



DENIS VILLENEUVE: THE PATH TO DUNE

Blade Runner 2049

It would be almost impossible to list the ways in which Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) has impacted science fiction filmmaking. Adapted from Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), it was certainly a touchstone for the French-Canadian director Denis Villeneuve. 'I saw this movie maybe 50 times,' he says. 'It's definitely the movie I saw the most in my life.' Now he's been given the daunting mission of delivering the sequel, *Blade Runner 2049*.

His appointment feels well-earned after a quartet of critically admired English-language films – *Prisoners* (2013), *Enemy* (2013), *Sicario* (2015) and *Arrival* (2016) – have positioned him as one of Hollywood's most 'visionary' directors.

You were 14 when Blade Runner came out. What impact did it have on you?

It was something I was deeply looking for: someone who would take sci-fi seriously. In literature, it's a serious genre: there was Isaac Asimov, Frank Herbert, Arthur C. Clarke. But in movies, sci-fi was very much approached as a B-movie genre – with the exception of Stanley Kubrick's *2001 [A Space Odyssey]*, 1968]. They were always clumsy or badly done. For me, *Blade Runner* is one of those rare gems in film history where a true artist decided to make a real sci-fi movie.

Unlike Alien, a franchise begun by Scott that has seen numerous sequels and spin-offs, this is the first film to follow Blade Runner. Was that a concern for you?

Yes. I was afraid of looking like a vandal with paint in a church! I will say there was a huge freedom coming from the fact that I was the first one [to make a sequel]. I remember a conversation I had with Ryan Gosling right at the start, where we both agreed that our chances of success were very small, that what we were trying to do was insane. Once we made peace with that, it gave us a lot of freedom. We said, 'We're going to do a pure artistic gesture.' Like a painter. We will give everything and try to do our best, and after that we know that people will judge us and condemn us, and will compare us to a masterpiece – no matter how good the movie is.

Beyond his input at script stage, what involvement did Ridley Scott have?

He was at the birth of the project: the main ideas, the main characters, the art of the film, is from him. From him and Hampton Fancher. Then Michael Green came on board. So Ridley was there a lot, from an influence point of view. It's his screenplay. Then I made the movie my own. I would not have been able to work with him behind me. You cannot work with the master; it would be unbearable... but he was very generous with me. The man allowed me to play in his dreams.

You worked with cinematographer Roger Deakins on Prisoners and Sicario. How was your collaboration with him here?

Roger is a painter and also a very strong storyteller. He was my closest and strongest collaborator. Roger was part of this project since day zero. One of the most important moments in the filmmaking process for me is the dream moment, when you find images inside you that will fuel the movie. Usually I do it alone; but for this movie I said, 'Listen, I'm shooting in 18 months. I need

help.’ And I brought in Roger right from the start. As I was editing *Arrival*, Roger came to Montreal and we spent several weeks together there drawing the movie. He was there full-time, with storyboard artists. We spent hours and hours... and basically in that period, we rewrote and designed most of the movie – the buildings, the vehicles, and we made a lot of decisions about the laws of the universe that we were going to use. We did a lot of visual research. For me, it was one of the most exciting periods. It was paradise to be with Roger alone, and the movie was born there.

How did you set out to design the film? The images seen so far – such as the deserts of Las Vegas – are different to the original Blade Runner, and yet feel completely of that world.

I’m so happy you’re saying this because it was very tricky. The thing is, I was very secure when we were in the same neighbourhood as Deckard. When we were evolving the film noir aesthetic, when we were in the streets of LA, in the darkness, in the smog... it was a world that was exciting and yet I felt secure. I knew I was in the *Blade Runner* universe. When we stepped out of that neighbourhood, when we were trying to go more on the outskirts of Los Angeles and trying to explore new territories, I felt a huge responsibility and it was frightening for me to try as much as possible to stay in the dystopian, urban landscape and create something that will still be a part of the *Blade Runner* world.

In Blade Runner, the backdrops showed major brands like the now virtually defunct Atari. And yet you have continued using this in the design of the cityscapes. What was your thinking?

I think Atari almost disappeared at one point; it went bankrupt and then it came back recently. There was something in the first movie that was quite powerful... you were seeing real companies, real brands, and that made a link with our reality and it made the movie feel real. The movie is filled with names and brands everywhere and we did the same, but I insisted that we use mostly companies that are part of the first movie, and most of them are dead right now – like Pan Am. Atari was important to me because it was a company that was linked with that era, that period of time, and it’s part of the aesthetic of the first movie. A lot of graphic design is inspired by Atari video games; the spirit of the 80s is very present in the film.

Blade Runner is sometimes said to be the last great special-effects film before the arrival of CGI. What was your approach for the sequel?

There are three movies where the VFX are astonishing: *2001*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Blade Runner* – all with effects by Douglas Trumbull. He is the master – a strong genius. Those special effects have never been bettered. Honestly, Roger Deakins and I – our goal as we were doing our movie, with all the CGI and all the technology, was to try to honour the strength of the first movie. We were saying to ourselves that 35 years on we are struggling to achieve just the beginning of the quality of what they’ve done. Even today it’s still difficult to achieve that.

Does Blade Runner 2049 continue pursuing themes of the world on the verge of environmental collapse?

I would say that it’s in the background: the sub-story. Like in the first one, the story is set in a world where the environment and eco-system has collapsed, where there was a major change in the climate and the earth is slowly dying.

Like in the novel, like in the first movie, it’s just getting worse. People are trying to get out of there as much as possible.

Ridley Scott says Blade Runner was all about paranoia. Again, are you focusing on that?

That inner paranoia, that inner doubt, that existential paranoia, is still in the movie. The new movie has a totally different story with very similar themes.

Denis Villeneuve interviewed by James Mottram, *Sight & Sound*, November 2017

BLADE RUNNER 2049

Directed by: Denis Villeneuve
©: LLC Alcon Entertainment
Production Company: Alcon Entertainment
In association with: Torridon Films, 16:14 Entertainment
Presented by: Alcon Entertainment
In association with: Columbia Pictures
With the participation of:
Canadian Film or Video Production Services Tax Credit
The filmmakers acknowledge the assistance of: New Zealand Government’s Screen Production Grant
This film benefited from: French Tax Rebate for International Productions
Executive Producers: Ridley Scott, Bill Carraro, Tim Gamble, Frank Giustra, Yale Badik, Val Hill
Co-executive Producers: Ian McGloin, Asa Greenberg
Produced by: Andrew A. Kosove, Broderick Johnson, Bud Yorkin, Cynthia Sikes Yorkin
Co-producers: Carl O. Rogers, Dana Belcastro, Steven P. Wegner
Associate Producer: Donald L. Sparks
Unit Production Manager: Bill Carraro
Production Manager Hungary: Miklós Tóth
Production Supervisor: Gavin J. Behrman
Supervising Location Manager: Emma Pill
Senior Location Manager: András Rudolf
Location Manager: Zsolt Molnár
Post-production Supervisor: Brad Arensman
Production Consultant: Des Carey
2nd Unit Director: Joel Kramer
1st Assistant Director: Donald L. Sparks
Script Supervisor: Jessica Clothier
Casting: Francine Maisler
UK/European Casting by: Lucinda Syson
Hungary Casting by: Zsolt Csutak
Screenplay by: Hampton Fancher, Michael Green
Story by: Hampton Fancher
Based on characters from the novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? *by:* Philip K. Dick
Director of Photography: Roger A. Deakins
2nd Unit Director of Photography: Pierre Gill
A Camera Operator: Roger A. Deakins
Steadicam Operator: Pete Cavaciuti
Visual Effects Supervisor: John Nelson
Visual Effects by: Double Negative, FrameStore, MPC, BUF, Universal Production Partners, Rodeo FX, Atomic Fiction
Miniature Effects and Photography by: Weta Workshop Limited
Previsualisation by: MPC
Special Effects Supervisor: Gerd Nefzer
Editor: Joe Walker
Production Designer: Dennis Gassner

Supervising Art Director: Paul Inglis
Senior Art Director: Rod McLean
Art Directors: David Doran, Bence Erdelyi, Tibor Lázár, Stefan Speth
Concept Designer: Sam Hudecki
Storyboard Artist: Sam Hudecki
Costume Designer: Renée April
Head of Department Make-up Designer: Donald Mowat
Special Effects Make-up Artist: Jason M. Collins
Hair Designer: Kerry Warn
Main and End Title Design by: Prodigal Pictures, Danny Yount
Music by: Benjamin Wallfisch, Hans Zimmer
Synth Design: Howard Scarr
Vocalist: Avi Kaplan
Exotic Instruments: Chas Smith
Cello/Vocals: Tristan Schulze
Cello: Simone Vitucci
Solo Bass: Nico Abondolo
Guitars: Owen Gurry
Music Supervisors: Deva Anderson, Theo Green
Synth Programming: Hans Zimmer
Choreographer: Viktória Jaross
Sound Designer: Theo Green
Production Sound Mixer: Mac Ruth
Re-recording Mixers: Ron Bartlett, Doug Hemphill
Supervising Sound Editor: Mark Mangini
Supervising Stunt Co-ordinator: Joel Kramer
Stunt Co-ordinator: Mike Massa
Stunt Co-ordinator Hungary: Domonkos Párdányi

Cast

Ryan Gosling (*KD6-3.7, ‘K’*)
Harrison Ford (*Rick Deckard*)
Ana de Armas (*Joi*)
Sylvia Hoeks (*Luv*)
Robin Wright (*Lieutenant Joshi*)
Mackenzie Davis (*Mariette*)
Carla Juri (*Dr Ana Stelline*)
Lennie James (*Mister Cotton*)
Sean Young (*Rachael*)
Edward James Olmos (*Gaff*)
Dave Bautista (*Sapper Morton*)
Jared Leto (*Niander Wallace*)
Barkhad Abdi (*Doc Badger*)
Hiam Abbass (*Freysa*)
Wood Harris (*Nandez*)
David Dastmalchian (*Coco*)

USA 2017
164 mins

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Blade Runner 2049

Sat 4 Sep 20:00; Sat 18 Sep 17:15; Fri 24 Sep 14:15; Sun 3 Oct 17:30

Maelström

Mon 6 Sep 18:15; Fri 17 Sep 20:55

Polytechnique

Fri 10 Sep 21:20; Sun 19 Sep 12:15; Thu 30 Sep 20:50

Incendies

Sat 11 Sep 20:30; Fri 17 Sep 17:50; Sun 19 Sep 14:45

Enemy

Sun 12 Sep 12:20; Tue 21 Sep 20:55

Sicario

Sun 12 Sep 18:10; Wed 22 Sep 20:40; Sat 25 Sep 20:40

Prisoners

Tue 14 Sep 14:15; Sat 25 Sep 17:00

August 32nd on Earth (Un 32 août sur terre)

Thu 16 Sep 18:20

Arrival

Thu 16 Sep 20:45; Tue 28 Sep 14:15; Sat 2 Oct 17:30