



Blade Runner

The Final Cut

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

Philip K. Dick died three months before the US release of *Blade Runner*, the film based on his 1968 science-fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* But what he had seen impressed him. He described the footage he was shown by director Ridley Scott as ‘The greatest 20 minutes I ever experienced... a tremendously information-rich experience... like being transported to the ultimate city of the future.’

Fans of *Blade Runner* love the film for any number of reasons, from Vangelis’ gleaming score, to the visual mishmash of neo-*noir*, Asian-American and future-past, to the joyous lunacy of Rutger Hauer as replicant leader Batty, the film’s true hero, lost in rain. For those who have forgotten the story, the replicants are short-lived synthetic people, exploited and feared by the ‘real’ things; as with HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), they’re far more human than the humans. But the reasons Dick gave – the sense of being swallowed up in a megacity conceived as a hybrid of New York and Hong Kong, where geishas loom from huge signboards and the *mise en scène* of chokingly congested street crowds can suddenly give way to empty interiors of rippling light – help explain the release of the new version.

This apparently ‘final cut’ of *Blade Runner* seems to be about maintaining its world’s wraparound seductiveness, honouring the filmmakers’ extraordinary efforts to render tiny details exotically alien, even while using the broad brushstrokes of *film noir*. From the opening shot of the fire-belching ‘Hades’ landscape, this is a reality one doesn’t want punctured – which it tends to be when the replicants die. There’s an incongruous blue sky when Batty’s dove flies up to heaven during the film’s climax, and an obvious stunt double when the replicant snake dancer Zhora perishes, swathed in neon-drenched plastic and shattered glass. Both shots are revised for this final cut, keeping the illusion’s integrity better intact for old and new generations.

The idea of a ‘final’ cut was instigated when Warner Home Video suggested in 2000 that Scott supervise a ‘definitive’ version. The subsequent delay was apparently due to negotiations with the film’s owners, Bud Yorkin and Jerry Perenchio, but in the event it meant the revision benefited from advancing techniques. One can only wonder what Dick would have thought had he been in the screening room with actress Joanna Cassidy, watching her character Zhora being digitally decapitated and her ‘real’ head attached for a stunt she never performed. Still stranger is the revision of an out-of-synch scene in which Harrison Ford’s ‘blade runner’ Deckard (a replicant-hunting gumshoe) menaces an Egyptian artificial snake dealer. After failing to find a suitable ADR track, the restoration team employed the services of Ford’s son Benjamin, who provided not just lipsynch but his actual lips, transposed over his father’s face.

Andrew Osmond, *Sight & Sound*, January 2008

In purely aesthetic terms, *Blade Runner* remains one of the influential pop-culture creations of the modern age. It is certainly one of the most achingly beautiful, sumptuously art-directed films ever. The story takes place in a dystopian Los

Angeles in 2019, a grungy industrial metropolis of deep shadows, low lights, constant rain and endless night. In the script, the location of the opening aerial panorama is listed as 'Hades', hinting that the lost souls in this story may already be dead and stranded in purgatory.

Ridley Scott sketched many of the film's design concepts himself with help from 'visual futurist' Syd Mead, production designer Lawrence G. Paull, art director David L. Snyder and special effects wizards Douglas Trumbull and Richard Yuricich. Working with old-school, pre-digital methods like miniature tabletop models and matte backdrop paintings, the *Blade Runner* team concocted a Betamax retro-futurism that is as much steampunk as cyberpunk.

Vintage Hollywood *film noir* is a heavy presence in *Blade Runner*, as much for its paranoid fatalism as its striking high-contrast style. Deckard's trench-coated, gruff, laconic detective is a clear modern-day twist on Humphrey Bogart or Robert Mitchum in their hard-bitten gumshoe prime. Indeed, actor-turned-screenwriter Hampton Fancher wrote the script with Mitchum in mind. Of course, the role eventually went to Harrison Ford, but his world-weary performance still owes more to *The Maltese Falcon* than the Millennium Falcon.

Reaching back four decades into the past to help imagine a future four decades hence, the film's visual reference points include Edward Hopper's iconic 1942 painting *Nighthawks*, Miss Havisham's clutter-strewn bedroom in David Lean's classic Dickens adaptation *Great Expectations*, and Joan Crawford's vampish outfits in *Mildred Pierce*. The film's rousing score by Vangelis throbs with strident analogue electronica, but also lonely jazz saxophones and bluesy echoes from the past. *Blade Runner* is saturated in melancholy, overshadowed by death and peopled by ghosts. Visually and sonically, it is awash with hauntological whispers.

As a cultural catalyst, the influence of *Blade Runner* is hard to overstate. In cinema alone, it launched a flood of Philip K. Dick adaptations, from *Total Recall* to *Minority Report* to *A Scanner Darkly*. The grungy cyberpunk aesthetic and future-noir cityscapes of *Brazil*, *Strange Days*, *City of Lost Children*, *The Fifth Element*, *Twelve Monkeys*, *The Element of Crime*, *Dark City*, the *Matrix* trilogy and many more all owe a debt to Scott's sumptuous sci-fi symphony.

Dark love stories about human males falling for synthetic females have also become commonplace since *Blade Runner*, most recently Spike Jonze's *Her* and Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*. Garland also adapted Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* for director Mark Romanek in 2010, a sombre near-future fable about human clones bred as organ donors who vainly fight for a few more years of life. More than any killer-robot blockbuster, these small cerebral films capture the yearning melancholy of *Blade Runner*, explicitly sympathising with their replicant heroes.

A belated sequel, *Blade Runner 2049*, was released in 2017, without Scott but with Ford. Spanish director Jon de Sosa made a minimalist version of Dick's original novel, titled *Androids Dream (Sueñan los androides)*. Set in 2052, and shot among the high-rise apartment blocks of Benidorm, it consists of documentary-style vignettes of harmless replicants being brutally 'retired' in shops, restaurants and nightclub toilets by a steely human bounty hunter.

Blade Runner's influence on broader pop culture is also immense. It spawned numerous comic books and computer-game spin-offs, plus three sequel novels by K.W. Jeter, and has long been cited as an influence by cyberpunk author William Gibson. The Vangelis score also has its own separate cult following: Massive Attack have performed it live while Tricky, Dillinja and many others have sampled it. Band names borrowed from the film include The Tyrell Corporation, the Replicants and Basic Pleasure Model.

Stephen Dalton, bfi.org.uk

BLADE RUNNER THE FINAL CUT

Director: Ridley Scott
©/Production Companies: Blade Runner Partnership, Ladd Company
In association with: Run Run Shaw
Presented by: Warner Bros.
Executive Producers: Brian Kelly, Hampton Fancher
Producer: Michael Deeley
Associate Producer: Ivor Powell
Production Executive: Katherine Haber
Executive in Charge of Production: C.O. Erickson
Auditor: Dick Dubuque
Production Controller: Steve Warner
Production Co-ordinator: Vickie Alper
Unit Production Manager: John W. Rogers
Location Manager: Michael Neale
1st Assistant Directors: Newton Arnold, Peter Cornberg
2nd Assistant Directors: Don Hauer, Morris Chapnick, Richard Schroer
Script Supervisor: Anna Maria Quintana
Casting: Mike Fenton, Jane Feinberg
Additional Casting: Marci Liroff
Screenplay: Hampton Fancher, David Peoples
Based on the novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? *by:* Philip K. Dick
Director of Photography: Jordan Cronenweth
Additional Photography: Steven Poster, Brian Tufano
Camera Operators: Robert Thomas, Albert Bettcher, Dick Colean
1st Assistant Cameramen: Mike Genne, Steve Smith
2nd Assistant Cameraman: George D. Greer
Key Grip: Carey Griffith
Best Boy Grip: Robert E. Winger
Dolly Grip: Donald A. Schmitz
Crab Dolly Grip: Douglas G. Willas
Lighting Gaffer: Dick Hart
Best Boy: Joseph W. Cardoza Jr
Stills Photography: Stephen Vaughan
Special Photographic Effects Supervisors: Douglas Trumbull, Richard Yuricich, David Dryer
Special Photographic Effects: Entertainment Effects Group (*Director of Photography:* Dave Stewart; *Optical Photography Supervisor:* Robert Hall; *Cameramen:* Don Baker, Rupert Benson, Glen Campbell, Charles Cowles, David Hardberger, Ronald Longo, Timothy McHugh, John Seay, *Matte Artist:* Matthew Yuricich; *Additional Matte Artist:* Rocco Gioffre; *Matte Photography:* Robert Bailey, Tama Takahashi, Don Jarel; *Special Camera Technician:* Alan Harding; *Optical Line-up:* Philip Barberio, Richard Ripple; *Animation/Graphics:* John Wash; *Effects Illustrator:* Tom Cranham; *Special Projects Consultant:* Wayne Smith; *Miniature Technician:* Bob Surlock; *Chief Model Maker:* Mark Stetson; *Model Makers:* Jerry Allen, Sean Casey, Paul Curley, Leslie Ekker, Thomas Field, Vance Frederick, William George, Kristopher Gregg, Robert Johnston, Michael McMillian, Thomas Phak, Christopher Ross, Robert Wilcox; *Key Grip:* Pat Van Auken; *Gaffer:* Gary Randall; *Film Co-ordinator:* Jack Hinkle; *Cinetechnician:* George Polkinghorne; *Still Lab:* Virgil Mirano; *Electronic/Mechanical Design:* Evans Wetmore; *Electronic Engineering:* Gregory L. McMurry; *Computer Engineering:* Richard Hollander; *Special Engineering Consultants:* Bud Elam, David Grafton; *Production Office Manager:* Joyce Goldberg; *Visual Effects Auditor:* Diana Gold)
Visual Displays: Dream Quest Images
Esper Sequences: Filmfex Animation Services, Lodge/Cheesman
Special Floor Effects Supervisor: Terry Frazee

Special Effects Technicians: Steve Galich, Logan Frazee, William G. Curtis
Supervising Editor: Terry Rawlings
Editor: Marsha Nakashima
Assistant Editor: William Zabala
Production Designer: Lawrence G. Paull
Visual Futurist: Syd Mead
Art Director: David Snyder
Set Designers: Tom Duffield, Bill Skinner, Greg Pickrell, Charles Breen, Louis Mann, David Klasson
Set Decorators: Linda DeScenna, Tom Roysden, Leslie Frankheimer
Leadman: Michael Taylor
Production Illustrators: Sherman Labby, Mentor Huebner, Tom Southwell
Property Master: Terry Lewis
Supervisor Action Prop: Mike Fink
Construction Co-ordinator: James F. Orendorf
Painting Co-ordinator: James T. Woods
Stand-by Painter: Buzz Lombardo
Costume Designers: Charles Knode, Michael Kaplan
Make-up Artist: Marvin G. Westmore
Hairstylist: Shirley L. Padgett
Titles: Intralink Film Graphic Design
Music/Music Arranger/Performer/Producer: Vangelis
Sound Mixer: Bud Alper
Pinewood Chief Dubbing Mixer: Graham V. Hartstone
Twickenham Chief Dubbing Mixer: Gerry Humphries
Stunt Co-ordinator: Gary Combs
Publicist: Saul Kahan

Cast

Harrison Ford (*Rick Deckard*)
Rutger Hauer (*Roy Batty*)
Sean Young (*Rachael*)
Edward James Olmos (*Gaff*)
M. Emmet Walsh (*Captain Bryant*)
Daryl Hannah (*Pris*)
William Sanderson (*J.F. Sebastian*)
Brion James (*Leon*)
Joe Turkel (*Dr Tyrell*)
Joanna Cassidy (*Zhora*)
James Hong (*Chew*)
Morgan Paull (*Holden*)
Kevin Thompson (*Bear*)
John Edward Allen (*Kaiser*)
Hy Pyke (*Taffey Lewis*)
Kimihiro Hiroshige (*Cambodian lady*)
Robert Okazaki (*sushi master*)
Carolyn DeMirjian (*saleslady*)
Charles Knapp, Leo Gorcey Jr, Thomas Hutchinson (*bartenders*)
Kelly Hine (*show girl*)
Sharon Hesky, Rose Mascari (*barflies*)
Susan Rhee, Hiroko Kimuri (*geishas*)
Kai Wong, Kit Wong (*Chinese men*)
Hiro Okazaki, Steve Pope, Robert Reiter (*policemen*)

USA 1982©

118 mins

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