABLE: 9 May
LABEL: Momentum Pictures (theatrical)
CERTIFICATE: E
RUNNING TIME: 109 mins

V*exille* is a movie that is up-front in many ways. You know from the off it's going to be pretty (it is CGI after all), and the plot and back story are neatly précised by a lengthy monologue which does set the scene but also seems to spoon-feed the plot. Set in the year 2077, *Vexille* introduces us to a world where robotic research has convinced almost every country that this science can only lead to destruction and war.

After Japan opposed a UN directive banning exploration into the creation of androids, the country goes into self-imposed isolation, just as it did in the 17th century. A decade passes and various western nations begin to worry about what the people of Japan might be developing with this illegal technology. Thanks to a physical barrier which prevents them spying on the Land of the Rising Sun, the US are totally in the dark about how far along their research has got and are, understandably, a little rattled.

To this end, the US special forces commander Vexille Serra and the rest of

the SWORD team are sent in under the radar to investigate the Daiwa Corporation. Daiwa is the company responsible for Japan's decision to walk away from the UN directive, and the largest threat when it comes to the production and research into beings which blur the boundary between man and machine.

Partly because of the mystery surrounding *Vexille*, the film has become keenly anticipated - and rightly so. It looks gorgeous, but then so does every CGI feature film. Part of the problem when this animation method becomes commonplace is that it becomes even harder to make a feature stand out from the crowd. In *Vexille*'s case, what sets it apart is the stunning soundtrack. Oddly, this is not dominated by Japanese bands that even the hardened otaku might have problems recognising, but well known artists such as Dead Can Dance, Paul Oakenfold, the Prodigy

and Basement Jaxx. Indeed, many of the tracks featured in *Vexille* wouldn't be out of place at a club on a Saturday night, and the choice of music really suits the technological feel of the film.

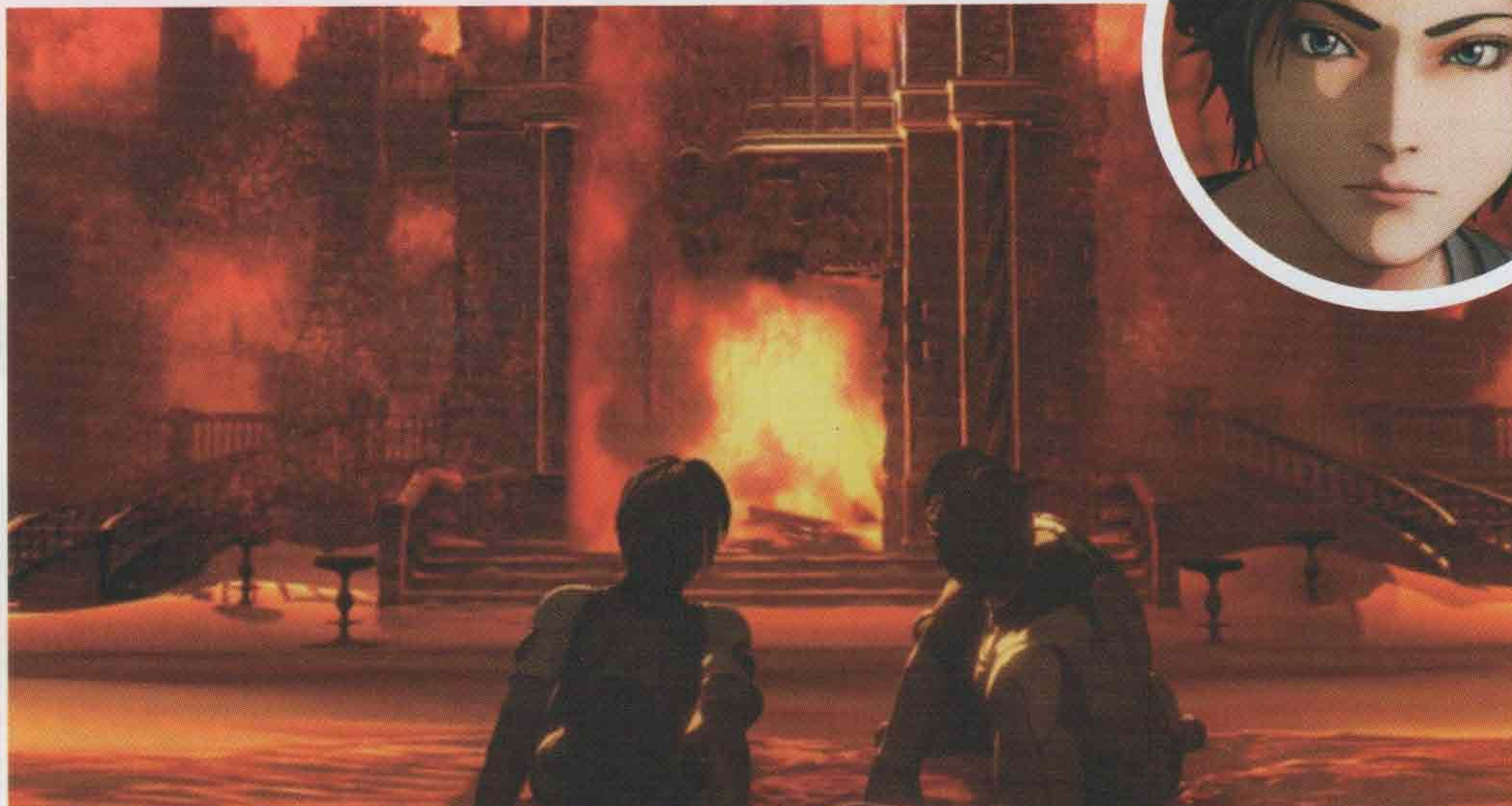
Like *Ghost in the Shell: Innocence*, *Vexille* drags up the usual questions of mortality, humanity and what defines a person. To strengthen these philosophical questions, the movie makes use of mythological motifs in the form of the odd butterfly (the ancient Greek and Japanese symbol for the transmigration of the soul). Trying to figure out who is human and who isn't is a predictable subplot, but does fit nicely with the storyline and themes.

Of course, as you'd expect of a film involving androids, there are going to be mecha. These are - sadly - a little bog-standard and, given the popularity of the genre, feels disappointing, but the machines of *Vexille* at least have the courtesy of coming in various different shapes and sizes, from the dinky to the dangerous.

Audiowise, for the theatrical release, *Vexille* features a fantastic Japanese dub, but there's also a pretty good English dub as well, which we hope to see if this feature is brought to DVD. However, both casts know their stuff, and this enhances the impact of the film.

In the dog-eat-dog world of CGI, it takes a lot to set a film apart, and while *Vexille* has its moments, it is not the new *Ghost in the Shell*, although it might be the new *Appleseed*. The film is worth watching if you're a fan of the genre (and it does indeed warrant at least one viewing if only for the curious) but whether it stands up to the test of time remains to be seen.

LESLEY SMITH



Despite the stand-out score, *Vexille* is just the latest in a long series of techno-centric CGI movies.
FILM ★★★★★