THE
BLADE RUNNER
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by Sara Campbell,

Dan Baron, & Joe Bensoua

BLADE RUNNER

Analysis by SARA CAMPBELL

It is unfortunate that most mainstream critics have been blinded by Blade Runner's shiny surface, taking it only at face value and labeling it as a vacuous, dramatically flawed film noir. But that might have been expected; mainstream critics rarely know how to handle SF cinema. Why? Because real science fiction is so damned disturbing. Case in point: Blade Runner.

Punk/New Wave artists and filmmakers have consistently used images from the '40s and '50s rough-guy/tough broad movies to parody present day society. Yet Blade Runner is the first really effective use of New Wave artifice, and the ironic proof lies in its utter hoodwinking of the mainstream media.

Blade Runner commences with a panoramic, god's-eye view of Los Angeles. A crime occurs: a weird guy named Leon Kowalski shoots a detective in the course of a lie-detector test. Leon doesn't like being asked about his mother. Fade out; down on the mean streets, it's raining heavily, it's night, and apparently the redlight district of Chinatown has engulfed the rest of the city. A seedy ex-cop stands around, reading a newspaper with a heavy expression of self-pity on his battered face, and sure enough, he slips into a morose voice-over. . . .

We've seen this film before on the late-late show . . . didn't it star Humphrey Bogart, or maybe Dick Powell or George Raft? What's more, we automatically know that soon we'll get to meet the cop's sloppy boss and sneering sidekick, and that his apartment, devoid of wife or kids, will be cluttered with gin bottles and practically lined with Venetian blinds. And very soon he's sure to get tangled up with a hot-eyed dame with wide padded shoulders. This is the Naked City, right?

Not exactly. In *Blade Runner* the visual parallels to those atmospheric '40s detective thrillers are so close as to be parodies. The hot-eyed (literally!) dame's padded shoulders are so pointy they could be used as sharp weapons; her skirt is so tight she can barely walk; her hair is drawn into an unnatural lacquered sculpture. She, Rachael, is a figure straight out of punk/New Wave iconography, the Mannequin Goddess. She would look right at home on the album covers of the B-52s.

And the cop, Rick Deckard, looks exactly like a middle-aged Elvis Costello minus the wraparound shades. His opponent Roy Batty, who in any efficient *film noir* would be a snickering psychopath played by Richard Widmark, here eventually becomes the film's most sympathetic character; though on first sight he looks like a super-Aryan Gestapo agent, and turns out to have a classic bleached-out punk haircut. He and his dim droog Leon walk the streets in black pseudo-leather like a two-man streetgang. Batty's sweetie, Pris, is a waifish punkette in kinky whore-getup. she would have no function in a detective flick (for one thing, she wouldn't translate well into Agnes Moorhead), yet she does very well here.

Punk/New Wave artists and filmmakers have consistently used images from '40s and '50s rough-guy/tough-broad movies to parody present day society. On any university campus, signing up for an "experimental" film course means sitting through a whole semester of Bette Davis clones mouthing obscenities, with hosts of store-window mannequins crowded into unnatural positions in the background. There's nothing like watching the portrayal of banality turn banal itself. Yet *Blade Runner* is the first really effective use of New Wave artifice, and the ironic proof lies in its utter hoodwinking of the mainstream media.

Punk philosophy is anarchic. In *its* view, the world is a steaming cesspool of corruption and "The System" has become a fascist police-state; mankind is devolving (hence Devo) into heartless automatons; and the only way to deal with the resultant alienation is to give in to it. In *Blade Runner,* we have no idea who is running whatever's left of the world; anybody with real ambition has dumped it for something better "Out There." The people who are left behind are misfits or too decadent to really care. What seems to be the most powerful corporation in the city specializes in making counterfeit humans. And mannequins, a staple of New Wave film, are tucked into numerous corners of the movie.

The matter of paranoia is one of the most pervasive elements of the film, most noticeable in the eye motif. There may be no Big Brother here, but *somebody's* watching. Everywhere there are video monitors blinking away, or gigantic electronic billboards of Japanese geishas watching the struggles down below, or blimps which look like huge cockroaches descending on hapless citizens, following them virtually *everywhere* to advertise the Off-world colonies ("Begin again in a golden land of opportunity and adventure!"). Rick Deckard has monitors all over his apartment, even in the bathroom. Then there is a Voight-Kampff test, which Deckard and

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other police use to detect bogus humans by measuring pupillary responses to revolting or obscene questions. Even the light-beams shooting horizontally into the darkened rooms serve as intrusions; and the camera itself builds the sense of fright and oppression. Always on the prowl, around corners and over shoulders, often at low angles, it rarely comes to a stop, and even then it is usually hand-held. (This is a technique which Ridley Scott used with equal effectiveness in his previous film *Alien*.)

There is a hair-raising scene of voyeurism in which Rick Deckard analyzes a photo stolen from Leon; with his Esper, a kind of electronic eye, he invades the room in the picture, zooming in on the figure of Batty and the objects at his elbow.

then going *into* the Van Eyck mirror at the end of the room. His study of the reflections makes them take on slightly three-dimensional qualities—he peers at clothing in a closet and at a woman in another room. And in the film's most obviously voyeuristic scene, Deckard worms his way into a suspected android's dressing room—she is a snake-dancer—and, passing himself off as a member of the Confidential Committee on Moral Abuses, says he's looking for holes: "Little dirty holes they drill in the wall so they can watch a lady undress." They? "You'd be surprised at what some guys would go through for a glimpse of a beautiful body."

Glenn Collins of the New York Times wrote an article (June 30, 1982) suggesting that the violence of *Blade Runner* is excessive and sadistic. One of the examples he used, Roy Batty's destruction of Tyrell, was very unusual in that it focused on the perpetrator, not the victim; another, Batty's grief over the dead Pris, was something many audiences actually find very touching. The destruction at the end of the film shows something that family films such as *Star Wars* (with its shooting, sword-fighting, dive-bombing, dogfights and push-button annihilation of entire planets) do not: violence hurts. To be sure, it is a grim film, and no wise adult would bring a kid under 15 to see it. However, the true violence of the film lies not in the actual events portrayed, but in the atmosphere of the film, and this teaches a very valuable lesson: the violence of intrusion, the horror of the loss of privacy. What is more awful than to owe your memory to someone else, and to have the workings of your mind pried open by a machine? This is not just speculative-fiction paranoia; it's a sentiment understood by most of our society. Many people today feel as though their government is holding them hostage with bombs, as though technology is leaping ahead of our privacy and our names are on who knows how many computer lists. This sentiment is not to be taken lightly; true or not, it's a major force in our culture. It propels both the Right and the Left, the anti-abortionists, the pro-choicers and the No Nukers. "Quite an experience to live in fear, isn't it?" Roy Batty says near the end of the film. "That's what it is to be a slave."

Beneath the New Wave's attitude of contempt lies a sincere sense of loss and isolation, and *Blade Runner*, especially in the person of Batty, certainly achieves this—often with moving intensity. Yet it can't be nailed down as a simple, straight-down-the-line punker allegory; for one thing, it contains none of the staccato harshness of your standard New Wave diatribe, nor the deliberate technical ineptitude; if anything, it's riveting for its elegant composition and editing, the lyrical ebb and flow of images and fantastic sound-layering. For another thing, it hasn't got that boxed-in quality—most New Wave experimental films are made in the director's basement. It has a broad, stunning scope which leaves most viewers gasping—and for this it is indebted to Fritz Lang's silent Expressionist classic, *Metropolis*.

That 1927 piece of futurism was set, like *Blade Runner*, in a huge, mindboggling city dominated by a Babylonian-ziggurat corporate skyscraper, in which the lord of the city and the slave-class dwells; both envision a society of decadent rich versus impoverished workers (although *Blade Runner* also includes mobs of out-of-workers), and both feature a rebellion of the slave-class; also, both feature terrifying

Photos: Center, left to right, Rick Deckard, the fatalistic detective with no future; Rachael, the fashionable working woman who has lost her identity; Roy Batty the child-like delinquent of romantic impulse; Pris, the sensual mannikin of deceptive intelligence. Top right, Roy grabs Deckard in the film's climactic moment of revelation and irony.

synthetic humans—*Metropolis* is especially famed for its evil robot, Maria.

But where there is hope for Metropolis, LA of 2019 is a dying city; the very first shot of it is reminiscent of Dante's Inferno. There is no madonna leading the captive masses in the new film—Roy Batty is intent upon winning, uh, better working conditions through the quickest means possible. And the Art Deco skyscrapers have degenerated, begun crumbling, and become retrofitted-baroque. The only solution to Rick Deckard's problems isn't political—no one seems to be in charge—but a matter of escape.

Ostensibly *Metropolis* was a grand work of future-projection, a prediction of what could happen to mankind; similarly, both the director and the critics of *Blade Runner* insist that it's futurism rather than science fiction. Yet much of the decay has a frighteningly familiar ring to it—the ever-present advertisements, the *crowdedness*, the idea that Atari, Coca-Cola and the Hare Krishnas will still be very much with us; even the very first shot of Deckard, leaning against the storefront window filled with banks of flickering video screens. This could almost be an abstract view of urban life in the here and now.

Japanese cinema is so foreign in form and attitude that it's incomprehensible to many Western eyes; yet more and more Western directors are being influenced by Kurosawa and Mizoguchi, and Ridley Scott is apparently no exception.

Japanese art is built upon the idea that all things are temporary. Insubstantiality and impermanence are the sources of all beauty; behind the beauty of the natural world is the fact that it all has to die, and behind all happiness lies its certain doom, and therefore in Japanese drama and art horror, tragedy and intense sensual beauty often intermingle. Akira Kurosawa's films are among the most cerebral and existential in the world; but at the same time, they are among the loveliest. *Rashomon* is built upon a one-sentence plot—a man has been murdered; the entire film is a quiz through different avenues of memory and ego to find our who dunnit, and we are taken through scenes of sensual perception to get to the root of the matter; by the end, it is a moot point, because we've been supplied with something far more important, the idea that truth is a sham. *Seven Samurai* has the most intensely sensual climax of any battle-film: a primitive battle between two armies in a monsoon of rain and mud. It is horrifying, yet unforgettably beautiful.

The narrator of *Blade Runner* is a man who is paid to kill disposable people. They are disposable because they have no past and no future—four-year lifespans have that effect—and without memories they can't develop feelings. He meets a replicant who has been given false memories. Is her eventual love for him real or fake? Meanwhile he confronts four replicants who have no such memory implants and are fighting for more time; in the final segment of the film, their leader displays love, anger, grief and wisdom which can't be denied. The question is continually asked: how reliable is memory—and how real is reality?

Ridley Scott didn't pack the film with so many Japanese motifs only to make a comment on Japanese industrial progress. He didn't have a samisen-strumming geisha hover over scenes of fate and disaster like the eye of God just for the sake of quaintness; and he didn't adopt Kurosawa's methods of destruction (Zhora's slow-motion death, straight out of *Seven Samurai, Sanjuro* and *Kagemusha*) and lyrical in-out drifting of images (*Rashomon, Seven Samurai*) for the sake of in-joke obscurity.

Insubstantiality. Impermanence. Fate. At his end, Roy Batty—in perhaps the most lyrical moment of the film—sums up some of the fantastic things he's seen in his short life, and smilingly adds, "All those moments will be lost in time like tears in rain."

What a Japanese thing to say.

"All those moments will be lost in time like tears in the rain . . ."

The central scene of *Blade Runner* is the one where Roy Batty reaches the end of his long and violent journey, where he confronts his maker and hisses, "I want more *life*, fucker." Who hasn't dreamed of saying this to their Maker? Who hasn't found life too short and time too fast? Batty's rage, his pain and fear, are the subjects of this scene and this entire film.

It is beside the point that Deckard isn't like Indiana Jones, Han Solo or Humphrey Bogart. Deckard is not an extraordinary man; he is us. This movie isn't really his story; it's the story of the replicants and what he's learned from them, from his point of view. He is the onlooker and Batty is the hero, just as Jay Gatsby and the Frankenstein Monster were the true heroes of other characters' stories.

Who, after all, really cares about Colin Clive and his sweetie while Boris Karloff is clomping around the countryside like a monstrous little boy? Yet, similarly, the framework of Deckard's story is necessary to Batty's; otherwise the latter wouldn't have stood out as such a bizarre and extraordinary creature. And he *is* extraordinary, probably the most complex character in SF drama since Freedom Lowell (*Silent Running*).

With Deckard, we penetrate the mystery of Batty by degrees, in stages. Our first sight of Roy is clinical: a computer-file, probably made soon after Roy's "inception", with a 160-degree rotating view of the replicant. We're told that this person with the sharp, powerful face has Level A intelligence and strength (which probably means above the human norm); that he is a warrior possessing "optimum self-sufficiency" and that since his entire life-span is only four years he hasn't had time to develop much of a sense of charity. He is so intent upon a mysterious invasion of the Tyrell Corporation—the company which designs replicants—that he has led a slaughter of 23 humans and will kill more to reach his unknown goal, unless he's prevented from doing so.

Deckard, a misanthropic loser who can be heckled by shopkeepers and arrested by fellow cops, is supposed to do the preventing.

We soon learn that Batty is irresistible and overwhelming. His henchman Leon, who is normally quite talkative, is silent and submissive in Roy's presence. Genetic engineers working for Tyrell lead him to their boss readily—intimidated, charmed or cajoled. Tyrell does not even consider using the dozens of security systems his home must surely contain, when confronted with Batty; even Deckard can offer only token resistance. Roy has the same effect on everyone in his path as that of a high-intensity searchlight on a trapped rabbit. Roy is unstoppable, and he and his unlucky proxies are the force which initiates practially everything in the story.

He is saturated with symbolism, even down to his name. (Roy means "king" in several Latin-based languages; Batty means, well, crazy.) Our first direct view of him is of his fist, with nails discolored like Karloff's Monster's. During his battle with Deckard, he bears a fleeting resemblance to Doc Savage (though this might be unintentional); and then there is the impalement of his own palm. Upon meeting with Chew, he quotes something that *has* to be out of *Paradise Lost*, a reference to the fall of Lucifer (who in that epic poem was the villainous hero/sympathetic villain). He is both Satan and Christ in this story, both villain and redeemer; he is obscene and poetic, and eventually makes destruction seem understandable and sacrilege sacred. "Look at you," his maker says, just prior to getting his head smashed in. "You're the Prodigal Son . . . you're quite a prize."

While Deckard is confused and uncertain, Roy knows exactly what he wants and is the most motivated of men; while Deckard is often surrounded by warm colors and soft shadows, Batty is often lit from below, which produces a foreboding or threatening effect, his face is divided by harsh shadows; in his invasion of Chew's lab, he is bathed with cold blue light—while Chew, mesmerized with fright, protests the cold. Where Deckard is often presented to the camera as isolated, behind Spinner-windows or Venetian blinds or the snake-maker Hassan's window, or paralyzed by crowds, Roy is free and elusive, and continually approaching, stalking, grabbing or embracing the object of his focus, and often is presented in extreme closeups—some of which are among the film's most striking images. He practically grabs the camera. Yet there is a point at which the two characters reach a sort of equilibrium: as Deckard becomes more vulnerable and lays himself open to the feelings which he himself has doubted, Roy, halfway through the story, suddenly drops his fright-mask and becomes more and more childlike, with a strong sense of play and wonder. The final battle between the two men develops into a monstrous game of hide-and-seek.

This sense of childishness, of meeting a misguided boy in a very adult body, is strongly reminiscent of the early *Frankenstein* cycle, particularly *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), in which Boris Karloff's "dear old fellow" returns from exile and demands a better life from his maker. The visual reminders of *Bride* are scattered all over this movie: not only are Batty's and Pris' fingers reminders of Karloff, but there is also the curious bit of business during the scene of Pris' death—the sharp, birdlike movements of her head, faintly reminiscent of Elsa Lanchester as the bride of the monster, and the veil draped over her head (which could also be taken as a Japanese motif—the color white is symbolic of death in Japanese art, and Japanese in this country are occasionally shocked by American brides' choice of color). The owl watching Tyrell's murder is directly lifted from the opening scene of *Bride*, where the monster kills a pair of peasants under the huge, opaque gaze of a barn-owl. Tyrell can be related to Doctor Pretorious, the evil, macabre scientist who aids Frankenstein in making the bride. Pretorious is not new to this hobby; in the past he had made miniature people (quite like Sebastian's "friends") and delighted in manipulating them—a King, a Queen, archbishop, devil, ballerina and mermaid; and these he made from cultures, unlike Frankenstein's method and very like Tyrell's.

To be sure, Roy has none of Karloff's Monster's innocence; he is not forced into murder through the callousness of others, but through his own rage and desperation. Roy is an entirely self-aware person, with an ironic and deadly sense of humor. One of the early Frankenstein-derived films, a German Expressionist film of 1916 called *Homunkulus*, features a synthetic man possessing superior qualities who, learning about his accursed origins, wreaks havoc and revenge on mankind. Roy Batty's roots are indeed in this creature and a host of monster-robots—with one big difference.

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He is not truly evil; indeed, he's capable of great good, and—like the Monster of *Bride*, is often motivated by love.

Perhaps one can relate the famous scene in the hermit's cottage to the segment in Sebastian's apartment, where Batty is revealed in an entirely new light.

The segment is especially interesting in view of the scene which precedes it—the lyrical and explosive love scene between Deckard and Rachael. That scene has an awkward, rather violent feel to it: Deckard seems uncertain about how to go about truly loving another being, even a fake, and Rachael is a true *tabula rasa* as far as personal contact goes; as though she'd been born yesterday. The two of them do a great deal of slamming about, grappling and instructing. Somehow they seem more frustrated than ever.

Roy Batty's meeting with Pris is entirely different; upon his entry into Sebastian's bizarre wonderland of an apartment, without prior discussion of the matter, Roy and Pris exchange a very passionate kiss, at which Roy suddenly is transformed into a small boy. On the verge of tears, hurt and agitated, he tells her that their friends have been killed and that they're now alone. It's a shocking scene—in comparison to the earlier scene, it's oddly charming to see such easy and familiar tenderness between these creatures.

What follows is nearly surreal: an interlude at Sebastian's apartment becomes a low-key Mad Hatters' tea party, as Roy and Pris wander around among the living toys—Pris herself looking like a disheveled rag doll. The two behave like incestuous brother and sister—two punk children with a big secret, a *really* big secret; and when Sebastian uncovers the secret with the remark "You're so different—you're so perfect," they alternate between glowing pride, eerie menace, charm, desperation and cajolery in getting what they really want; while Sebastian seems to think they're the best toys that ever wandered into his home. Batty is riveting during this scene—a charming menace; and at the same time, you have a hint for the first time of just how powerful this guy is. In taking off his coat to stay awhile, maybe have some milk and cookies, you see how massive his chest and shoulders are; and Pris displays more of the Nexus Six range of power by playfully sticking her hand into a jar of boiling water to fetch an egg.

It is interesting that when Roy finally gets to the point and grabs Sebastian by the lapel, he tells him that *Pris* hasn't got long to live—"I can't allow that." Natural or not, these creatures really mean something to one another; it is no sham.

Dramatically, this short examination of the replicants' lives is one of the most satisfying segments of the movie, a natural follow-up to the investigation of the little world inside Leon's photo. One is left wishing for even more information, maybe an account of their hijacking of the transport ship Off-world. Our sympathies are raised. It would be interesting to see these children grow up, and it wouldn't be half bad to see them win their lives.

The scene with Tyrell, however, is a perverse masterpiece. As Roy puts it, he's meeting his maker; however, this is a terribly unsympathetic God. He looks like a cross between a corpse and Pope Pius XII. All along he has treated his creations callously—even throwing away his prize, Rachael, by willingly exposing the falsity of her past and then abandoning her. He has betrayed all of his children: imagine the cruelty of making a human and forcing it to live its childhood as a slave, with no hope of a future; the rottenness of creating beautiful, strong, sensitive people with no past—and then abandoning them. This sequence can be taken as a play on the ancient philosophy that if there is a God, He must be vicious—if He's so all-powerful, why'd He create evil along with goodness? Why'd He make us only to kill us off?

This God can't stand up to Roy Batty. Although he covers up by saying, as Batty enters his temple-like apartment, "I'm surprised you didn't come here sooner," he is obviously apprehensive; whereas Roy, though looking decidedly unhealthy and feverish for the first time, is more than up to the occasion.

The interview takes on a ritualistic quality: maker and creation circle each other warily, Batty zeroing in on Tyrell with almost seductive menace and Tyrell backing away, nervously tossing off flimsy excuses for his botched work—telling Roy why he can't live, but not why he was designed so unfairly in the first place. The viewer can't help applauding Batty's blasphemy as he hisses, in the echoing, candle-lit *sanctum*: "I want more *life*, fucker."

Roy Batty, the avenging angel of "Humanity Lost," relentlessly pursues Deckard across the deserted rooftops of a dying civilization, only to save him from extinction.

The rest of the scene becomes a bizarre seduction which culminates in a Kiss of Death. The moment of Tyrell's destruction is transcendent and obscene; it's to Ridley Scott's credit that during this horrific sequence the camera is aimed at the face of Batty rather than his victim.

At the end of *Bride of Frankenstein*, the monster allows his creator to escape the castle before blowing it up in despair; the Creature destroys himself, his reluctant mate and Pretorious with the line, "We belong dead!" There is no doubt that the murder of Tyrell has left Roy in a frenzied state, yet even now there is no stopping his clock, and this is perhaps his most fundamental difference from Frankenstein's monster: he does not give up. Despite his crimes, of which he is very aware, and impending death, he still rages against the dying of the light. Frankenstein's monster thought of himself as accursed and unnatural; Roy has thought of himself as Sebastian describes him—different but perfect, a special version of a human. "Ah, Chew," he says to the man who designed his eyes, "if only you could see what I've seen with your eyes."

In Philip Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the basis of *Blade Runner*, androids may have felt empathy for one another—for instance, Roy's grief for Irmgard—yet they don't seem to have made the cross-over into the ability to empathize with humans. They develop considerable skill at faking empathy; hence the Voight-Kampff test to weigh verbal replies against actual physiological responses. Perhaps that is why, in the film, it takes Deckard so long to nail down Rachael as a replicant: she doesn't even try to fake empathy, and by answering cold-bloodedly comes off as an unsympathetic human.

There was another character in the novel, Mercer, a sort of global-awareness, lesser-god figure with whom humans would link mentally for wise advice. In the climax of the novel, during his chase of the last replicants, Deckard shares a transcendent mind-link with Mercer, who teaches him the truth of suffering and duty.

In the film, not only does Roy show genuine grief at Pris' loss; but this death also propels him into humanity and causes him to take on some of the qualities of the novel's Mercer.

Early in the film, despite their polarity—or perhaps because of it—Batty and Deckard were linked. They are both on searches, and as Deckard examines Leon's photo of Batty in fascination, he echoes Roy's gesture, leaning cheek-on-fist—a classic gesture of sympathy according to anthropology. Roy's own love scene follows Rick's. Now, in this segment of the film, they are further linked. Batty taunts Rick with what must be the cop's inner thoughts—"Aren't you the good man?" He and Rick suffer identically; in different parts of the building, in their bizarre hide-and-seek, they hear each other's screams of pain over their injured hands. "If your right hand offend, cut it off;" these hands have been pretty offensive. What a Christ figure for Batty to become, forcing mutual atonement for sins.

Deckard is the final character in the film to be overcome by the force of Batty's personality; as Roy finds Pris' body and knows that he too is under the gun—meanwhile actually having the nerve to stop to kiss his dead mate—Deckard can only wait for Batty to come into his

Photos: Left column, top down, Rick Deckard walks the foggy streets of Animoid Row as he attempts to locate the shop of the snake maker. Lt. Gaff pilots the police spinner through the night as Deckard awaits his fate. Chew, the eyeball geneticist works in his sub-zero lab where everything is caked with ice. Deckard uses his ESPER to zero in on specific details of some of Leon's photos.

sights; his hands are shaking so badly that his failure to shoot Batty is not entirely due to the replicant's speed. From the beginning, Deckard hardly has a chance against Batty, even though he is the one who's armed. It becomes plain that Batty is playing with Deckard, keeping him on a string like a frantic yo-yo. If he's not going to kill him, what is it Batty has in mind for Deckard?

In this segment, it is hard to know what is in Batty's mind, because his past incentives have disappeared or lie bleeding on the floor. He has to go back to Pris' corpse a second time; he caresses it and bursts into tears, and the entire building seems to resound with his anguish as he begins to howl like a lost animal. At this point, stripping down and hunting Deckard, he becomes a figure of almost abstract power.

Roy is virtually unstoppable. As he dies, he only seems to become stronger and greater—punching through one wall to yank at Deckard, butting through another headfirst to urge him on, kicking through a window to chase him onto a ledge. At one point, Deckard hits Batty with a lead pipe in a direct echo of Ash's beheading in *Alien;* but this android, not so easily halted, merely encourages Rick with a joyous cry of "That's the spirit!" (At least he has a sense of humor. . .) Rutger Hauer, the actor who played Batty, has said that Scott wanted Batty to become a sort of Bruce Lee combatant. This would seemingly take some doing; Lee was a fighter of considerable beauty, and despite the viciousness of his films and his own poor acting ability, watching him can be a great pleasure. In the last segment of the chase Roy Batty becomes a figure of even greater passion and beauty. Following Deckard relentlessly with a terrible smile, streaming blood and raindrops, he looms over the low-angle camera like a figure straight from mythology.

There is, eventually, the moment where Roy Batty becomes human; where he crosses the last barrier and achieves the ultimate link between the heroes of the film: Deckard has jumped across a chasm to avoid him, and is hanging from the edge of the building by a few fingers; Roy stands clutching a white bird, his face illumined by some transcendent, joyous decision—the decision to cross the chasm; and in doing so, he seizes Deckard with his crucified hand.

Perhaps this act of empathy, the saving of his would-be murderer, is actually the final joke of a very ironic character. Yet throughout the film he has been almost literally hanging from the edge, as poor Deckard truly ends up doing; and it is gratifying to see Batty get liberated from the chasm and from time . . . if terrible to see him go. Batty has achieved everything that science fiction itself aims to do: he has fascinated, terrified, inspired and *disturbed* the audience; which is a good enough apotheosis for any character. ■

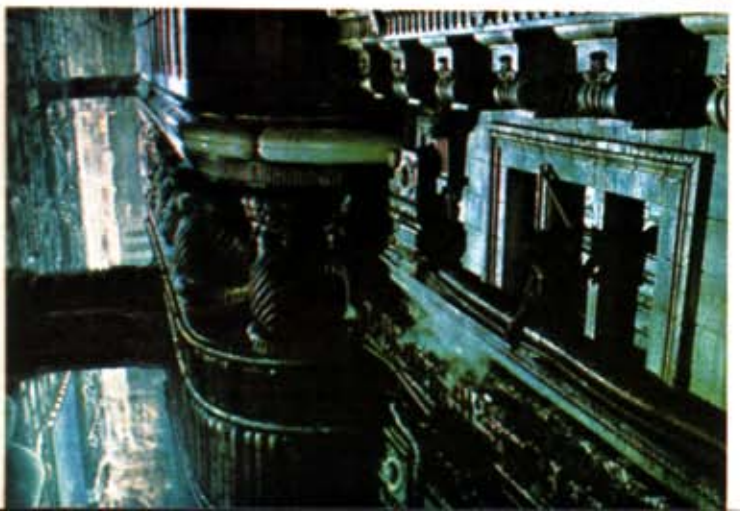
Photos: Right column, top down. Deckard shows his blade runner identification to a street cop after shooting a fleeing replicant. Deckard stalks his prey from the top of a Metro cab. Roy Batty rides the elevator up the side of the Tyrell pyramid as he plans to confront the very man who designed and made him. Deckard finds momentary shelter in a stone alcove atop the highrise as Batty stalks him in a deadly game.

SPECIAL EFFECTS Director DOUGLAS TRUMBULL Talks About The Fantastic World of BLADE RUNNER™

Article by DAN BARON

Los Angeles, 2019. The sky is filled with flying cars called "Spinners." Through a dense maze of smoke and a continuous downpour of rain, one can see a decaying city that houses remnants of the past and creations of the future. The streets are polluted; the city is overpopulated. Rick Deckard, a blade runner (or in modern terms, a type of police officer), is assigned to "retire" (or kill) several "replicants"—manufactured humans who are thought to be dangerous, and are supposed to be incapable of having any human feelings or sensitivity. This is the premise of Blade Runner, *Ridley Scott's movie that painstakingly creates a future city through a vast array of visual and special effects. To supervise the effects for the film, Scott was able to obtain the talents of Douglas Trumbull, master of special effects.*

Photos: This page, left, top down; this futuristic panorama of the industrial complex of Los Angeles was an incredibly detailed miniature built in forced perspective out of plastic, etched brass and fiber optics, and photographed through a "star filter." The monolithic Tyrell Pyramid is shown here fully lit by fiber optics as a "flying truck" glides past its etched brass edifice. A advertising derigible floats low over the city, promoting cigarettes and "off-world" fantasies, while its perpetually crisscrossing searchlights out through the rain and the darkness. In this street scene, Deckard's car zooms down a side street as Matt Yuricich's matte painting of the Los Angeles skylines fills in the distance. Top, center, Special Effects director Douglas Trumbull looms over the incredibly complex, fiber-optic-lit frontal facade of the Tyrell Pyramid "miniature."



Since 1965 Douglas Trumbull has been instrumental in the creation and development of new technology in the field of motion-picture special visual effects. His education and early experience in art, design and illustration led him to work on such film projects as Lifeline In Space, Space In Perspective, *and* To The Moon And Beyond *in Cinerama 360 for the New York World's Fair. He has created special effects for* 2001: A Space Odyssey, The Andromeda Strain, Close Encounters Of The Third Kind, Star Trek, The Motion Picture, *and now* Blade Runner. *He has received several Academy-Award nominations for his effects work. He also directed* Silent Running *for Universal Pictures, and recently completed directing the ill-fated SF thriller* Brainstorm *for MGM.*

Several years ago Trumbull founded EEG (Entertainment Effects Group). His partner at EEG is Richard Yuricich, a professional cinematographer with extensive experience in the filming of commercials, documentaries, television productions and feature films. His early experiences as a cameraman eventually were applied to the technically and aesthetically demanding discipline of special visual effects. His credits include 2001: A Space Odyssey, Silent Running *and* Close Encounters Of The Third Kind, *for which he was director of photography of special visual effects and received an Academy-Award nomination. In the same role for* Star Trek, The Motion Picture, *he received another Academy nomination and an award from the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror.*

Douglas Trumbull Talks about EEG, Special Effects and BLADE RUNNER

"Entertainment Effects Group is a partnership between myself and Dick Yuricich. We've been working together for years on projects since *2001*. I feel that my job in the company is really a sort of creative head of our operations. I provide the input on projects relating to the creative design of how I feel the effects for a certain picture should look. I get into an involvement on how the effects should be broken down, or what kind of conceptual approaches should be taken to achieve a certain effect or a certain look, or a certain overall design to a picture. I find it sort of challenging and interesting to try on each picture to come up with at least one thing that's somehow different or better than, or in addition to whatever's been done before. So that's one of the things that keeps me interested: to try to invent something like the smoke room, or a new kind of motion-control system, or some kind of interesting thing that makes each project intriguing as we go along so it doesn't remain a manufacturing business.

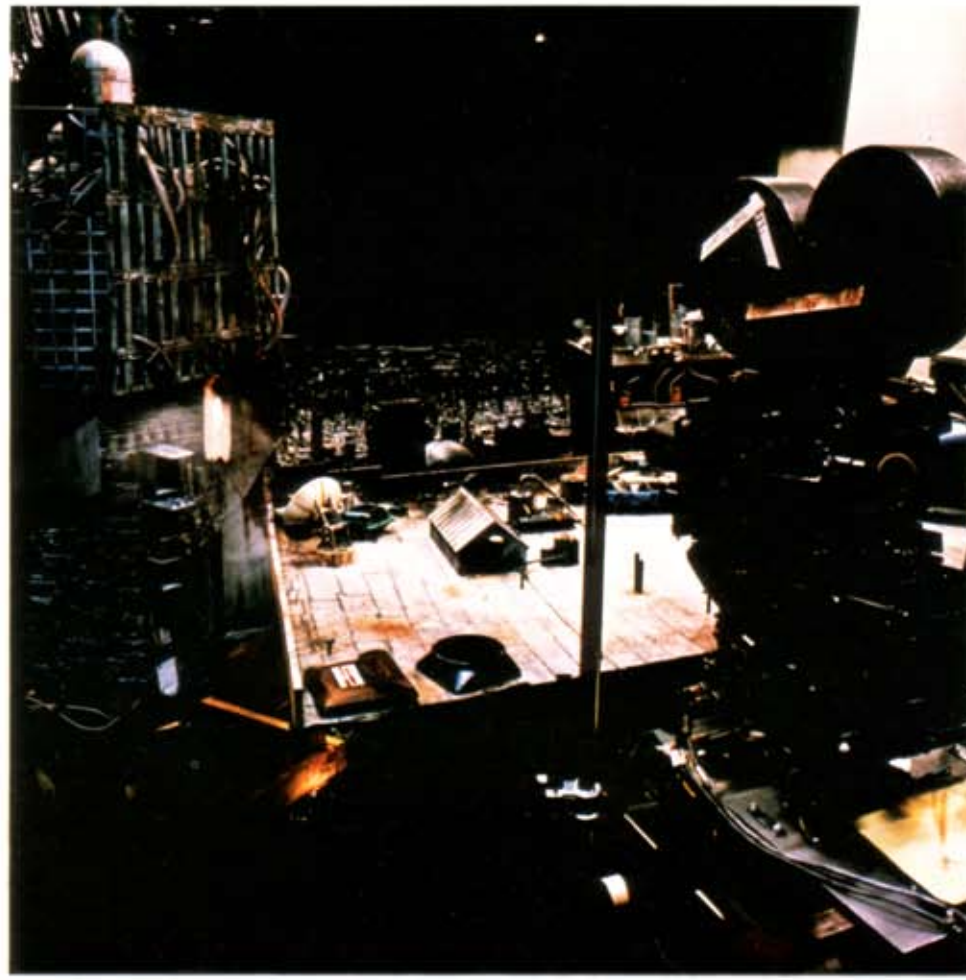
"Dick is really in charge of all of our photographic processes, optical processes, equipment, crew, staffing, operations. He's, I think, one of the most gifted cinematographers in the world. He was just cinematographer on *Brainstorm*.

"We specialize, with almost all of our photography, in 70mm. I'll say 70mm because it gets very complex when I discriminate between 65 and 70mm. Sixty-five millimeter is the negative stock, and 70mm is the print stock; but it's just easier to say 70mm. There are other effects houses around, including Apogee and ILM, that work in 35mm or 36mm VistaVision. Each of these processes have their advantages and disadvantages.

"We generally shy away from blue-screen work. We have found that blue screen is an adequate technique for hard-edged mattes, but doesn't quite provide the clarity that we want. We work in a larger format; we use motion-control very extensively, and we pull mattes off using a second pass, creating a contrast matte so that our images are clean against black. I'm oversimplifying it, but I'll just go through some of the terminology.

"We use motion-control systems extensively. There's been a lot of discussion about motion control. I think some people believe today that if you have a motion-control system, you're a special effects man, and that's just not where it's at. Motion-control is a technique that has been growing extensively for many years. What could be called motion control was used fairly successfully on "2001," and motion control at that time consisted of very clumsy synchronous motors or DC motors linked up to Selson motors, which were linked up to gear boxes, which were taken off lathe machines, which were hooked up to timing belts, which were hooked up to lead screws. The whole thing was very clumsy; it only ran at one speed, and it only did one direction. But nevertheless, it was motion control. It was a technique for ex-

Photos: This page, right column, top down; a miniature police Spinner, its running lights haloed by smoke and photographic filters, does a "fly by" past the Tyrell pyramid. Rachael greets Deckard in Tyrell's penthouse office in this composite shot of live footage, matte paintings, cell artwork and arc lamps. A police Spinner perpares to land on top of the L.A. headquarters of police operations; background buildings are also miniatures, lit by fiber-optics and shot in EEG's "Smoke Room." Deckard (lost in the shadows) prepares to climb out onto the ledge of a highrise overlooking L.A. in an attempt to escape the homicidal replicant Roy Batty; the matte painting of the Los Angeles street scene was painted by Matt Yuricich.



actly repeating camera moves.

"Motion control is basically nothing more than that, and the movements can be any movement you can imagine. It can be the movement of an object, the movement of a model, the movement of a camera, the movement of a lens, the turning on and off of a light, the moving of a light—any kind of dynamic, physical motion you can think of can be controlled by motion-control systems of one kind or another.

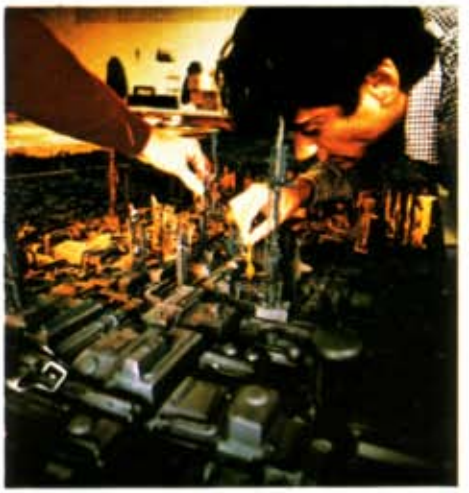
"I'm sure most everybody knows that a matte is simply a black and white silhouette image on a piece of film, whether it's on one frame or many frames, or whether it's moving or static. It's usually a high-contrast film image used in an optical printer for purposes of superimposing images together.

"We then go through all the standard processes of optical 'lineup,' which is just the idea that every special effects shot is really a composite of a number of different photographic elements—positive and negative elements, motion-picture films of different models that have to be composited into a single shot, which might include a model shot, an animation shot of a background, a matte painting, some live-action photography. Effect shots are often amazingly filled with many, many film elements.

"We spent a lot of time with Ridley going over *Blade Runner,* and obviously everybody had their own mind's-eye view of what a scene should look like. One of the most fortunate things for us on this picture was that Ridley is quite a good illustrator and does many of his own drawings. He can draw for you right before your eyes what he wants to see, and from that we can extrapolate what's special effects, what's foreground, what's background, and he can then guess at the length of a shot or the angle of a lense. From that we make a plan of what the shot will consist of and hope it ultimately matches what Ridley asked us to do.

"I think *Blade Runner* is really very accurate on a technological level. One of the things about this film is that it's absolutely filled with merchandise. It's just pervaded with high technology, and that's probably the way we are headed. *Blade Runner* has a very credible look in that respect.

Photos: Top left, counter-clockwise, the "New York" street on the studio lot is in the early stages of its massive reconstruction into what eventually became known as "Ridleyville;" The final set was a totally convincing futuristic world of neon and machinery; strange characters populating Scott's vision of the future, complete this scene along "Animoid Row;" Rutger Hauer prepares for a shot amidst a jungle of colorful neon signs; the camera is ready for a shot of this rooftop miniature, complete with the forced perspective modle of L.A.'s industrial complex in the distance.



"A good example is the whole concept behind the Spinner, which was designed by Syd Mead, who is a very talented and knowledgeable illustrator and industrial designer. He's worked for automotive companies and large steel companies; he's been designing vehicles for years based upon his knowledge of technology. So, the conditions under which this vehicle might in fact fly via the thrusters that come out of the bottom and lifting devices, are very similar to some of the vertical take-off planes you see today. I think it's going to be quite awesome when this Spinner flies to the Tyrell Pyramid, which is about a mile high. We've invested a lot of time and energy in the construction of the pyramid and the choreography of the sequence where this Spinner flies up to the top of that pyramid, and I think it's going to be very convincing.

"One of the reasons I like working on films like *Blade Runner* is that it's clear by definition to the audience that it's a special effect because you couldn't just go out and shoot it. I shy away from films that are period pieces. They're not as challenging to me as creating a whole new world environment."

THE VISUAL DESIGNERS

Perhaps equally important were the jobs of production designer Lawrence Paull and visual consultant Syd Mead . While Trumbull and his associates at Entertainment Effects Group were responsible for work that involved miniatures and mattes, Paull and Mead helped establish the actual design of the environment being depicted.

Long before production on the film began, Scott was trying to establish the visual style that he wanted to realize on the screen. His ideas for a visual scheme would often be transformed into thumbnail sketches of what he wanted to film; from this point, Scott and production designer Paull would expand on these sketches and develop them. One key element of Ridley Scott's visual style is his emphasis on "layering." For *Blade Runner,* the director planned to have many visual elements interacting in every frame. In addition, early on it was decided that the world of *Blade Runner* would not be the sterile uninhabited world of many a futuristic science-fiction film; instead the

(Continued on page 68)

Photos: Top row, left to right, one of the full size "Spinner" mockups lifts off from the set with a dramatic burst of exhaust, and the aid of a steel harness of crane cables; Deckard and Gaff are encompassed by instrumentation inside the cockpit of the Spinner. Second row, an entire crew of model makers at EEG were set to work constructing the miniature cityscapes and buildings which were constructed of wood, vacuformed plastic, etched brass and miles of fiber-optics. Bottom row, a modle Spinner nearly three feet in length was also constructed, complete with miniature passengers.

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film would try to make its environment authentic and believable, with a core of densely accumulated details.

Amidst the obvious credit that is given for the striking look of the vehicles in the film (which were designed by Mead) and EEG's special effects, many have overlooked the contribution of the production designer to this film. But Lawrence Paull helped coordinate the different visual effects for the film, and was closely involved with Scott on every phase of production. His work often bridged the gap between the imagined or sketched world and the world that eventually unfolds on the screen.

Scott and his associates acknowledged the various sources that helped shape and influence their vision of the future as it appears in *Blade Runner.* The most obvious influence are the films noirs of the 1940's and 1950's; Deckard not only offers voice-over narration as many Hollywood gumshoes have—he inhabits a dark nightworld and city of sin that seems to be derived from the novels of Raymond Chandler (even recent films such as *Chinatown* and *Body Heat* come to mind, with their comparably blazing colors). Ridley Scott has also mentioned the influence of *Heavy Metal* magazine on his visual style, and the streamlined rectilinear shapes of many of the tall buildings in the film suggest various Art Deco influences as their source or inspiration. In addition, there are many characters that wander in and out of scenes in this film who would seem at home in the world of punk rock and New Wave music.

One of the more distinctive aspects of this movies' visual design is the visualization of the idea of "retrofitting." Basically, this refers to the addition of new parts or equipment to existing objects or machines. Many of the man made systems depicted in the film are beginning to fall apart, so additional layers are added to them to slow down their inevitable breakdown—the systems are retrofitted. Thus the idea of recycling, and the tension between the old and the new, is given visual expression in the film.

While glancing through various magazines, books, and pictures, Ridley Scott came across *Sentinel,* a book by Syd Mead that included his designs of futuristic vehicles. Mead, a well-known industrial designer who worked on *Tron,* was hired as a visual consultant for *Blade Runner,* and was instrumental in imagining and helping to realize the vehicles in the film—and their surrounding environment. Mead has worked for the Ford Motor Company in the area of visual design; he has a talent for imagining what futuristic vehicles will look like. But Mead's contribution to *Blade Runner* included more than just visualizing or drawing vehicles: he was able to integrate his ideas about the look of the future into the overall concept of the film. As a result, Mead was able to influence the look of the storefronts, streets, and props that were part of the world that his cars traveled through.

Alltold, Mead designed five vehicles for the film—most of which have some rough equivalent in today's world. For example, Mead designed one vehicle called the People's Vehicle—which is essentially a futuristic answer to the problem of public transportation. Nevertheless, it seems to combine elements of a taxicab, a personally owned car, and other means of transportation: patrons pay to drive the vehicle for a certain amount of time, and when they have arrived at their destination they leave it for the next person (or replicant) who needs it. Likewise, Deckard's private car blends elements of the present and the future: it looks almost like an updated and advanced sports car.

"One of the more distinctive aspects of Bladerunner's unique design is the visualization of the idea of 'retrofitting'."

Perhaps the most formidable vehicle in the film—and certainly the one that garners the most attention—is the Spinner. Often in science-fiction movies, vehicles have taken on wings in order to fly; for *Blade Runner,* Mead wanted to create a more believable method for flying. The inside of the Spinner actually contains the means by which it can take flight. Mead designed an internal system that lifts the vehicle, including hydraulically operated machinery which folds up the front wheels—just as an airplane folds up its wheels before a flight. Another practical yet futuristic feature of the Spinner were floor boards made out of plexiglass. These boards allowed the drivers or other passengers to look directly below them at a city that was receding into the distance.

The fate of one of Mead's designs offers a quick glimpse at the process inherent in filming special many visual effects. Mead would hand his designs over to draftsmen, who would then meticulously make blueprints of the vehicles. From this point, the vehicles would actually be built—as miniatures and on a full-sized scale. But at every step in this process the work was likely to be challenged and refined. Scott often asked that the designs be changes to suit his vision, and Trumbull wanted to make sure that the full-scale vehicles were in close harmony with the miniatures that his staff was constructing. In another area of production, Mead's matte designs would also fall under the scrutiny of the craftsmen at EEG as they were also responsible for painting the mattes.

The actual construction for the full-sized vehicles fell under the supervision of Gene Winfield, who had previously produced and designed vehicles for the *Star Trek* television series and Woody Allen's movie *Sleeper.* Working with a crew of thirty-five people, Winfield was responsible for producing twenty-five vehicles for the film.

Modern-day vehicles were often used as the body or chassis of the futuristic vehicles. The large vehicles were in many cases built up from old Dodge Vans; the Spinners, from Volkswagons. One method that was used to build the more elaborate vehicles was to create fiberglass pieces to the car from molds taken from a wooden mockup. The flying Spinner—which would actually be flown by crane—was composed of a light type of aluminum. Other vehicles that appear in the film are modern-day cars retrofitted for the city environment of *Blade Runner.*

While Syd Mead, Gene Winfield, and others were designing and producing the vehicles for *Blade Runner,* Trumbull and his associates at EEG were assembling a staff to work on their branch special effects. Actually, Trumbull and his partner at EEG Richard Yuricich (who is also a cinematographer), acted in a supervisory capacity for this film. While they would often design effects and oversee the production of them, the supervision of the actual shots as they were being filmed was turned over to David Dryer, who, like Ridley Scott, has had considerable experience in television commericals. There were also a variety of separate departments at EEG whose craftsmen would make significant contributions to the final look of the film: covered in these departments were such areas as optical effects, effects photography, miniatures, motion control systems, and mattes.

All told, there were about eighty-five special effects shots executed at EEG,and the crew was able to complete them slightly under budget. One key feature of all these shots is that they were filmed with sixty-five millimeter film; in most other films, most of the special effects are filmed with thirty-five millimeter film. The difference is that the sixty-five millimeter film produces a clearer and sharper image.

The miniatures and mattes were probably the most important effects in terms of the final look of the film. In the miniatures department, there was also a key change in personnel: Mark Stetson replaced Greg Jein early on in production as the person in charge.

One of the most outstanding miniatures that appears in the film is that of the Tyrell building. The pyramid-like look of the structure was actually based on pyramids in Mexico that one of the film's craftsmen photographed during production. The model for the building was two and a half feet high. One of the first steps that Mark Stetson and his crew took was to construct a foam mockup of the structure. From this point, such features as plastic panels, acid-etched brass plates, and moveable elevators were added, as the final model took shape. One striking element of the two pyramids that appears in the film are the convincing lights which emanate from them. These lights come from *inside* the pyramids; the windows on the pyramid through which the light shines were realized by scraping paint from the structure.

Another product of the miniature work on the film was the environment that the pyramids dwell in: this environment was called the Hades landscape by the crew. The vast staggering panoramas that appear in the opening scenes of the film are often just a miniature that was built on a table. It was thirteen feet deep and eighteen feet wide. The design for this complex was also inspired by photographs of existing structures: in this case, oil refineries were photographed by the crew. Part of the miniature was composed of etched brass plates, which would be placed on top of plexiglass sheets on the table. Other parts of the structure were composed of foam, which would be put into molds. The entire landscape was lit from below: holes were made in the plexiglass, and over seven miles of fiber optics lit Hades from below and within.

The miniature crew also had a difficult task when it came to making small versions of the Spinners. Four miniature Spinners were constructed: one was one foot, three inches long; two others were three and one half inches and one inch long, respectively. And, for most of the shots of flying, a four foot model was constructed. The model was filled with puppets that represented characters in the film; the puppets were a foot and a half long. Like the shots of other miniatures in *Blade Runner,* many of the shots of the Spinner were filmed in a smoke-filled room; this technique if often used at EEG to give the illusion of depth, but it was particularly appropriate for this film with

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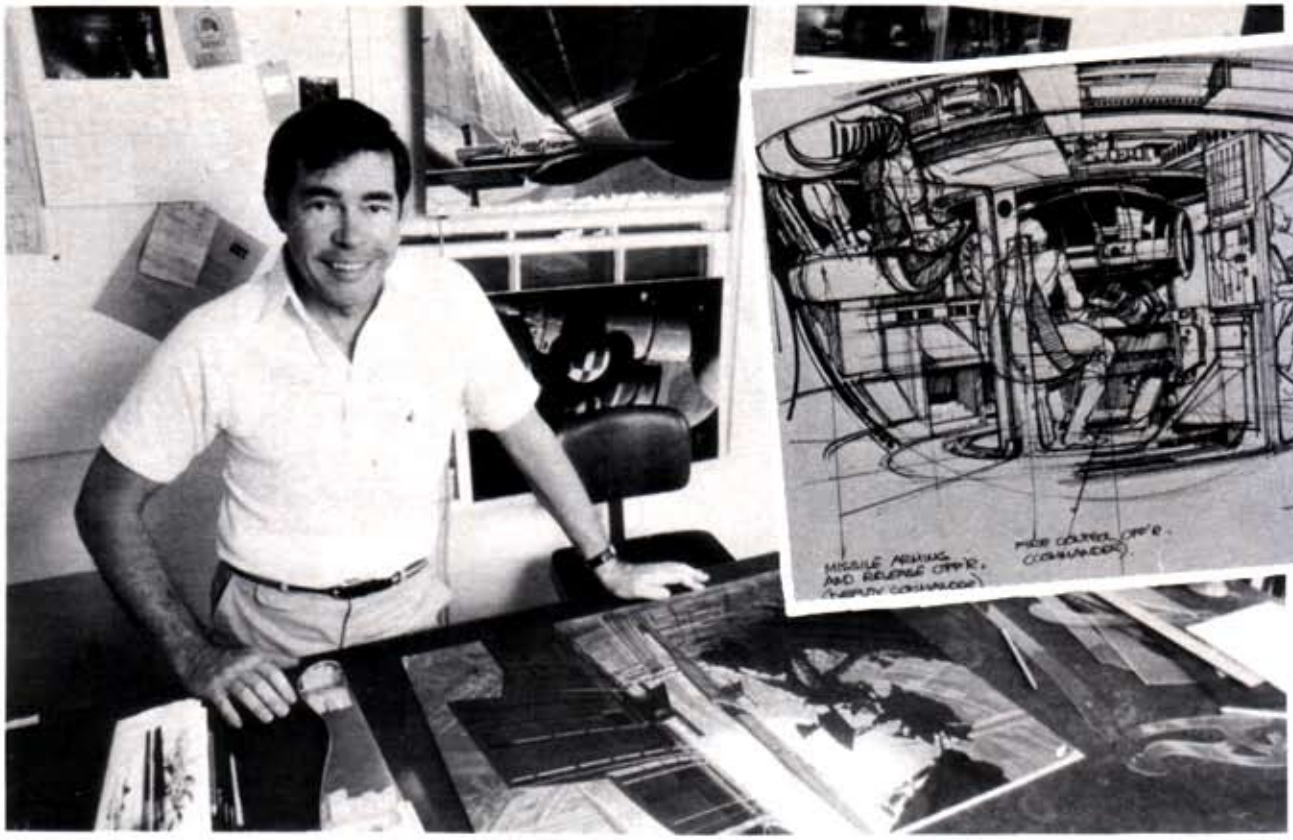


The Fantastic Futures of SYD MEAD

From the BLADE RUNNER Ghetto to the Game-Grids of TRON

Designer SYD MEAD Shapes the Worlds of Tomorrow

Profile by JOE BENSOUA

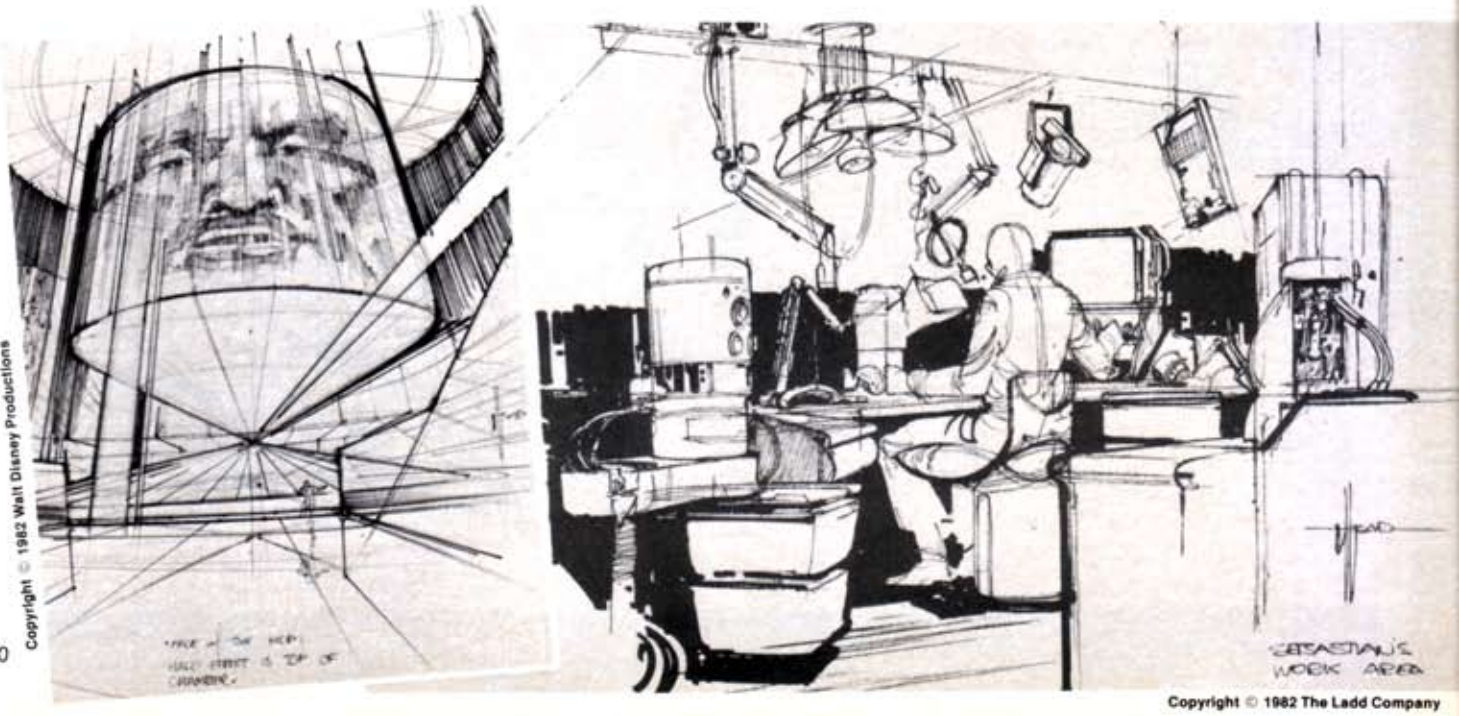
Syd Mead is a design specialist who deals with futuristic concepts. He's worked on a total of three movies so far, and has lent his visions of the future to *Star Trek: The Movie*, *Blade Runner* and now *Tron*.

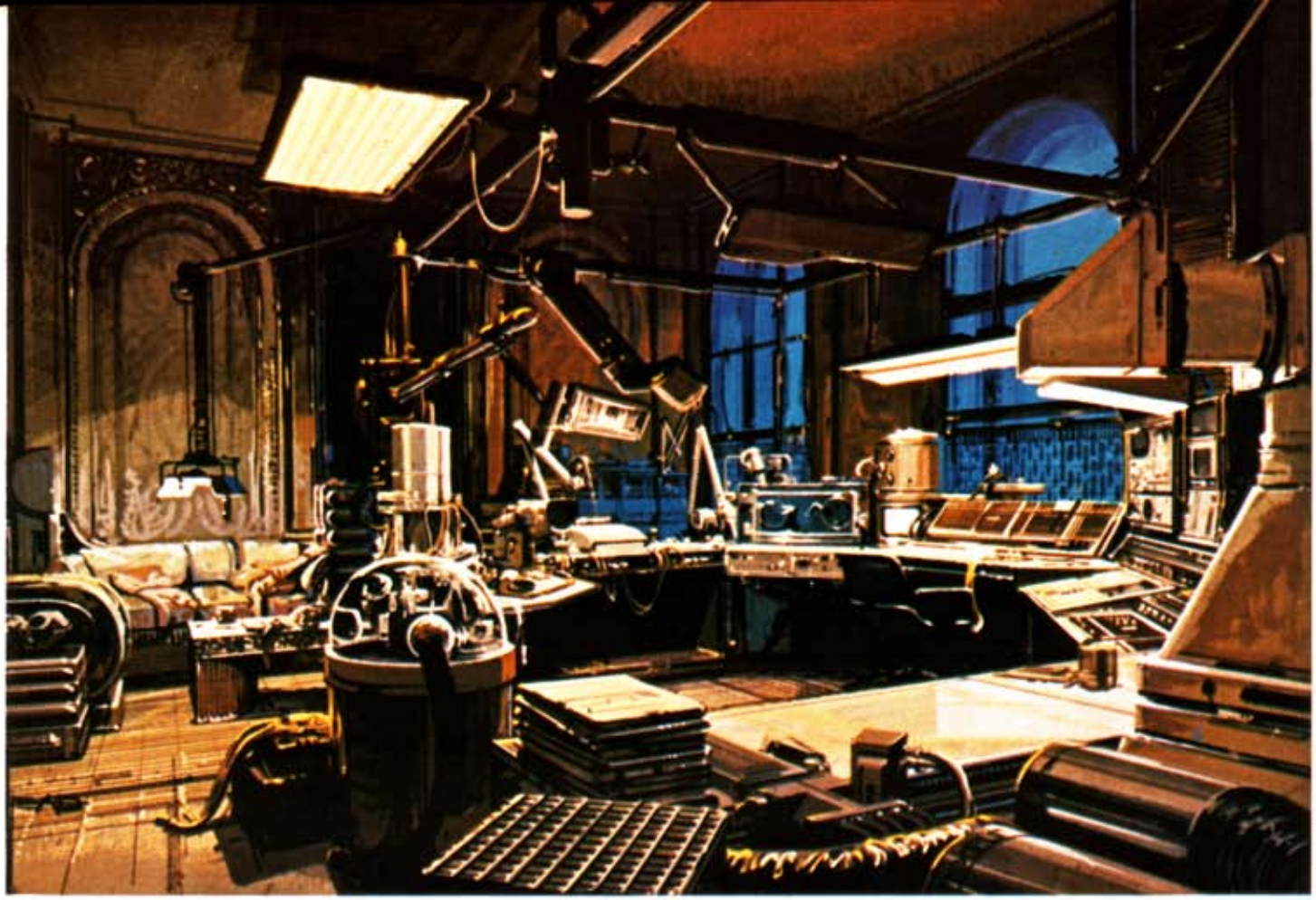
Mead was hired to come up with, as he puts it, "mobility ideas" for *Tron*. He designed Sark's (David Warner's evil computer alter ego) aircraft carrier, the light cycles, tanks, solar sailers, a variety of terrain, a training camp and holding cells for the gladiators, among other things.

"It didn't require a lot of art work," he says of his role on *Tron*. "I did a lot of sketches. Lisberger wanted ideas on how things should look. Then the computers would duplicate my drawings. They would feed in four-view drawings, for example the aircraft carrier, and that way you have a three-dimensional object. They embellished it with pinpoints of light and color shading and came up with an object that's very real. It has weight; it's lighted properly . . . it's marvelous."

In *Tron*, as in his previous movies, Mead's biggest challenge comes in making his objects believable.

"Doing this depends on the operational limits," he said. "In *Tron*, believability is what the director wants. What do I look for? I think having worked on two major productions and listening to film indus-





try people all the time, it seems there's a kind of 'in-head memory' that you must accept as a 'limitation'. If something doesn't look believable, it interrupts the audience's concentration . . . it disrupts the illusion of reality that is mentally in progress.

"Also you sometimes have to make concessions in order to make things look like people think they should look. That's very complicated. I could never throw believability out the window."

But to get a better fix on Syd Mead, the man, you have to know what qualifies him to work on films. As a consultant, Mead has been engaged by some of the world's leading corporations, including Honda, Lear, Philips and Alcoa. He had designed experimental body shapes for Ford Motor Co., has assisted in the development of economy cars for American Motors, and produced consultant designs for Volvo's mid-1980's series. In addition to these companies, he has worked in a similar capacity for Chrysler, BMW, and Jeep. His illustrations have been reproduced in books for National Geographic and have been the subject of magazine articles from Fantastic Films to Playboy.

In the area of naval transportation, he conceived a high speed yacht for Hater Marine of New Orleans and designed the entire exterior and interior of the Norwegian Caribbean Line's proprosed cruise liner for Ring Design of Spain. He has also designed bus cockpits that reduce driver fatigue, and for the U.S., Department of Transportation has visualized high speed commuter trains suspended on magnetic fields.

In aviation, Mead's collaborative efforts with the French brought on the first class cabin for the Airbus 300, a fuel efficient competitor to the U.S. Airline designs. He also worked with the French firm of Raymond Loewy, and produced illustrations of interior concepts for Air France's Concord. For NASA, he provided the illustrations for the interior of Skylab and conceived a fold-up chair system to accomodate different sized crew members.

It wasn't until he moved to Los Angeles from Detroit with his business manager in 1975 that Mead was introduced to Hollywood.

"I got a call from John Dykstra," he said in an interview at his Hollywood home. "He wanted to get acquainted and say hello because John used a lot of my steel books going through industrial design school. (see Dykstra interview on page 64) The books were for U.S. Steel and were used for rendering references and idea starters."

Dykstra, the special effects wizard who helped bring *Star Wars* to the screen with Doug Trumbull, was present with his conceptual designs, and approached him to work on *Star Trek*.

"*Star Trek* was in progress and John got the contract to build the Veeger entity," said Mead. 'They called me in and I started designing it with director Robert Wise.

"My job was to design a back end for it; they had the front already done. Wise wanted something awe inspiring but cathedral-

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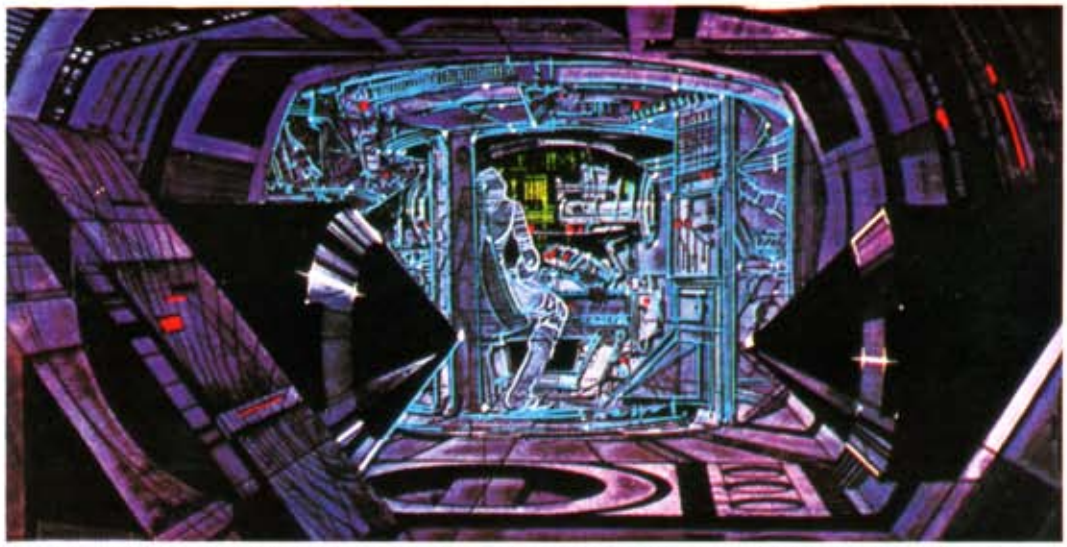

Photos: Opposite page: top, Syd Mead at work in his studio. Insert, a preliminary Mead sketch of the tank turret from *Tron*. Bottom left, a conceptual drawing for the anthropomorphic MPC unit in *Tron*. Bottom right, an early sketch of Sebastians genetic workshop in *Blade Runner*. This page: top, a final preproduction painting of the work area in Sebastians apartment. Middle, Mead's color rendering of the tank turret from *Tron*.

SYD MEAD TRON SPFX

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like . . . almost a religious kind of atmosphere. I took a gothic cathedral and rotated it into six sections; thats what Trumbull built for a model."

Blade Runner, the futuristic search-and-destroy movie starring Harrison Ford, was next. He met with director Ridley (*Alien*) Scott while the script was still named "*Dangerous Days*" and was asked to bring his ideas with him.

"I started designing vehicles, the street scenes, voice count machine, and other things. But my main role at first was to come up with five or six vehicle designs: the spinner (the flying car), Sebastian's vehicle, a taxi, a street car, and a time-used peoples' car.

"I put them in settings to make the cars look real," he said. "Ridley started to like the backgrounds and had me go on to design the street set. It was a case where one thing led to another. I also helped design Deckard's apartment and Sebastian's laboratory. They had budget crossovers, so some stuff I designed got cut out, like a portable computer Deckard would use which was an extension of a police computer.

"Ridley was a stickler for visual detail. *Blade Runner* had to recreate reality in almost every detail . . . wall plugs designs and parking meters had to look just right. There has to be some logic to it. I have a good background in how things are manufactured which makes them look real when you build some imaginary thing."

Since Mead is a man who brings futuristic ideas to life, does he think his concept of the future as seen in movies can be put to practical use?

"No," he says without hesitation. "*Blade Runner* isn't my idea of the future. It's Philip Dick's idea, translated through the script writers and Ridley Scott. It may be plausible for a high thrust power source for the hover cars, but you could only use them in a place like Iowa. There's too much density here in Los Angeles where the film takes place. You'd have disaster."

Mead's future looks as busy as the ones he bripgs to the screen. In addition to an upcoming project with director Bill Friedkin (which he declined to describe), he'll be working on entertainment complexes in Houston and London. ■

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its dense atmosphere. The key to the final look of the four foot Spinner is that it matches the full-sized Spinner; while watching this film, a viewer cannot distinguish between the various effects because they were so meticulouly conceived of and integrated.

The man responsible for the matte paintings was Matt Yuricich, who is the brother of EEG's Richard Yuricich. The matte paintings for *Blade Runner* were far more complex than for most films: the film not only combined many different types of special effects, but many of the visuals contained aspects of the present and future. Thus Yuricich had to create mattes that would blend in well with miniatures, full-size vehicles, and live-action. Many of the large and expansive shots of the city that open the film are really mattes. In addition, mattes play a major role in the final climactic chase scene as Deckard stalks Batty. When Deckard is gripping the ledge of a building and seems and seems about to fall countless stories to his death, he is actually dangling above a travelling matte.

The technique use for mattes at EEG is unique among mattemakers in the industry. Most matte artists paint to the original negative; at EEG the painting is done to the intermediate duplicating stock. This gives the matte artists flexibility; the original camera negatives that others use cannot be replaced. There is also very little lost in quality in the EEG mattes, because 65 millimeter film is used.

One of the greatest challenges (and problems) of the EEG method is achieving the right colors in the matte. The problem is that the dupe negative which is used for the matte is itself created by a low-contrast print called the interpositive—which is derived from the original negative. The colors for the two prints are slightly different; the matte artist must paint a matte in which the colors match. For *Blade Runner*, it was often necessary to approximate colors by using a color spectrum analysis to reproduce the colors of a particular shot.

Before the mattes were painted. Yuricich and his crew examined the live action scenes that required mattes. Later, they often tried to realize some of Syd Mead's and Ridley Scott's designs for the mattes. When the mattes were filmed, a matte stand was used; it facilitated the photographing and lighting of the mattes. In addition, Yuricich would often add a color filter to a matte after it had been completed. The process of making matte paintings for this film took nine months; the result was about twenty mattes.

The makers of *Blade Runner* have utilized a wide variety of visual effects and creations to establish a society which is at once imagined yet authentic—fantastic, without being that far removed from our very own. It is difficult to recall any other film which has presented such a fully realized and detailed visualization of a city in the future. ■

BLADE RUNNER DESERVED BETTER

I'd like to comment on whether *Blade Runner* really answered the question, "Do Anroids Dream Of Electric Sheep?"

First of all this film had some things going against it from the start. There was a month's delay in its release, therefor it became a shadow in the sucess of all the other sci/fi movies that were realeased prior to it. Secondly, it received too much pre-publicity. Most of it in the form of "word of mouth" from people who had read a first draft script that was readily available at all sci/fi conventions. I had read the script, and it amounted to nothing more than a filthy rag. Then there were the infamous sneak previews where a handful of Harrison Ford fans felt they had the authority to blow up the Ark all over again.

Some people say too much of the phylosophy of Dick's book was left out of the film, others say it was too difficult to follow. I feel a phylosophical depth can never truly and justifiably be represented on a screen. It is a personal experience. Therefore, the Ladd Company had to work within the limits of dishing out a deep story to an audience who goes only for gore or "root-em shoot-em up" movies. I had no difficulty following the story with the long introduction at the begining of the film, Capt. Bryant's in depth explinations, and Deckard's continuous narration. Surely this shows that *Blade Runner* wasn't catered to those privileged few of us who had an opportunity to read Dick's book.

I think *Blade Runner* is a brilliant piece of work! It is an etching in film history, a reflection of what we as a society may become. The sets are holders of a bizzare authenticity. The characters are played to perfection! May I say, Harrison Ford *IS Blade Runner*. Deckard is probably the most realistic hero I have seen in the cinema in years! He cries, hurts, is confused, afraid, needs help, shakes, bleeds, has male urges, eats, and drinks. Harrison Ford has transcended the glorious limits of being a hero. He shows us the quiet beauty of being a hero. When a man finds his spirit again after dehumanization. Rutger Hauer in turn demonstrates that villians are human after all, (hmm?) His awesome Batty intertwines a deep sensitivity in the film. This is definitely a movie where the great special effects, (and that they were) are only a crutch to a moving screenplay!

It is only too tragic that the year 2019 is indeed in the midst of us now. We must indeed be dehumanized if we should turn our noses away from such a beautiful film! Not only "do androids dream of electric sheep," they also dream of the immortality of such great cinema. I believe it a terrible waste that *Blade Runner* should be put out to pasture!

Irene Tumanov
Parlin, NJ