THE
BLADE RUNNER
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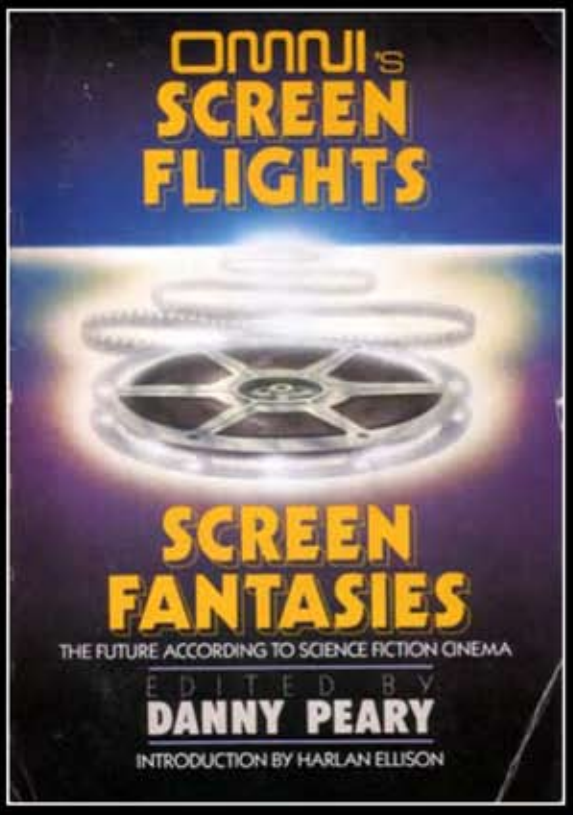


notes:

OMNI 1984

by Danny Peary

OMNI'S

SCREEN FLIGHTS

SCREEN FANTASIES

THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO SCIENCE FICTION CINEMA

EDITED BY

DANNY PEARY

INTRODUCTION BY HARLAN ELLISON

was marvelous and it became the film's title." Although the film didn't do well in America when first released, it has since emerged as a cult favorite, a midnight movie staple, and perhaps the first "thinking person's sf film" since 2001: A Space Odyssey *(1968). Left: The images on this poster are of blade runner Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) and his replicant lover Rachael (Sean Young). However, their story may not be as important as the backgrounds; specifically, the streets, buildings, and atmosphere that characterize the year 2019. Above: Deckard searches the hazy streets for a replicant he must kill.*

Top: A photo of the megastructure in which the Tyrell Corporation is situated. Buildings such as this dominate the film—in this case, the building is a model created by Doug Trumbull's Entertainment Effects Group. Above: The inhospitable, unhealthy streets of L.A. in thirty-five years. Filming was done on the main street of Warner's Burbank lot.

The Way the Future Looks: *THX 1138* and *Blade Runner*

Robert Silverberg

We are in Los Angeles, but it is not the familiar city of palm trees and perpetual bright sunshine. Above us loom colossal, sloping high-rise buildings of intricate and alien design, patterned, perhaps, after Aztec temples or Babylonian ziggurats, that turn the narrow, congested streets into claustrophobic canyons and hide the dark, pollution-fouled sky. A cold, bleak, maddening rainstorm goes on interminably. Great searchlights intended, possibly, to substitute for the absent sun, send intrusive beams slicing across vast distances from sources mounted somewhere far overhead.

Down here on surface level we move warily through a densely packed district, largely Oriental in population and in architecture, a crazy, hyped-up version of Hong Kong or Tokyo, where a dizzying multitude of flashing electronic signs seeks insistently to draw our attention to games parlors, massage houses, noodle counters, drug-vending shops, and a thousand thousand other commercial establishments. Dull-eyed coolies, bending under immense burdens, jostle us aside without apology. Myriads of spaced-out fanatics in fantastic costumes dance along beside us down the street, each lost in some private bubble of self-absorption. High above us, helicopters moving with reckless velocity buzz like crazed dragonflies between the skyscrapers: police, most likely, searching for the deadly fugitive androids that are said to be loose in the city. At any moment, we think, one of those helicopters may descend from the sky in lunatic spirals and land in the middle of the next block, disgorging policemen who set about making arrests with Kafkaesque implacability.

The mood is oppressive and scary. We are trapped in one of the ultimate urban nightmares: a city of a hundred million people, every one of them hostile to everyone else. The look of the place—dark, menacing, congested, dominated by those immense ponderous towers that crouch like monsters upon the land—is unique and uniquely horrifying. Everything manages to glisten with futuristic pizzazz and nevertheless reveals itself simultaneously to be tinged with rot and decay: new and old, light and dark, airy and ineluctably heavy, both at the same time. The year is 2019, and this is the world of Ridley Scott's 1982 motion picture, *Blade Runner.*

Try another world? Well—

We are indoors. Perhaps within some giant building, perhaps deep underground in a labyrinth of tunnels—it makes little difference. The essential point is that there are no windows and no doors to the outside, that the sun and the sky and the stars are no part of this place, and we inhabit a realm of sterile corridors, bright lights, white walls, a megalopolis with a hospital's grim aseptic dazzle. Here there is neither clutter nor squalor: The prevailing esthetic here is that of the surgical operating chamber, not of the crowded

Robert Silverberg is the award-winning author of *Nightwings, Tower of Glass, Dying Inside, Recalled to Life, A Time of Changes, The Book of Skulls, Born With the Dead, Lord Valentine's Castle, Majipur Chronicles, Master of Life and Death, The Seed of Earth, Up the Line, Son of Man, Sundance,* and *Downward to the Earth.* Probably the most prolific science fiction writer, he also has edited numerous anthologies.

Left: The antiseptically clean underground corridors in THX 1138. *Here is a test-tube world where signs of dehumanization are everywhere. Bald men in dull, white uniforms walk alone, their eyes straight ahead, their mouths shut. Robot police watch out for nonconformity.*

Right: In Blade Runner *(Harrison Ford) tracks down a replicant on the crowded streets of downtown Los Angeles in 2019. Passersby are so used to street violence that they don't even turn their heads; or perhaps they look straight ahead so their eyes won't be bombarded with the advertising that covers the walls.*

Oriental marketplace. Though the population density is high, perhaps as high as in the world of *Blade Runner,* there is no sense of overcrowding because there is no random motion. A bland, lobotomized-looking populace, clad in standardized costumes rather like prison garb, makes its journeys from place to place in obedient tidy files, while guards with impassive inhuman faces step in quickly to see to it that no one gets out of line or deviates in any other significant way from the flow of traffic. From gleaming grilles in the walls comes a constant low incomprehensible electronic static, an aural wallpaper of blurps and bleeps and soft crackles, interrupted at frequent intervals by cryptic instructions that are instantly accepted and followed by those to whom they apply. Flickering television screens provide two-way monitoring; computer eyes scan and count and record; Big Brother's minions, unseen but omnipresent, oversee the flow of data. The color scheme is a blinding white-on-white: There is no room for untidiness here, no space whatever for irregularity. The mood, once again, is oppressive and scary. We are trapped, once again, in an ultimate urban nightmare, though of a kind quite different from the last one. The year is something like 2200 A.D., and this is the world of George Lucas's first film, *THX 1138,* released in 1971.

These movies, *Blade Runner* and *THX 1138,* strike me as two of the most valuable science fiction movies ever made. To me they embody the highest virtue the science fiction film can offer: They show the way the future looks, and they show it with such conviction, such richness of detail, such density of texture that the visions of tomorrow they offer will remain embedded forever in my imagination. They have provided a kind of time-travel experience, in a sense, and they have done it so well that I am willing to ignore entirely the manifest failure of both these movies in most other aspects of the art of science fiction.

If *Blade Runner* and *THX 1138* were novels, they would be undistinguished ones. *Blade Runner* is indeed based on a science fiction novel, and an outstanding one: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by the late Philip K. Kick. But—although Dick reported himself pleased with the screenplay that Hampton Fancher and David Peoples drew from his novel, and would, I think, have been pleased by the finished film itself had he lived to see it—*Blade Runner* bears only the most skeletal resemblance to the book on which it was based, taking from it nothing but the essential plot idea of hunting down a group of escaped androids. As for *THX 1138,* it began life not as a novel but as a film treatment, produced by the very young George Lucas while he was still a student at U.C.L.A. After Lucas and Walter Murch had expanded it into the full-length script for the final version of the movie, that script was indeed "novelized" for paperback release by the experienced science fiction writer Ben Bova, but not even Bova's professionalism could lift the story beyond the level of the perfunctory. Science fiction is, among other things, a literature of ideas; and the problem that each of these movies has as *science fiction literature* is its mediocrity on the level of idea.

Blade Runner is simply silly. We are asked to believe that humanity, just a few decades from now, has colonized not merely the Solar System but the stars; that we have populated those stars with "replicants," synthetic human beings that are superior in most ways to ourselves, although they are designed to live only four years; and that a handful of these replicants, having rebelled at being assigned to slavery in the star-colonies, have found their way back to Earth and are

running amok in Los Angeles. Out of this cluster of manifest implausibilities is generated a perfunctory plot in which the androids, hoping to find a way to have their lifespans extended, seek to enlist the aid of their designer, while a police officer follows their trail, taking desperate measures to destroy them—at the risk of his own life, even though the androids have only a few weeks left to live anyway. Since none of these concepts makes much sense, either taken by itself or in conjunction with any of the others, it is hard to find much useful speculative thought of a science-fictional nature in *Blade Runner:* It tells us nothing much that is useful about the human-android relationship, the colonization of the stars, the use of genetic engineering to produce superbeings, or anything else that might seem to be contained in the main premises of the story. If we filter out the self-cancelling absurdities of the plot, we are left with only two concepts that a demanding reader of science fiction might find nourishing. One is the depiction of the female android Pris (Daryl Hannah), a mysterious acrobatic creature in whom the life-force rages so powerfully that when she dies it is with an astonishing display of superhuman fury, the outraged death of an extraordinary though limited being; the other is the question of how to distinguish readily between humans and androids, which was at the core of Dick's novel and which here is crowded into convenient corners of the script, only occasionally to be confronted directly. The rest is straight private-eye stuff, dogged pursuit culminating in a terrifying but conceptually empty rooftop chase.

The ideas around which the story of *THX 1138* are built are not at all foolish—merely hopelessly stale. They go back at least as far as H. G. Wells's *When The Sleeper Wakes* of 1899 and E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" of 1909, with touches borrowed from such later but hardly recent works as Zamyatin's *We,* Huxley's *Brave New World,* and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four.* That is, we are ushered once more into the complete totalitarian state, where computers make all decisions and the populace is drugged into complaisance. Uniformity of thought, costume, and behavior is imposed by law and enforced by automatonlike humanoid police; unseen monitors keep watch on everything and everyone; any sign of individuality is relentlessly suppressed. The protagonists are those familiar characters, the rebels against the conformity of it all: THX 1138 (Robert Duvall) and his female roommate, LUH 3417 (Maggie McOmie), who surreptitiously cut down on the dosage of the drug they are compelled to take to reduce their sexual impulses, and, after restoring their libido, set about conceiving a child, which is forbidden by the regulatory powers. They are apprehended; LUH 3147 is destroyed, but THX 1138 manages to escape the hivelike city into an outer realm where other rebels and nonconformists have taken lodging. A pair of implacable robots pursue him; and the film, which until this point has been pure if overfamiliar science fiction, devolves in its final third into a mere chase story, an endless sequence of frantic zoomings through subterranean tunnels, until THX 1138 at last eludes the police and escapes into the open-air world beyond.

But—even though one of these films is cobbled together from nonsensical premises and the other is manufactured from clichés—it is, I think, beside the point to pay much attention to those failings. These are *not* novels, with a novel's scope for

Left: Deckard suspects that this mannequin is one of the replicants he must kill. He's correct: Pris (Daryl Hannah) is about to spring on him.

Right: A minimal set that seems suitable for an absurdist play. In THX 1138 *such empty rooms with white floors and walls become prisons for dissidents. Here robot security guards harass THX 1138 (Robert Duvall), who almost blends into the environment.*

explication and analysis. They are movies, that is, visual events, pictorial compositions extended along a narrative axis by complex technological means. It is possible to wish that *Blade Runner* had relied more on the intricacies of Philip K. Dick's novel and less on the formulas of detective fiction, or that *THX 1138* had given us more of a look at the assumptions on which its totalitarian society was founded and less of a mad chase in those tunnels, but to express such wishes is to ignore an ugly reality, the Catch-22 of science fiction moviemaking: Science fiction films require special effects, special effects are costly, costly films need to pull in big audiences in order to break even, and big audiences are snared only by reliance on familiar plot mechanisms. (As it is, *Blade Runner*, which cost something like $30,000,000 to produce, was a commercial failure. *THX 1138* was the relatively inexpensive work of a novice filmmaker, and in its way was an uncompromising and difficult movie, revealing its plot in an oblique and demanding way, but without its harrowing if meaningless chase finale it might have drawn no audience at all, with consequent difficulties for George Lucas's further career.) It is precisely in those special effects that the merits of the two movies lie; indeed, *Blade Runner* and *THX 1138* provide startling evidence that an important science fiction movie can be assembled out of unimportant science fiction material. If their failings as fiction had not been as great, they would have been finer movies yet; but perhaps that is asking too much.

They are visionary movies in the most literal sense of that word. They show us futures, and they do it, not as a novelist might, with a few deftly chosen adjectives cunningly disposed on the page, but with nuts-and-bolts reality. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Philip K. Dick creates his atmosphere of gritty, dismaying urban decay with quick little touches ("the tattered gray wall-to-wall carpeting. . . . The broken and semi-broken appliances in the kitchen, the dead machines. . . . Tufts of dried-out bonelike weeds poking slantedly into a dim and sunless sky"). Ridley Scott, at an expenditure of millions of real dollars, builds an entire gigantic city of enormous pseudo-Aztec temples and flashing pseudo-neon signs, fills it with weird little shops where commodities as yet uninvented are sold, and whisks his camera swiftly through it, giving us tantalizingly elliptical glances at a future world that he has in fact realized in immense detail. I have seen it argued that it is somehow a higher achievement for a novelist to create the texture of a world by quick descriptive touches than it is for a movie producer to turn loose a battalion of carpenters and electricians, but—despite my own novelist's bias—I'm not so sure of that; the effects that Scott creates by building sets and letting us have mere glimpses of them are at least as elegant and cunning as any instance of the science fiction writer's descriptive art. The Los Angeles of *Blade Runner* is a unique invention, actually owing relatively little to the Dick novel; however preposterous the adventures of Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) may be as he stalks his way through that somber, ominous city in search of the crazed replicant Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer), the city itself remains the essential imaginative achievement, and it does the essential science-fictional thing of displaying and illuminating a landscape not otherwise accessible to the eye. It mattered very little to me whether Deckard pushed Batty over the edge of the roof or Batty pushed Deckard over; what did matter, and a great deal, was the hypnotic

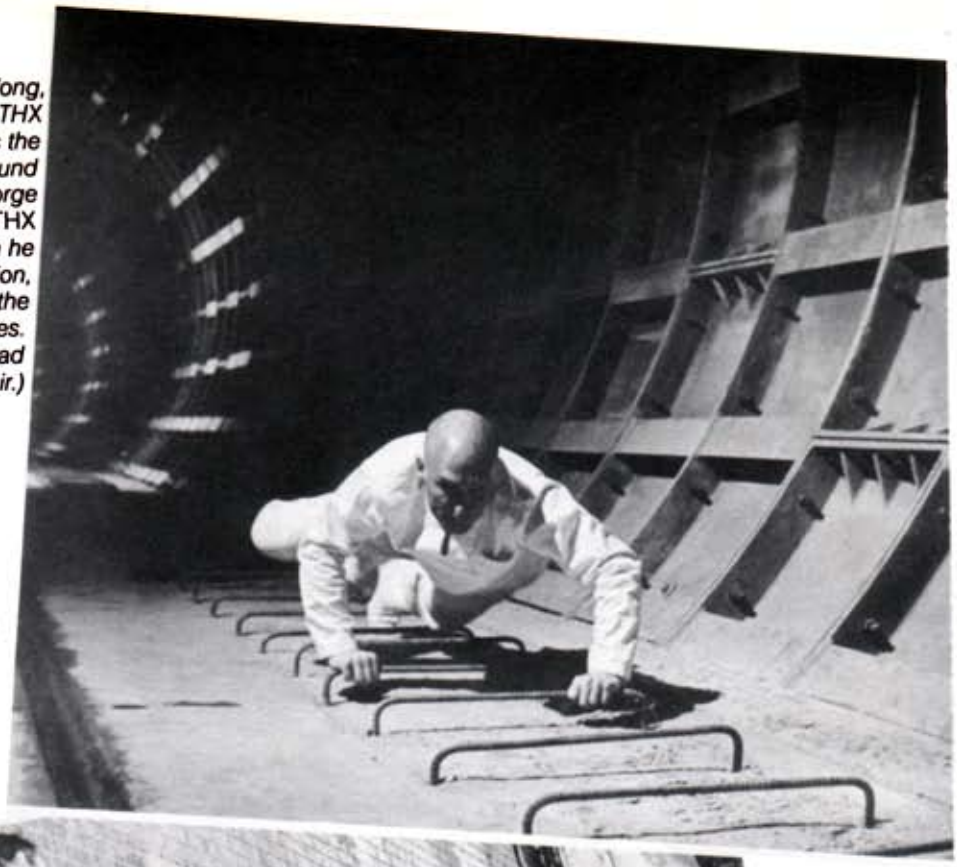
power of Scott's camera as it panned down the face of one of those overwhelming buildings, and showed me the architecture of an era yet to come.

So too with *THX 1138*. "Imagine, if you can, a small room, hexagonal in shape, like the cell of a bee," wrote E. M. Forster in 1909. "It is lighted neither by window nor by lamp, yet it is filled with a soft radiance. There are no apertures for ventilation, yet the air is fresh." And we are launched into the stiflingly circumscribed world of "The Machine Stops." Or we turn to Zamyatin's *We*, on which, I suspect, *THX 1138* was founded, and we read, "As always, the Music Plant played the 'March of the One State' with all its trumpets. The numbers walked in even ranks, four abreast, ecstatically stepping in time to the music—hundreds, thousands of numbers, in pale blue unifs, with golden badges on their breasts, bearing the State Number of each man and woman." But Lucas makes us *see* it. He makes us *hear* it. The faces, the eyes, the shaven scalps, the white-on-white corridors, the electronic buzzes and murmurs, the flow of computerized commands so baffling to the twentieth-century eavesdropper—the movie is an astonishing experience, an all-out immersion in a world of the future, without explanation, without apology. If Lucas is using other writers' material, he is making it altogether his own by the vivid way he realizes it and by the sheer uncompromising strangeness of the place into which he thrusts the viewer. (Scott does that too. Though he uses a crude voice-over technique to explain details of the plot, he offers the startling urban landscape largely as a given, without footnotes or commentary, thereby greatly enhancing the power of its strangeness.)

The task of the science fiction novelist, ideally stated, is to discover a unique speculative concept, develop its implications through a rigorous intellectual process, and make it accessible as fiction through an appropriate choice of characters, plot, and narrative style. Since science fiction usually involves the depiction of an unfamiliar landscape, the novelist's craft requires the mastery of descriptive techniques that will convey that landscape to the reader with maximum visual impact (a craft that entails more than a little collaboration on the part of the reader, but is a collaboration that the skilled novelist knows how to elicit). The task of the science fiction moviemaker, ideally stated, should be the same, and perhaps some day it will be, although, as I have suggested, commercial considerations at present seem to demand certain oversimplifications of concept and plot and character, and, in any case, even the most uncompromising of films are necessarily unable to achieve some of the things a novel can manage.

So far, I suppose most and perhaps all of the science fiction movies that have been made have failed the highest tests of science fiction excellence; but in the domain of depiction of an unfamiliar landscape, that is, in the domain of special effects, there have been notable successes: *Alien* (1979), *2001* (1968), *Star Wars* (1977), *Forbidden Planet* (1956), and many more. I think it is no trivial achievement to make futuristic visions concrete in that way; as I have said, I am not among those who would claim that building a movie set is somehow a less worthy artistic accomplishment than composing a paragraph of vivid descriptive prose. What those films managed in the way of putting the look of the future on the screen was far from trivial. But I can think of no others in which the special effects are dedicated so powerfully to

Right: Following a long, suspenseful chase, THX 1138 escapes the oppressive underground world. In director George Lucas's student short THX 2238 4EB, *on which he based his feature version, the chase took up the entire twenty minutes. (Moreover, the lead character had hair.)*



Below: On the ledge of one of the city's many dilapidated, abandoned buildings, Deckard battles powerful replicant Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer).

the creation of a coherent imagined environment that wholly enfolds and houses the story that is set within it. That the story is foolish in one case and stereotyped in the other is regrettable but fundamentally unimportant. What Ridley Scott accomplished in *Blade Runner* and George Lucas did in *THX 1138* is notable despite all peripheral failings: to create a landscape of the mind, vivid and compelling and complete, that for one breathless moment of suspension of disbelief seems to be the real thing, the authentic future, which we can in no other way experience than through the medium of lens and light and screen.

Designing the Future

Syd Mead

I drew pictures from the time I was two or three, like all children do. The difference was that I tended to make more elaborate drawings earlier in the process and, as I got older, became more and more proficient at making the scenes I depicted look real. In a way, it was an escape: I thought that the worlds I dreamed up were more interesting than the one I lived in. Indeed, it was because I enjoyed imagining what the future could be like that, after leaving the army, I was prompted to study industrial design at the Art Center School in Los Angeles, and, later, to choose my particular career.

I supply *ideas*—I call them "additional visual vocabularies"—to clients in fields as diverse as boat design, aircraft interiors, mass transit, product design, motion pictures, and automotive exterior design. There are innumerable engineers, materials specialists, techniques, and plant facilities available to make production of objects relatively simple, but the fact that for more than fifteen years I've been hired over and over again by clients with large production staffs proves to me that *ideas* are at a premium. You must have an idea of something before you can start figuring out how you can make it.

The term "conceptualist" was invented for me to use as my screen credit on *Blade Runner* (1982). Whereas a "futurist" predicts general world trends, on anything—food, housing, the nature of government evolvement, the economy—a conceptualist, in regard to design, is someone who thinks up how things might *look* according to a very exact client-supplied scenario involving a specific setting and time frame. If the client tends to be conservative, he can be his own worst enemy because conceptualizing is essentially a freewheeling, radical procedure. I deal with the look of the future in the whole lifestyle spectrum. This means that I theorize on everything from how architecture might look to how people might dress. Politics and economics don't really fit in, but I suggest what forms higher levels of technological achievement will take and I cover what might occur in the whole social scene. All of these things together produce a picture that has that odd look one would get if one could peer through a time telescope.

My design company usually works on several projects at once. Now, for instance, I'm doing two architectural projects, gearing up for a major design job in the transportation field, and finishing up on my involvement on *2010: Odyssey Two* (1984). In the last five years, movie design has contributed between 20 to 25 percent of our gross company income. As far as I'm concerned, doing conceptual art for film companies is just the same as working for other clients. You work with a director, who in turn is working with a script, either

Syd Mead has done conceptual art for *Star Trek—The Motion Picture, Tron, Blade Runner,* and *2010: Odyssey Two.* Internationally recognized as a leading innovator in the design of the future, he has been engaged as a consultant and/or designer for many leading corporations, including Ford, Honda, Chrysler, BMW, Jeep, Phillips, and General Electric. His book *Sentinel* contains illustrations of futuristic architecture, transportation systems, and computerized environments.

one that the studio or film company purchased or one he wrote himself. It's his picture—I'm just hired to be his eyes and imagination and to conceive the visual ideas that were suggested in the script. The overview is the director's and what I hope to accomplish on each film is to design specific fixtures, props, or a look that will satisfy him. Working for someone else doesn't affect my creativity—they hire me because I have a record of being creative.

Being a film designer has not affected my other design, but my background as a corporate designer has influenced my film work. Although I'm not an engineer or necessarily a materials specialist, I do have an awareness—a *heightened* awareness—of how things have to be built; so I can think up something that doesn't exist and indicate a detailed assembly system that will make it look real. The procedure for satisfying requirements on a film assignment is exactly as it is for a corporate design: There is the classic progression from sketch to finished art. I am an illustrator really for my own convenience; it's a separate facility I use or don't use, depending on the job. However, because I am an illustrator, working on films is curiously satisfying. What I invent is later built into a piece of hardware of a prop or an interior set, and the illustration *moves*. It's wonderful to see your idea come to life in a setting that was laboriously made to look as real as possible.

The best way to work on a film is to have personal relationships with the director and art director and to have day-to-day involvement with the special effects people, who do so much to make an impossible or nonexistent reality seem real. Fortunately I've had close one-to-one relationships with directors Steven Lisberger on *Tron* (1982), Ridley Scott on *Blade Runner,* and, now, Peter Hyams on *2010.* I always presented my ideas directly to them (just as I do with corporate clients), and we got along well as co-workers and friends. I also had close discussions with Robert Wise, the director of *Star Trek—The Motion Picture* (1979), my first film project, but in that instance I worked as consultant to the film's *second*-unit. When I came on the film, in fact, the action had already been shot and only the special effects postproduction work remained.

Getting involved in film design happened by pure accident. John Dykstra called about *Star Trek—The Motion Picture.* I then contracted as a consultant for Dykstra's company Apogee, which was producing the model for the picture's celestial entity, V'ger. I was given the specific job of designing V'ger. The movie needed an ending, and it also needed a spectacular setting for that ending. The design for V'ger was a six-sided geometric extrusion, twisted and modulated along the length of the entity. The interior was a kind of outgrowth of thinking, "What would be the most awesome, awe-inspiring sight a human being could have?" I went to our common cultural base, and took a Gothic cathedral and turned it on end; imagine walking into the cathedral at Cologne with the top of the building ahead of you. The model was forty-seven feet long, and it was photographed in a zero-visibility facility. I think it met my visual expectations: It was an awesome, lovely, frightening sight.

On *Tron,* I was expected to think up the computer-generated tank, aircraft carrier, and Lightcycle. This was done by going back to inhead audience memory—constructions of what people visualize when they think "tank" or "aircraft carrier" or "motorcycle." I took actual photo scraps of all these devices and then synthesized a rearrangement of the same relative masses and

Left: Syd Mead, conceptual artist, at work.

Right: Mead conceived the logo for the computer-generated opening title for Tron *(1982).*

sizes and came up with sleek constructions that still looked like these vehicles but were floating in free space. For the aircraft carrier design, I took two aircraft carriers, placed their flight decks at 90-degree angles to one another, and then floated the bridge tower (the big mass that sits to the edge of the flight deck), having it come out of the side to float like an enormous ring. And this produced the same mass relationship in terms of profile and section that a contemporary aircraft carrier has, only it was changed into a free-floating construction.

The Lightcycle was a much more difficult problem. According to Steven Lisberger, the drivers would hold a code wand in their hands; that code wand was what triggered the energy field to produce the Lightcycle. This meant the code bars functioned like handlebars. So I envisioned the front wheel as a power source that pulled the cycle along—that's why it ended up as a sphere. And the rest of light's cycle was formed behind, under, and between the legs of the drivers as they stood up. When they put their feet up into the foot-wells, the vehicles closed around them, and away they went.

I sort of edged into working in other areas of the movie. I did some costume constructions—for instance, the clothing pattern on Tron (Bruce Boxleitner) was generated from some costume studies I did. I designed the construction of the Master Control Program tower. That was visualized, as was V'ger, as some kind of wondersome, Gothic churchlike cathedral construction. The energy field around it was conceived as an interlocking set of wedge-shaped details, which were endlessly repeated to form the circle around the MCP tower. Energy would flow out and into the MCP through and along these cracks and imaginary surfaces. The computer graphics used throughout the film were generated by first coming up with a ten-number set {1, 2, 3...0} in a peculiar geometry style. Lisberger liked that and asked if I'd like to take a crack at the title graphics. I simply did an alpha (letter) variation on the numeric design and that became the final title graphic, TRON.

For *Blade Runner,* I was originally hired to design the futuristic vehicles. Included was the police spinner—a car-aerodyne combination. I theorized that if all the power can be generated inside the vehicle through the use of turbines (the bottom of the car would be vented), the spinner wouldn't have to have extendable wings. Because the spinner doesn't change shape when it rises and flies, it is more magical.

Creating vehicles was almost like creating characters because they had to have specific characteristics that suited the personalities of the people who used them. For example, the truck used by Sebastian (William Sanderson) was a composite of add-on parts, theoretically found in a junk heap in the year 2019. The problem was making it look strangely assembled—kind of like a tinkerer's automotive dream. I envisioned all these pieces of what might be discarded technology at that point in time.

By the time I'd been working on the vehicles, the movie was progressing, the screenplay was being revised, and so forth. And with my weekly briefings from Ridley Scott, I was getting a feel for what was wanted in terms of a *look.* I started putting fixtures and ideas behind the vehicles, to put them in a futuristic setting. I don't like to do a car on a white background; it looks too isolated and strange, and the approach is too clinical. So I place my vehicles in a complete environment. As long as the scene is consistent with itself, with its own internal detail mechanics, it will look real.

Ridley liked my drawings very much—to be fair, I must say that I was the only source for these kinds of ideas at the time—so he asked me to go ahead and come up with the concepts for the picture's street sets. I also did most of the interiors because the ideas had to have the same mechanical set that the exteriors of the society had. Doug Trumbull, who did the film's special effects, designed the Tyrell (Joe Turkel) office for a very good reason: It had to look significantly different, more elegant and cleaner than the jumble of mechanical fixtures that characterized the lower echelons of society.

The city of 2019 was getting progressively dense. Buildings were over three thousand feet high, with older buildings of ten to twenty stories being used as bases for the entire superstructures. Cables and tubes, delivering air and removing waste, would climb along the outsides of old buildings. The street level would be a service alley to these towering megastructures. Street-level fixtures such as fire hydrants, parking meters, and the noodle bar where Deckard (Harrison Ford) eats, were, again, all conceived using the social theory of *retrofitted utilization*. Ridley Scott, Ivor Powell (the associate producer), Lawrence G. Paull (the production designer), and I developed the concept: Because in 2019 there was so much energy being devoted to off-world activity, for which the replicants were made, the consumer base wasn't getting much attention. This meant that the population was very actively collecting bits and pieces of add-on layers to make their original articles work. Today, in many Third World countries you'll find older vehicles, some dating back to the Thirties and Forties, that have air conditioners on top, larger batteries and generators, mud-flaps, and hang-on fixtures. They're retrofitted machine constructions that bear superficial resemblances to the original articles, but they've been overlaid by so many add-ons that they've taken on a style of their own. We labeled that style, which influenced the look of the film, "retro-deco."

Ridley also asked me to conceive the Voight-Kampff machine, which he said was to be an exotic, intimidating kind of lie detector used for exposing replicants. Since the machine would only be the size of a briefcase, I had to make it threatening in a different way. I decided that it should breathe. The machine would draw in air samples from the immediate area, reacting to a body's chemical changes as the person or replicant becomes nervous or scared because of the questions he's being asked. As soon as the subject walks into the room, the machine's arm swings around and focuses on his eye and the breathing begins. It's alive in a way, and is very, very threatening.

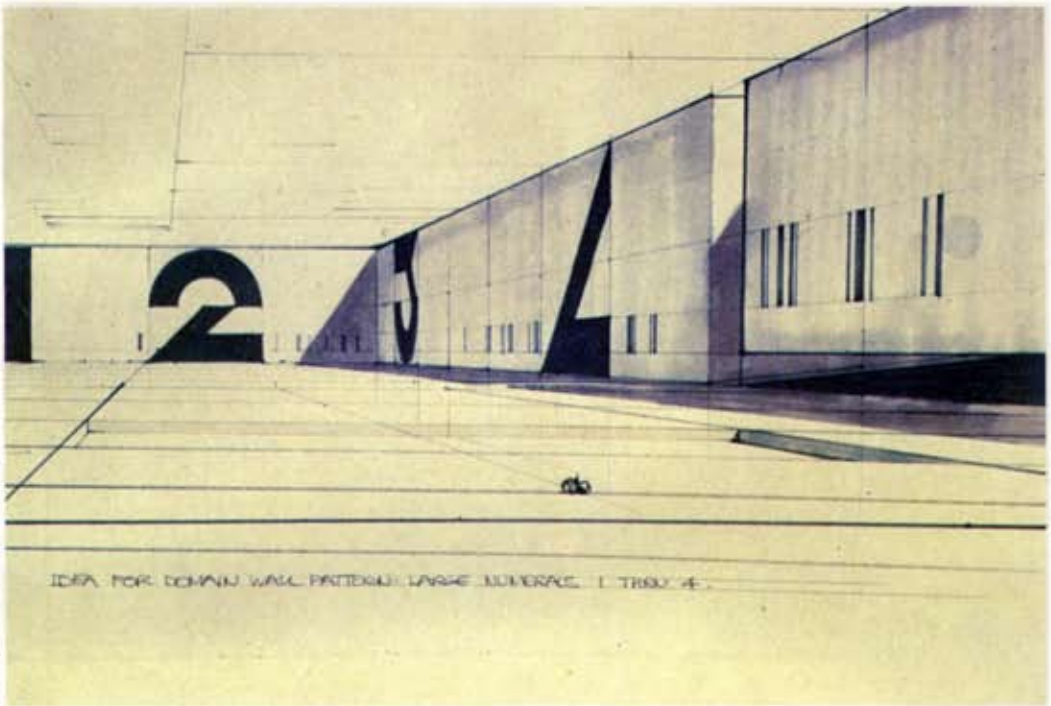
I have seen many films that have depicted future worlds: I thought *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), for instance, was wonderful; for its time *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) was an incredible, startling visual tour-de-force. But I've never studied motion pictures to see how they invented the future. I'm hired for my own particular visions. My vision of the future is much different than that depicted in many of the potboiler science fiction movies. For one thing, they have a kind of shattered-icon fascination with technology going haywire, with sparks flying, things crashing, nuclear bombs exploding, and man being helpless. Setting up a disaster scenario is probably the least creative and simplest thing to do, and is not much more sophisticated than the old Frankenstein Monster kind of plot—very uninventive and boring. But the shock value of something going radically wrong is a kind of catharsis, and people flock to see these kinds of things.

Star Trek—The Motion Picture actually had a much more inventive premise than I've just described. Men are confronted with the unknown and make the brave decision to investigate what it is all about—and when nothing goes wrong, they go a little bit further. This was really a fairly sophisticated plot structure. It wasn't new, of course. They'd patched together at least seven plots from the old television series to come up with the overall framework of the story. *Blade Runner* was, typically, the original idea-gone-haywire story. When the replicant Batty (Rutger Hauer) confronts his designer Tyrell and in frustration (because Tyrell can't prolong Batty's life) crushes his head like a watermelon, it's very much like the angry Frankenstein Monster returning to his creator and demanding a little more than it had been given. *Tron* was much more a fantasy trip into a fascinating, impossible world. Everything was expressed in ego confrontation; and we had the mad, evil computer scientist taking over his creation, rather than the other way around, as is usually the case.

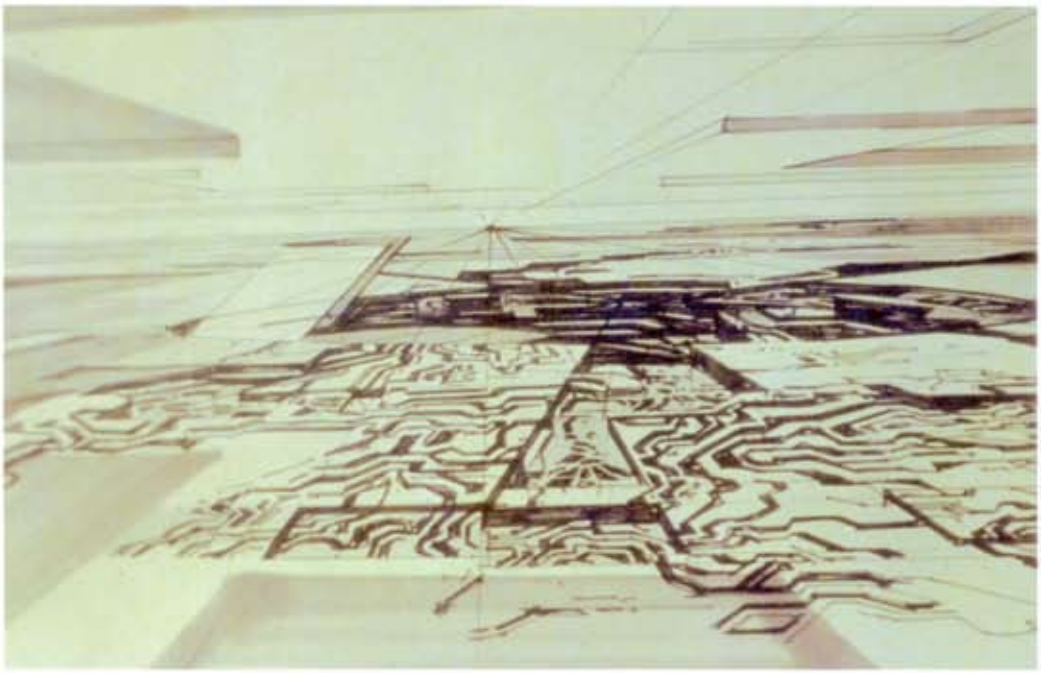
I have a more optimistic outlook than most science fiction films because I believe that if we've lasted this long, there's a very good chance we're going to last a lot longer. Conceiving a future that takes place after a nuclear holocaust is a favorite, much belabored failure-of-nerve scenario. If we all insist that a nuclear holocaust will occur, it probably will. But I believe that the human race has a very strong survival mentality. The idea of having a nuclear war is really quite repugnant to most of the world's societies. I think this will get us through. We're now realizing that the greatest danger comes not from the large superpowers but from the so-called "renegade" societies that have a rising level of technical capability and a highly educated, paranoid megalomaniac who has taken over the economic base of his country. A lot of people will sell weapons to these countries for immediate profit, and this is worrisome. But the superpowers are becoming increasingly aware that we have too much to lose. The test will be if we can last through the year 2000. Then I

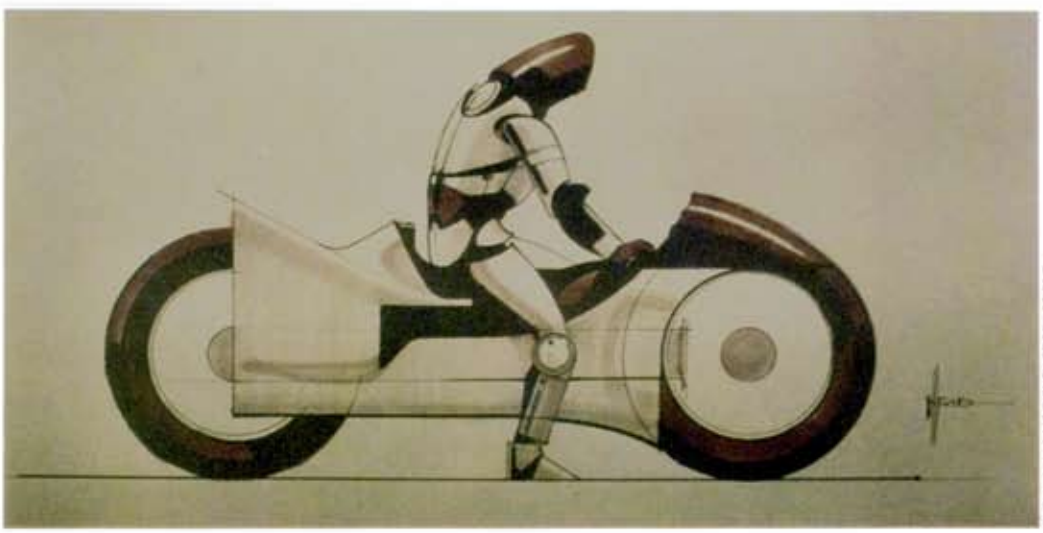
An impressive head-on view of V'ger in space, from Star Trek—the Motion Picture *(1979). Like all images in this color section, V'ger was conceived by Syd Mead, the most innovative conceptual artist working in films today. His futuristic designs on the three films represented here—*Star Trek—The Motion Picture, Tron *(1982), and* Blade Runner *(1982)—paved the way for his recent assignment on* 2010: Odyssey Two *(1984).*
All photographs on these pages were taken by Erik van der Palen.

Top: View of central sphere of V'ger. Above: View down valley toward maw of V'ger.



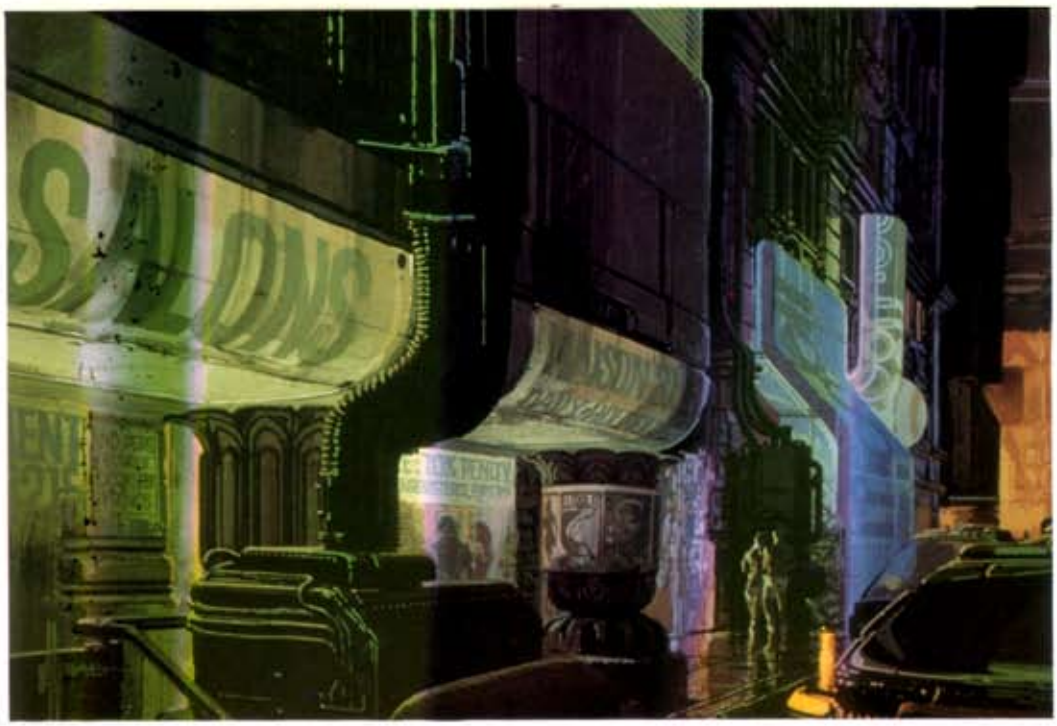
Computer images from Tron. *Top: A game arena sketch for a domain wall pattern; using large numerals 1,2,3,4. Above: A freeze frame of a Lightcycle.*

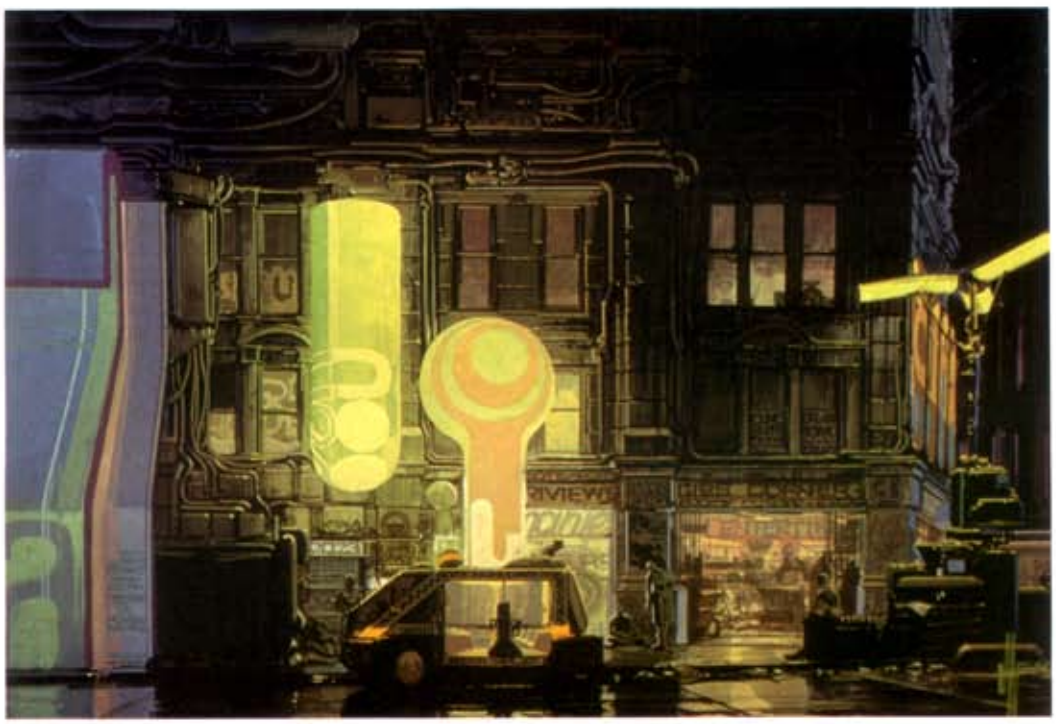




Top: Overall view of Tron *terrain. Above: Sketch of a Lightcycle—a side view.*

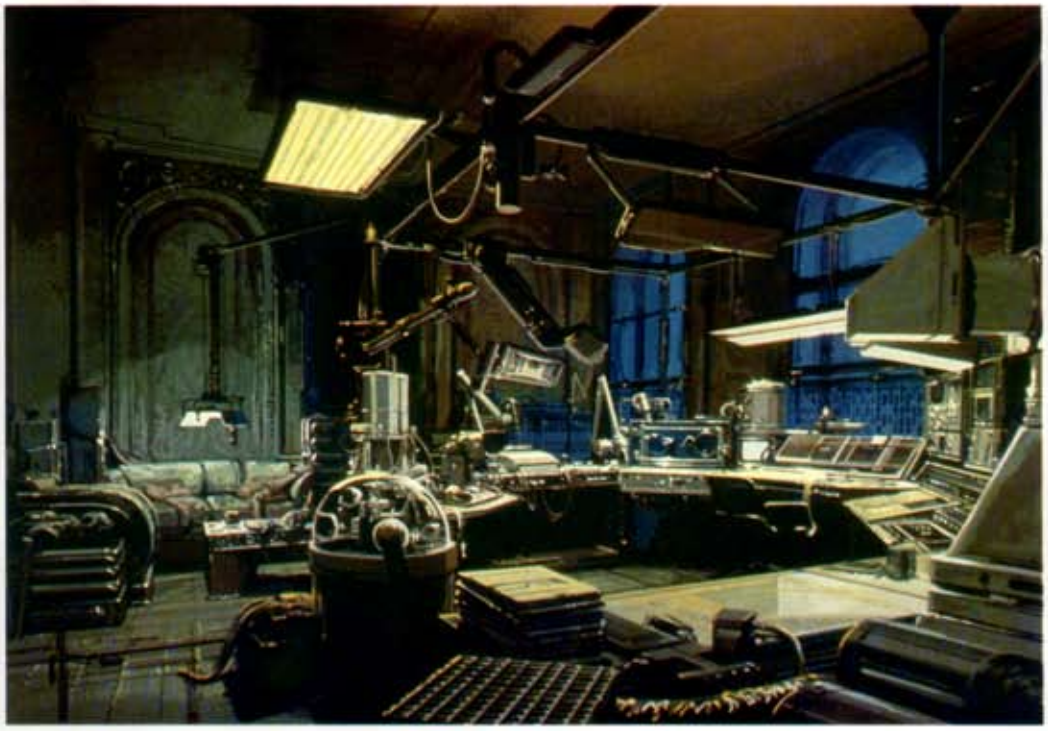
Top: Cityscape of L.A. in 2019 in Blade Runner. *Above: Mead was originally hired for* Blade Runner *to design this police spinner and other vehicles. He was later assigned the look of the whole city.*





Top: Close-up of street facades in Blade Runner. *Above: An elevation of a street block.*

Blade Runner. *Top: The Burbank studio's street set before being transformed into a futuristic L.A. street. Above: A futuristic street intersection.*



Blade Runner. *Top: interior of Intensive Care Unit. Above: interior of Sebastian's workshop.*

think we'll be home free. By then we'll have figured out some of the ways we can balance our drives and ambitions, and it'll finally start to sink in that we're all together on this cosmic speck called Earth.

My visions of the future don't have any particular limits. We're all limited by ourselves, our accumulative awareness and knowledge, etc. But there's no particular year in the future where I'd have difficulty making predictions. Of course, it's hardest making predictions about the *near* future, say five years from now, because we don't have access to corporate marketing plans and other priority information. But it's comforting to know that once you pass that magic time, you can say, "My idea is as good as anyone else's." Nobody other than geophysicists can really have an idea of what the Earth is going to be like in, say, the year 3000. What we come up with, therefore, when doing prediction exercises, are possible, visually and story-wise entertaining visions of particular futures.

A common mistake is to automatically make things in the future bigger, even limitless. If you build things today that are ten blocks across, in the future you assume you can build them hundreds of miles across. That's not necessarily true, except in space, where we'll be able to build anything we want with no particular restraints in regard to size, other than getting all the material necessary together in one place.

Architecture, I think, will continue to become more exotic and complex. It will become more natural: We'll have spectacular two-hundred-foot-high indoor waterfalls, cascading banks of greenery, flowers, and movable, adjustable landscapes. Certainly there will be very large projects, extensive interconnected indoor environments, possibly going up to the 3,000–4,000-foot-high level in high-density urban locations. Cities are already in place and they'll pretty much remain constant in terms of where they are and how much land they'll cover. Because of economic considerations, I can't see cities looking much different except for add-on structures. But the new self-contained city centers and malls that are being built will become so large they will be equivalent to whole new cities in the future.

I think we're going to clean up the environment as we find the loose ends of the various loops we've put in motion. We'll be able to control the deterioration of the air quality; and through management of the earth's resources in the biosphere and with space satellites tracking air movement, we'll be able to regulate and predict rainfall to improve crop conditions. We should get an excellent handle on preserving our natural environment.

Entertainment will become much more participatory. Even now with videodiscs and elaborate computer games, you can design your own fantasy. Once we can get into our own heads on a preprogrammed basis, we can activate, quite possibly, our dream centers. Then we can go back and visit people in history, be places we've always wanted to go, relive our most enjoyable experiences, and create new ones.

I'm not a fashion designer particularly, but I believe clothes will continue to be kind of a plaything. There will be new fabrics that can change colors, and others that can change shapes when activated by electric currents. And once we solve the XY-screen kind of technology (flat screen pixel address with on-board memory), we'll be able to weave electrified fabrics that can produce any pattern you want, in whatever combination of colors you desire.

I think we'll see floating pleasure islands that actually will be large machines. They'll be able to move into a port and either be used there or they'll sail away on a trip with a few thousand people aboard, much like an ocean liner but more leisurely and less a mode for transportation. I don't think there will be many single vehicles that can travel on land, sea, and in the air, for the simple reason people won't need such capabilities from one vehicle.

Land vehicles is a huge subject. In general, I believe we're going toward about five different types for the consumer base: Two will be most common. There will be a small, utility-rolling-cabinet vehicle, much like the Renault 5 or Ford Escort. There will also be something that will replace the normal sedan. I expect it will be a van-type, one-box profile, as car designers call them. They'll be very efficient, and be able to haul the most people and biggest loads on a minimum ground imprint.

I don't believe we'll see privately owned aircraft reach the density of automobiles on the freeway. The management required to keep a dense aerial mix of traffic in place and control the mechanical-failure percentages is simply too great. But we'll certainly have private vehicles in space. We'll have commercial traffic, bringing materials to and taking finished articles out from the Earth's orbit. We'll have traffic to and from various space worlds. . . .

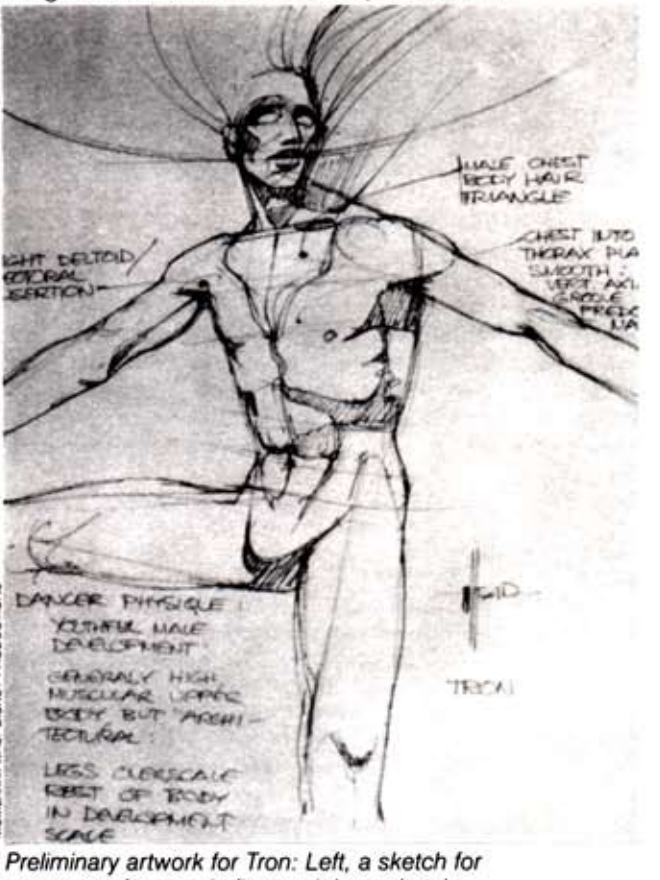
Advertising is a little bit out of my field, but thinking about the way technology is going now, I believe that once we achieve high-density computer memory and a flat XY-access picture control, we can easily have moving advertising sticker spots placed on *everything*. They'd have a life of, maybe, a couple of days or a week; they might be sun-powered. There will be an avalanche of advertising access to the individual once we achieve the cell system—two-way communication areas for phone or other person-to-person link-ups—all over the country. People will have their own communications modules. Those channels in the dead spaces of conversations might be accessible for advertising that will deposit into one's local memory device. The biggest

problem is going to be preserving one's privacy, because a person will have to give all kinds of personal information to a computer bank so it can facilitate his or her communication desires. All of these technologies might then be perverted to favor the needs of advertisers getting their messages to potential consumers.

As is the case today, technology will tend to invent itself back into invisibility. Solid state circuitry is getting smaller and smaller; and if we have success in building bioelectric computers (the protein computer, for instance), we can compress the entire written and recorded history of mankind into a cube one centimeter on each side.

The entertainment world's view of science in general is terribly apocryphal and naive. As techniques more and more marvelous become available to us, science will progressively be a utilitarian, problem-solving series of investigations and a monitoring of ideas. The major wave of science will then have to do, once again, with studying nature, the workings of the universe, and the balance of forces we have to confront as we go into the future. Science might very well become a very arcane, abstract study of truly cosmic forces, rather than a means by which to solve the problems of the next one hundred years.

Artificial life will certainly be generated in many, many forms—the pure mechanical (robots), biomechanical-cyborg, cloning. It will be completely possible to have yourself cloned, and then move into yourself, into a younger, healthier duplicate—if that's what you want. Cloning will certainly have monumental social impact. For one thing, it will play havoc with inheritance rights and tax laws—are you copy #1 or copy #50? The concept of replicants that was central to *Blade Runner* is definitely the most logicial way to go, rather than trying to build an elaborate mechanical or even biochemical construction. Duplicating a human being is the least of the interesting goals for robot technology. It's more of a trick, harking back to the original fascination with anthropomorphic constructions. As a race we have long tried to figure out who we are and why we are, and



Preliminary artwork for Tron: Left, a sketch for a costume for a male figure; right, a sketch emphasizing the body proportions of a male figure.

Policeman Gaff (Edward James Olmos) and detective Deckard (Harrison Ford) take a ride in a police spinner that was designed by Mead for Blade Runner *(1982).*

now we're beginning to find out what we are. In the future, we'll be able to decide who we are going to be. We'll literally be able to remake ourselves in any particular shape, form, direction, or level of organization that we wish to achieve. In the future, we could ship whole colonies of people off to somewhere on a little frozen speck of protoplasm securely transported in a vacuum vial.

Earth is such a tiny bit of stuff, that logically, it will not be able to supply the human race with its needs forever. That's why space will become such an active place. There will be resources to develop and room to move and places to go in space. Here we are, coating this little speck with all our activities, all of it amounting to about the same thickness in scale as a smear of butter on a cue-ball. We have much more ambitious dreams than that, and space is where we'll make them come true.

In the future, the United States will become just a member of the world community and, along with everybody else, will concentrate on boosting its people off this planet. By the year 3000 there will be many, many more people living off this planet than will be left here. There will be estates and colonies in space, and eventually, in the far future, we'll generate all of our power to run our Earth society off-world. Then we'll turn the Earth back into a beautiful garden, and work to preserve our historic civilization sites. Earth will become *the* place to go back to, visit, and to trace our cultural heritage, much in the way some people born in America go to Europe, land of their ancestors.

Directing *Alien* and *Blade Runner*

An Interview with Ridley Scott by Danny Peary

Danny Peary: Prior to directing *Alien* [1979], had you a strong interest in science fiction?
Ridley Scott: I had virtually *no* interest in science fiction until I saw *Star Wars* in 1977, other than having been tremendously impressed by *2001* [1968]. Fantasies don't work unless they quickly take on a reality of their own, and the sci-fi films I'd seen always contained silly, utopian ideas or tended to take the more extraordinary dilemmas of the day and assume they'd develop in nonlogical, unbelievable ways. The people who made sci-fi films didn't understand what they were doing.

After the completion of my first film, *The Duellists* [1977], I prepared to do another period piece, "Tristan and Iseult." While this was in progress, I was in the United States and saw the opening of *Star Wars*. It impressed me so much! It was innovative, sensitive, courageous—I saw it on three consecutive days and it didn't diminish at all. I consider it to be a milestone film—one of the ten best I've ever seen. I was most struck by how Lucas took what is essentially a fairy tale and made it seem totally real. The combination of *2001*—a threshold film that presented science fiction as I thought it should—and *Star Wars* convinced me that there was a great future in science fiction films (which may sound naive in hindsight). So I decided to terminate my development of "Tristan and Iseult."

Coincidentally, at that time I received the script of *Alien*. In my work on "Tristan and Iseult," I had used *Heavy Metal* magazine as a reference. While I was absorbing the sorcery side of that magazine, I also looked with great interest at its visions of the future. So when I read the *Alien* script, not only was I fascinated by the marvelous, strong, simple narrative, but also I realized that because of my brief education reading *Heavy Metal*, I knew how to do the film. I accepted *Alien* almost immediately.
DP: Was it essential for those involved in *Alien* to have scientific knowledge or at least insight into how a believable futuristic film should be made?
RS: When I came onto the project, there were already people involved who did have scientific knowledge. My first in-depth meetings about how sci-fi should be and how it should look were with Dan O'Bannon, who'd written the original screenplay with Ron Shusett. O'Bannon introduced me to Ron Cobb, a brilliant visualizer of the genre with whom he'd worked on *Dark Star* [1975]. Cobb seemed to have very realistic visions of both the far and near future, so I quickly decided that he would take a very important part in the making of the film. In fact, I brought both him and O'Bannon to England during the making of *Alien*, and he became a very important member of the art department [as a conceptual artist]. We based a lot of our interiors of the Nostromo on Cobb's visuals.
DP: You were a designer yourself. . . .
RS: I was a painter and then a designer in art school, which totaled a period of seven years' training. I eventually ended up at the BBC as a set designer. I was a set designer for a number of years, so whatever film I do, I always have great input into the decision on how the sets and the atmosphere will be. This also means that my selection of a production designer is a painstak-

Ridley Scott is the British director of *Alien*, *Blade Runner*, *The Duellists*, and *Legend*.

ing process. I consider myself a good designer, therefore I require an extremely good designer because I push him all the time. It's fairly easy to find a production designer who can cope with contemporary environments or period pieces for which there are paintings or photographs to use as visual references, but production designers who are "into" visualizing future environments are few and far between. I believe I have a good take on the future and it's vital for the production designer I choose—be he Michael Seymour on *Alien* or Lawrence G. Paull on *Blade Runner* [1982]—to be in total sympathy with what I'm doing.

DP: In *Alien*, everything *looks* old, uninviting, bleak, disheveled. What was the look you wanted for your major set, the starship Nostromo?

RS: The look really was meant to reflect the crew members who, I felt, should be like truck drivers in space. Their jobs, which took them on several-year journeys through space, were to them a normal state of affairs. Therein lies the fantasy. The reality would not be like this for maybe a thousand years—but in our tongue-in-cheek fantasy we project a not-too-distant future in which there are many vehicles tramping around the universe, on mining expeditions, erecting military installations, or whatever. At the culmination of many long voyages, each covering many years, these ships—no doubt part of armadas owned by private corporations—look used, beat-up, covered with graffiti, and uncomfortable. We certainly didn't design the Nostromo to look like a hotel.

DP: The characters in *Alien* seem more spirited than those in *Blade Runner*. But there is also a strong sense of melancholia, claustrophobia (which you've been quoted as saying frightens you most), and irritation. What personal views on space travel were you trying to get across? What about sex among crew members?—I know you cut out a sex scene involving Ripley [Sigourney Weaver] and Dallas [Tom Skerritt].

RS: I think the crew members of the Nostromo seem spirited only because of their argumentative nature, which is due to the fact they probably can no longer stand the sight of each other. It wouldn't matter how it was worked out in the prevoyage stage, when a computer probably determined the compatibility of the unit; like all crews in confined spaces, they'd get on one another's nerves and would be cutting each other's throats in six months' time. I tried to glean as much as I could from the problems that present-day astronauts go through preparing for prolonged periods in space. I then factored in ten years in space and tried to envision how a character would react to going off for that kind of period. Obviously it would raise all sorts of psychological problems, above and beyond claustrophobia and melancholia. The idea of spending *really* prolonged periods in space—say, of up to three years—is inconceivable and at the moment only exists in fantasies such as *Alien*.

We took out the scene where Dallas and Ripley discuss sexual "relief," because after the scene in which Kane [John Hurt] is killed when the alien bursts through him from the inside, it just seemed out of place. That scene proved much more powerful, *and* successful, than I expected, and for the sex to follow would have seemed totally gratuitous. The "relief" scene

Left: On the Nostromo in Alien *(1979): Captain Dallas (Tom Skerritt), second-in-command Ripley (Sigourney Weaver), and science officer Ash (Ian Holm), who turns out to be a robot. According to Ridley Scott, it is "because Ash is an* unfeeling scientist, *not that he is Nazilike," that he admires the alien's "purity."*

Right: Dallas, Kane (John Hurt), and Lambert (Veronica Cartwright) discover it was a long-dead space jockey that had sent the radio transmissions. Was he transmitting a warning?

was to be our token attempt to answer the question about sex in space. If you think about it logically, the only way that mixed crews could work out on long missions is by neutralizing everyone and forbidding sex entirely, or by having free "open sex" for whoever wants it. Close relationships in tightly closed ships with small crews would certainly have to be discouraged. The problems that would result from some men and women pairing off and leaving other crew members on their own is obvious.

DP: *Alien* is the first space film, I believe, that features working-class characters rather than a crew of scientists, military men, or astronauts.

RS: That's absolutely accurate. At this point in time, I believe everyone in a crew can be a working-type. The Nostromo is driven by Mother, a computer, and, as far as running the ship goes, the crew is secondary. Once on the ship, their function is minimal. They need know only how to work the ship's basic equipment. That equipment can start itself, repair itself, think for itself, and act as its own monitoring system.

DP: At this point in time, has the value of humans diminished even further than today as far as the military-industrial complex is concerned? I am struck by the opening scene in which the ship's computers and machinery "come to life" before the humans are revived from their suspended-animation state.

RS: It's possible that the value of humans could have diminished. I'm now thinking on the level of the Big Brother idea of a lifeless megastructure and its attitude toward human employees, who are considered expendable. In this instance, the machinery, information data, and cargo are of more importance to corporations than the individuals on their ships. I certainly think this situation has parallels today. But the fact that computers can run the ship before the humans are revived is meant to be logical and not, as you suggest, antihuman—it really has nothing to do with Big Brother and an unfeeling company. Ships will be run by computers specifically for efficiency reasons.

DP: I see the corporation, even more than the alien, as being the villain of the film. Its top priority becomes the alien, and it could care less about the danger that this causes its crew.

RS: The industrial-government complex is responsible for the attitude that allows such an alien to be brought on board the Nostromo. In

fact, it is already responsible for the paranoia prevalent on all the ships because of its insistence on placing a company man on each vehicle. In this case, he takes the form of a robot, Ash [Ian Holm]. This would seem to be the normal development of a huge corporation trying to protect its interests. In this particular future, it would be very easy for "pirating" to exist. Corporations will have to find ways to assure that vehicles carrying minerals or vital information will not be hijacked.

DP: Was it the intention of the corporation that owns the Nostromo to bring back an alien, any alien? And for what reason?

RS: I think any corporation that sends probes into unknown territory is going to think of the possibility of finding something *new*. I'm sure that the crew members on all its ships would have been briefed to bring back anything of interest. It would be part of one's job to bring it back. An alien would, of course, be of top priority. This particular corporation didn't have a preconceived notion that an alien would be found on this mission, much less the particular alien that is brought onto the ship. The idea of bringing it back alive would not have been on the minds of the corporation executives when they first received the alien transmission. They just had high expectations when they ordered the Nostromo to investigate—it was purely out of curiosity.

DP: Yet the film seems to express a "topical" theme: For selfish reasons, our leaders in government and business will side with "aliens" who have no regard for humanity, at the expense of the people who trust them.

RS: Although I didn't set out to make such a statement, the parallels on both a political and company level are quite obvious.

DP: What is the nature of the alien? Is it vulnerable? Does it fear anything? Is it interested in the crew members for any reason other than food? Is it male or female?

RS: In relation to humans, the alien does seem to be indestructible. It does *not* fear anything. In fact, it is a supreme being. The kind of creature we came up with emerged from the logic of how it could reproduce itself and, in fact, what its development or life cycle would be: Therefore, I guess, the alien is a hermaphrodite.

DP: In the film, Dallas seems to be killed instantly, but originally there was a shot of him trapped in the alien's cocoon. . . .

RS: That was simply a visualization of the alien's life cycle. What gave us the cocoon concept was that insects will utilize others' bodies to be the hosts of their eggs. That's how the alien would use Dallas and each of the crew members it kills. This explains why the alien doesn't kill everybody at once, but rather kills them off one by one: It wants to use each person as a separate host each time it has new eggs.

DP: Would the alien have killed Ash?

RS: Probably not. We theorized that the alien would feel or understand that Ash was a construction of robotics, however complex and strange. Because Ash wasn't human, he'd have been no use as a host for its eggs. The biological makeup of humans was useful, however, for the alien eggs to feed on—a revolting explanation!

DP: The alien is obviously intelligent and crafty. Does it sneak into the shuttle at the film's end because it knows the main ship is about to blow up, because it expects Ripley to go there, or. . .

RS: . . . because we needed an end to the picture. . . .

DP: Sigourney Weaver told me that she believed the alien looked at Ripley in the final scene with curiosity and perhaps sexual interest.

RS: I never thought about it that way. I find that her comment is . . . certainly odd. Perhaps Sigourney has a touch of sympathy for the creature because she looks at it from the viewpoint of her character. Ripley was part crew member and part scientist, someone who thought in logical terms. Maybe at that moment her scientist side emerged and she began to study the creature like a scientist would and started to get a perspective on what it may have been thinking. Previous to this scene, remember, there had been absolutely no communication between the alien and the crew members, other than the violent experiences.

DP: Ripley is one of the bravest, smartest, toughest women in science fiction. Veronica Cartwright's Lambert character is also quite

Left: One of the screen's scariest moments: Kane (with all the forethought of an Inspector Clouseau) bends over to peer into a quivering pod he discovers in the hatchery on the space jockey's derelict ship.

Right: Parker (Yaphet Kotto) and Lambert hope to flee the Nostromo in the shuttle. But the alien will prevent it.

strong and capable. Are these two women such strong characters because today's audience demands such women in scripts or because that's how you expect women will be in the future?

RS: My film has strong women simply because I like strong women. It's a personal choice. I'm in no way a male chauvinist, nor do I understand female chauvinsim—I just believe in the equalilty of men and women. It's as simple as that.

DP: Because the alien was not killed in *Alien*, but was merely blown into space, there may some day be a sequel. What should it be about?

RS: It certainly should explain what the alien is and where it comes from. That will be tough because it will require dealing with other planets, worlds, civilizations. Because obviously the alien did come from some sort of civilization. The alien was presented, really, as one of the last survivors of Mars—a planet named after the god of war. The alien may be one of the last descendants of some long-lost self-destructed group of beings.

DP: In *Alien*, you built suspense by having characters talking in hushed tones, smoking incessantly, drinking coffee, pacing nervously, sweating.... In *Blade Runner*, you emphasize characters' eyes to create tension, paranoia, mystery. Did you learn how to effectively manipulate an audience back when you made commercials?

RS: My training in commercials was really my film school. It helped build my awareness of how to present suspense and—"manipulate" is a bad word—*fascinate* the audience and hold it in a kind of dramatic suspension. I learned how to communicate immediately, to use every conceivable visual and aural device to work on the senses and grab the viewer's attention for a particular time-span.

The emphasis I placed on characters' eyes in *Blade Runner* was just my playing games with the audience. Obviously if every replicant in the film had glowing eyes, then there would have been no need for the Voight-Kampff machine to detect them. We went through a little tap-dance argument as to whether or not I should present something different about their eyes. I decided to take a middle line on this, to be deliberately intriguing and confusing rather than specific. So it varies throughout.

DP: In *Blade Runner*, the head of an enormous business conglomerate, Tyrell [Joe Turkel], is also the man responsible for the replicants' existence. Does he represent *science* to you? If so, do you believe this direction science is taking—its becoming part of private enterprise—is scary?

RS: Tyrell represents the ultimate in science and industry, or scientific-industrial development. Here you see a large corporation that specializes in one area buying up another corporation that does something in an entirely different field. Obviously two separate sides of the conglomerate world—perhaps genetic engineering and biochemistry—will eventually merge; just as I think industries will develop their own independent space programs. It's bound to happen and, yes, it is scary.

In Blade Runner *(1982), detective Rick Deckard chases replicant Zhora through the crowded, cluttered streets of downtown L.A. in 2019. "I wanted this to be a curious world where people would have the choice of staying or leaving. If you went off-Earth you were rewarded, but obviously people like Deckard didn't want to leave their familiar home environment."—R.S.*

DP: How does your vision of the future compare to what you present in *Blade Runner*?
RS: Much of what I envisage for the year 2019 is reflected in the look of the streets and the attitudes of the people in *Blade Runner*. The viewpoint speaks for itself. I thought about it very carefully. I presented a future world that I believe would come close to being a totalitarian society—if not quite 1984, then one step from it. It *is* 1984, in the sense that the world is controlled by perhaps only four major corporations, of which the Tyrell Corporation is one, and the people exist in what is almost a Kafkaesque or Orwellian environment. To cope with the anarchy in the streets there is a sort of a paramilitary-police group, by which Deckard [Harrison Ford] is employed as a replicant exterminator. It's a world where the poor get poorer, and the wealthy get wealthier and think it chic to protect themselves even more than they do in America today. Even Deckard lives in a condominium with electric gates. It looks rather like a fortress and one only gets access to his floor by undergoing a voice-pattern check-out system in the elevator—otherwise it won't move. It's a time of self-protection and of paranoia.
DP: In the city of Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*?, on which *Blade Runner* is based, there are no murders, no abortions. . . .
RS: In the city of the film, I imagine everything would be done, from abortions to murders. In a city where only the wealthy can afford to protect themselves, and there is chaos on the streets, surely anything goes.
DP: The *look* of the city in *Blade Runner* is spectacular. Discuss your work with Syd Mead, the film's conceptual designer, specifically on the architecture.

RS: *Blade Runner* was a difficult project to conceive because it is set only about thirty-five years from now, in a "tangible" future rather than in the obscure future of *Alien*. It was essential not to go wrong or everyone would realize it. So it made sense to ask an industrial designer who is also a futurist, like Syd Mead, to design the film's hardware. We worked very closely on the vehicles and he proved so prolific that I had him branch out and help us envision what would happen architecturally to existing cities.

I think that the mistake a lot of futuristic films make when they attempt short leaps forward in time is that they devastate whole cities and erect hokey-looking utopias. Things wouldn't work that way. Look at New York or Chicago. They have their business centers, middle-class areas, ghettoes, and central areas of development. One wouldn't possibly flatten it all. In today's cities there is already the practice of taking existing architecture and making applications to the outside of buildings—for example, because of cost factors, it's preferable to apply an air-conditioning or communication system to the outside than to rip the whole building apart to make it function. We took that line of thought further: As we move farther and farther into the future, the probability is that the construction of new buildings will diminish, except in certain ar-

eas of the city, and the constant repairing, shoring up, and modernization of older architecture will begin to take on a rather retrofitted look.

Our vision was really of a clogged world, where you get the sense of a city on overload, where things may stop at any time. Services may give out—in fact, they already have ceased in at least some parts of the city. Everything is old or badly serviced, and the bureaucratic system running the city is totally disorganized. One of the few things in fine order is advertising. I expect that by this time, billboards and electric signs will be everywhere. There will be an even bigger media explosion than there is today.

DP: One of the most intriguing features of your city is the constant rain and haze. I get the feeling that everything is contaminated and everyone will soon die from radiation poisoning. Has World War III occurred? Judging by all the Orientals in the streets, could China have defeated America?

RS: I think the Cold War is still going on. If there had been a third world war, the world would not have been in the state we presented it—it wouldn't exist. Again, we were working in the context of a fantasy, so I don't necessarily believe there will be a future in which the air is *so* contaminated—at least I hope that at some point we'll actually do something about the way things have been going. The idea of a world filled with radiation is abhorrent. It was only presented that way as a dramatic device. The constant rain was "dramatic glue," if you like. It also amused me to think that it was taking place in Los Angeles, meaning the whole weather pattern would have changed by 2019. If L.A. gets all the rain, then maybe New York would get the sunshine.

DP: You switched the book's setting of San Francisco to Los Angeles.

RS: Originally we were going to begin the film with a title that read "San Angeles." Our idea was that San Francisco and Los Angeles would become one city and cover the entire western seaboard.

DP: What does your city smell like?

RS: New York City.

DP: Is there religion in this world?

RS: That's something I never really came to terms with. That is difficult to speculate about. But it may be stronger than it is today, when it seems to be on the wane in certain areas. Maybe the governments will have become the religions—then you've gone one step closer to 1984.

DP: In the novel Rachael and Pris look exactly alike—they are the same model of replicant. Why did you have two actresses—Sean Young, a brunette, and Daryl Hannah, a blond—play the two roles? And why was Rachael's last name changed from Rosen to Tyrell?

RS: It would have been confusing and not worked dramatically to have had Rachael and Pris played by the same actress. The name change was just a matter of us preferring Tyrell.

Replicant Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer)—until the end, the picture's villain—has come to Earth to see if his brief life span can be increased. If not, he'll kill his creator, Tyrell.

DP: Dick died before the release of the film. Did you have a chance to meet him?

RS: Only once. I showed him the special effects I'd just completed with Doug Trumbull's EEG [Entertainment Effects Group]. He was more than delighted—I think he was stunned by the look of our environment. He said it was exactly how he had envisioned the world with which we were dealing.

DP: Except for the fact that he tracks down renegade replicants rather than standard criminals, our hero Deckard is in many ways like the classic disillusioned, morally ambivalent detective—which is fitting considering the other noir elements found in the film, including his hard-edged narration.

RS: When we first meet Deckard, he is already thinking of giving up his job as professional exterminator. The job was in fact getting to him, as it did to, say, Philip Marlowe. His attitude toward his profession had already discolored his vision of the world and affected his attitude toward himself. As in classic detective stories, his background is not central to the film and is suggested by innuendo rather than fact; but what I wanted to do at the beginning was show a man who wanted to change his whole way of life and was in a way trying to find some kind of absolution or, maybe, a conscience.

Above: Ridley Scott works with Joanna Cassidy, who plays Zhora, and Harrison Ford, whose blade runner character is on her trail. Left: In the scene as filmed, Zhora proves to have more physical strength than Deckard.

DP: Deckard's romantic involvement with a replicant, Rachael, humanizes him to a certain degree—at least it causes him to release some of his pent-up "human" emotions and gives his personal life meaning. On the other hand, do you see his line of work, killing replicants, as being dehumanizing?

RS: I think Deckard is simply doing a job within his futuristic time slot. Therefore he should be unemotional about his work. I don't really believe that the nature of his job must necessarily dehumanize him. What he does is act as a garbage disposal—it's rather like getting rid of industrial waste. Certainly because the replicants are highly sophisticated machines one starts to relate to them as human beings. But one must remember that they are *not* human beings.

DP: But when Deckard murders replicant Zhora [Joanna Cassidy], by shooting her in the back, you certainly intended viewers to not only find his brutal method devastating but also cowardly and upsetting.

RS: The audience reaction to Zhora's death is how you describe it. Of course, one was meant to feel sympathy and possible sadness for some of the replicants. But I must remind you that Deckard is just doing his job and following

Deckard tracks Batty through an abandoned building. White pigeons, the only animals shown in the film, fly about—"symbols of peace and life," according to director Scott.

through on what he set out to do. Zhora could have come quietly but she decided she had to have freedom and she ran. So he did what he was there to do. The scene ends with Deckard looking down at this "woman" he has just killed and we get one more facet of the reason he wants to quit his profession. For we're now dealing with a man who is guilt-ridden.

DP: How do you see the relationships between the replicants? I find them to be a bit schizophrenic. Sometimes they're loyal to one another. When Batty [Rutger Hauer] kisses the dead Pris, it indicates he loved her. Yet Rachael kills the replicant Leon [Brion James] in order to save Deckard, a human.

RS: To me, the way replicants relate to each other and to humans is one of the points of the story. Batty kisses Pris with affection and love. It demonstrates that even replicants can have those kinds of feelings. If you create a machine through genetic engineering, biochemistry, or whatever, the very fact that it has been created by a human being indicates to me that when it becomes truly sophisticated it will ultimately be free-thinking. I'm sure that in the near future, computers will start to think for themselves and develop at least a limited set of emotions, and make their own decisions. The same goes for the replicant that is so sophisticated that it's on par with the human being—in fact, in some ways it may even be superior. The replicants that Tyrell designed were the first of his "master race," which he planned to unleash to develop his interests on other planets, but within the context of this film, the replicants are more "human" than humans *or* "more equal" than humans. They are superior—they make their own choices.

DP: Aside from Rachael falling in love with Deckard, how do replicants feel toward human beings? With pity? With hatred?

RS: Certainly not with pity. The replicants would regard their human creators very much as a slave would a master he despises. Also I think they'd fear humans. And in some ways they'd empathize or want to identify with them.

DP: The female replicants, at least, are capable of having sex. Do you think they have the capabilities of enjoying sex and actually having orgasms?

RS: I never went into this in much detail, either. But I guess that if Tyrell went to the trouble of making *perfect* replicants, then he'd have taken into account their sexual capabilities. For obvious reasons. Maybe some female replicants like Pris were employed in military camps on space

The dying Batty allows Deckard to live. This is the ultimate peaceful gesture in sf cinema between man and machine. It gives us hope that we can live in harmony.

bases and were constructed for specific sexual purposes. . . . That's a very fascistic viewpoint, a very sick one, and I don't really like discussing it.

DP: Deckard finds himself sexually attracted to Rachael. Was it your intention to have male viewers find themselves attracted to the three female replicants in order to further diminish the distinction between humans and androids?

RS: No. I just happened to cast three actresses who are rather beautiful. Anyway, if you're going to make female replicants, why would you want them to be ugly?

DP: Comment on the climactic scene in which Batty saves Deckard. Batty's own death (with slow-motion employed) is quite stirring and dignified.

RS: Batty's death scene is in a way the final demonstration of his superiority over Deckard and the replicants' superiority over human beings. He could have taken Deckard's life—Deckard had just killed Pris—but decided as a gift to let him live. The white pigeon that he sets into the sky is, of course, a symbol of peace and life.

DP: In the novel, Deckard constantly worries he will mistakenly kill a human he thinks is a replicant. In fact, he constantly worries that he, himself, is a replicant.

RS: At one stage, we considered having Deckard turn out to be, ironically, a replicant. In fact, if you look at the film closely, especially the ending, you may get some clues—some by slight innuendo—that Deckard is indeed a replicant. At the end there's a kind of confirmation that he is—at least that he believes it possible. Within the context of the overall story, whether it's true or not in the book, having Deckard be a replicant is the *only* reasonable solution.

DP: I see this film as possibly being about several endangered species, namely the human beings who roam the contaminated world, animals which, except for the pigeons, are no longer part of this world, and replicants, who have only a brief life span.

RS: I don't see the film as being this serious. I make films to entertain and this was really meant to be a "heavy metal" comic strip about a future society and a character who just happens to be a replicant detective. I don't think the film is about several types of endangered species. It's a film about some goodies and some baddies. The baddies are presented as replicants who, we discover eventually, are like all good antiheroes in that they have sympathetic streaks. At this point the balance of the drama changes—but this film does not have any deep messages.

DP: Yet wouldn't you consider *Blade Runner* to be cautionary?

RS: It doesn't say "watch out for this!" or "watch out for that!" It simply presents the kind of world I see in 2019. However, if you do take it seriously, then there are cautionary notes in regard to future environments and the way people relate to one another in them. Admittedly, the vision in *Blade Runner* isn't very promising, but unless we do something drastic to change the flow of things I don't think the world will be a very pleasant place in the future.