



JOURNEY  PLANET

THE BLADE RUNNER ISSUE



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EDITORIALS

Peter Young

There are now seven years and seven months to go before November 2019. That actually might be an ideal date for Ridley Scott to release his *Blade Runner* sequel - or will it be a prequel? - if it ever gets into actual production. Personally I hope we won't have to sit around that long, because thirty-seven years will be a helluva long wait between an original and whatever follows.

I also realised while putting together this issue of *Journey Planet* that *Blade Runner* is a movie I have probably thought about every day of my life for the last thirty years. At minimum it's probably a fleeting, distracted thought while I get on with the stuff of real life, but it's still always there, floating up to the surface on a daily basis, and the fact that it has done so, and so often,

perhaps says more about the kind of weird stuff I fill my head with than it does for the obvious endurance and impact of the film.

James first said he'd like to do a *Blade Runner* edition of *JP* sometime in early 2011. He made a few other suggestions, but this is the one I immediately signed up for before any other guest editor had a chance (sorry for being so selfish, guys). Then it bounced around my head for nearly a year before I began to assemble things in January 2012.

There is constant fan activity surrounding *Blade Runner* and its iconography, perhaps in a less obvious manner than *Star Wars* but that's actually a good thing as it only enhances *Blade Runner's* cult status. One of the most significant reworkings of the film's themes is the image we have on our front cover,

painted by the great, late John Alvin. John's original *Blade Runner* paintings in the early 1980s have become iconic 20th Century poster images, and for the 25th anniversary of the film's release in 2007 he reworked the painting more to his personal satisfaction, most noticeably adding Roy Batty to the top right corner. I'm very grateful indeed to John's widow Andrea Alvin for giving us permission to reproduce John's work here, and I hope that the rest of this fanzine does John's painting - and of course the film itself - justice. She has also produced the hardcover book *The Art of John Alvin* to be published in the UK by Titan Books this year, and which will debut at the San Diego Comic-Con in July.

Blade Runner has matured into one of those films that become rich intellectual playgrounds; one in which, given the moral framework of the questions around which the screenplay was built, we can find any number of satisfactory intellectual conclusions. However I never wanted this issue of *Journey Planet* to be another crop of academic articles about *Blade Runner*. *JP* is a fanzine, after all, and I wanted to gather articles that give voice to the less academic side to the film's wide fanbase. Nevertheless I am grateful to Gollancz and Graham Sleight for permission to reproduce his (slightly edited) introduction to the latest SF Masterworks edition of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

It's an introduction that impresses me because it helps readers clearly discern the wood from the trees when experiencing Dick's often scattergun technique in firing off ideas of into his readers' minds. For those (like me) who find *Do Androids Dream...* to be a rather clumsy novel, Graham helpfully points out what's good to focus on, in much the same way as *Blade Runner* does by its excision of two of the book's three plot threads.

There's plenty more here too, of course - opinions, rants, some history, fan-fic, discussion and great artwork besides, and I regret not being able to include something from more of the diverse threads of *Blade Runner* fandom. Time kind of ran out on us, but I am indeed very proud to show off what we've gathered here. Enjoy!

James Bacon

Welcome to this latest issue of *Journey Planet*, all focussed on *Blade Runner*. As always I am very grateful to all our contributors, and I hope our readers enjoy this issue.

I frequently think about *Blade Runner* (although perhaps not quite as much as Pete - see above). For me, by saving Deckard, Roy Batty lives forever, his final words are remembered, and he effectively achieves some kind of afterlife.

The 2007 Final Cut astonishes me. A highlight from the Original Cut, the interaction between Deckard and Rachel in Deckard's apartment, is so hard to judge. He talks her into kissing him, more than I would ever risk with a girl... he nearly forces her to kiss, to show some kind of human affection. It's quite violent even, he shoves her at one stage, and he is lucky she doesn't shove her Replicant fist through his strong human jaw. Maybe Deckard in this sequence is not human *enough*, not holding back, no fear of consequences... or maybe he is too human?

I think Roy Batty has the most human portrayal. There was never much certainty about Deckard. Batty is awesome and defeats everything, he is indeed superhuman and that in his death he is at



his most perfect, but also least human. I think he is most human when saving Deckard so that he himself endures as a memory. The sequence between Roy and Pris in J.F. Sebastian's apartment, the love and affection they show is natural and strong, no fear or embarrassment, while J.F. is socially inadequate; he has empathy and yet his only friends are mechanical. But J.F. himself is slightly special. We do not have all round superhumans, rather people who are especially good at certain things, and at times incompetent at the regular norms. Anyhow, these are some of my thoughts on the film.

I hope you enjoy all the work done here, especially by Pete Young who I am again so pleased to have as a guest editor. We have no LoC section for this issue - we're holding that over for the next. We'll also soon be working on an issue looking at women creators and characters in comics; plus one about the trials and tribulations of writing; a further one about First Fandom, and at some stage an issue dedicated entirely to Philip K. Dick. So please do get in touch if these or any other subjects interest you!

Christopher J. Garcia

Journey Planet is four years old with this issue. Pretty weird to think that it was 2008 when James came up with the idea and we dove head first into it at Eastercon. Looking over all the issues up to this point, it's incredible

to me all that we've managed. The themes have been a lot of fun, the list of contributors frankly kinda scary in its awesomeness, and overall, it's been a great time! Hell, getting to work with guys like Pete Young on any sort of regular basis is amazing!

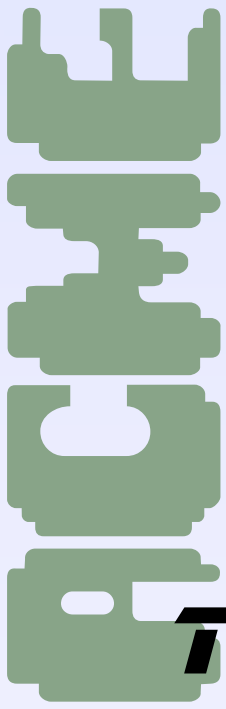
And now you're staring down the barrel of the *Blade Runner* issue. I can't say that I've ever found a movie that more perfectly captures the dark future that so many saw coming out of the 1980s. I love the look, I love the music, I love the performances, and I especially love the way that the film flows. I also love a topless Joanna Cassidy. It's been thirty years since they released it, and strangely thirty years since *Blade Runner* fandom started. You can trace *Blade Runner* fandom to the release of the first issue of Sara Campbell's fanzine *Cityspeak*. Campbell released a few issues, but perhaps most importantly, she and several others had a panel at the Chicago WorldCon in 1982 that discussed the film and started the fandom that grew up around it in the 1980s. There's a lot of *Blade Runner* fan-fic from the 1980s and early '90s, and a lot of that started with Campbell and her network of friends.

If I can recommend one place to get an idea of what *Blade Runner* has meant and the fandom that has grown around it, it's KippleZone (<https://sites.google.com/site/kipplezone/main>) maintained by the excellent C.A. Chicoine. There's a lot of great

information and a look at *Cityspeak*, including recentish discussions with people who had been involved with *Cityspeak*, including Anne Elizabeth Zeek, a wonderful writer and one of the truly great forces in media fandom in the 1980s and '90s.

And now, our entry into the history of *Blade Runner*, a film which changed the world of science fiction film!





instant

Edited by
James Bacon

FANZINE

These questions have been wandering around in my head for maybe too long, but I wondered what others thought. I was very lucky that two authors responded, **Ruth Long** and **Lynda E. Rucker**, and pleased that two other people I hold in very high regard, **Mike Meara** and **Ken Marsden**, also replied. These questions are hard – you try answering them, and you’ll be welcome in our next issue’s letter column.

I asked my brother Trevor these questions and, evading the issue, he said. “One of the interesting things for me about *Blade Runner* is citing the specific year in which it is set – 2019 – and how that then becomes a milestone for how the present will end up. In the 1980s as a kid I wondered, will it really be like that then?” I had the same curiosity about the year 2015, based on *Back to the Future II*. As the years moved on, I began to think “Nah, it’s all much further away.” The pace of technological development in the last ten years however has brought me back to that childlike wonder. Androids and flying cars as part of daily life by 2015? Maybe not. By 2019? Perhaps...

What was it that you enjoyed most about *Blade Runner*?

Ken Marsden: I enjoyed the darkness. The whole *film noir* aspect brought to the future is amazing. I first saw it when it was released and didn’t really get it, probably because I was six, but I knew there was something about it. The Vangelis soundtrack is perfect also – hand in glove, so to speak. Even today I sometimes put it on low when I’m going to sleep at night.

Ruth Long: The look, the feel, the atmosphere of the film, the questions it raised about humanity and what it means to be human.

Lynda E. Rucker: This is one of my favourite movies, and one of the best science fiction films ever made. But if I had to choose a single element of it I love best, that would be its deep-seated sense of longing and loss. It feels like an elegy for the human race. It’s shot through with a sense of poetry, from Roy Batty’s now-clichéd but still beautiful dying speech about the wonders he’s seen that no human hunting him can even imagine, to the desperate loneliness of J.F. Sebastian’s life with his mechanical friends in the decaying Bradbury Building.

Mike Meara: It showed the near future for what we all now know it will be: dirty, gloomy, threatening, and with cold and possibly toxic liquids dripping down the back of your neck all the time. Of course, that near future is much nearer now, thirty years on – hey, I see what you did there! From the standpoint of 2012, the date of 2019 is wrong. But maybe not that wrong. There is still far to go before we reach the sunlit uplands of Iain M. Banks’s Culture-land.

This is the *film noir* of today. Well, almost today. Okay, it’s in colour, but in your mind it’s in lovely black and white. Isn’t it?

The sense that things may not be as they seem with the characters is of course entirely appropriate, given the source. And it’s well done, too.

The music. I probably get negative cred points for admitting I’m a big fan of Vangelis. When the 25th anniv-

ersary 3-CD set came out, I bought that as well. But there's lots of other soundtrack geeks out there, otherwise the bootleg version wouldn't have come about.

How do the different editions of the movie compare for you, what do you like and dislike?

Ken Marsden: I dislike the original voiceover. To me it's unnecessary and distracting. It takes away from the mysteriousness.

Ruth Long: I must be a philistine. I like the voiceover. It accentuated the *film noir* element which I think is so powerful and grounds the future presented in our past (or cinematic past), helping us to connect with the story being told.

Lynda E. Rucker: Ugh, I really hate the end of the original US theatrical version, of Rachel and Deckard riding off in their car. That romance has never worked for me. It feels perfunctory, like neither the director nor the screenwriter nor the actors were particularly engaged or convinced by it, but it's a Hollywood movie and you have to have a romance, and so here we go. The Replicants, Pris and Roy, generate a much more convincing passion.

When I finally got around to reading the book, I found the interplay between Rachel and Deckard a lot more plausible.

Mike Meara: I dislike that there are so many versions in the first place. Seven, is that right? Sheesh. There should only be one, obviously, and that is the one that the director wanted us to see. In what way does it demonstrate good management, to pay lots of money for a director who you then proceed to overrule?

How disappointed would you have been if the Director's Cuts were never released? (A note from James: This question could have been clearer, but the specific Director's Cut I was poorly referring to was the 1991 version, the 2007 version being the Final Cut. The row over money on the movie, or overspend on costs, is/was legendary but the producers wanted Star Wars, and Ridley Scott wanted Art.)

Ken Marsden: Fairly disappointed. I remember how excited I was to buy it on VHS.

Ruth Long: Well, I wouldn't have got to go to the cinema dressed as Rachel...

Lynda E. Rucker: I assume here we're talking about the Final Cut from 2007 where Scott had full control—not the so-called Director's Cut from 1991. I'd have been very disappointed. I remember hearing about the version with no narration and waiting and waiting for that and then finding out that there was yet another version that was different from the 1991 version that we got - I think Scott's 2007 Final Cut is the best by far, and it's the only one I watch now.

Mike Meara: The so-called Director's Cut, and the Final Cut? Well, the strict answer is, not at all, as I wouldn't have known they existed. And even if I had known, if I hadn't seen them, how could I tell how disappointed I would have been?

I haven't seen the Final Cut version. I don't have the Final Cut version. I have the Director's Cut version. Naively, I thought they were telling me the truth with that. Not quite, though, as it turns out. The only version I want to have, and to see, is, as I said above, the one that the director wanted us (me) to see. Which means I shall have to buy another version of this very important film. And because I suspect that - unlike with the soundtrack editions - the differences between the two are not that great, I shall be very cross and grumpy when I do so.

What questions did Blade Runner stimulate for you?

Ken Marsden: One of the questions I remember asking myself was how Dick would have viewed it. He died the year it was released, I think. I also remember hoping that they never made a sequel, that they would leave it as a stand-alone masterpiece. Although *Alien*, another of Ridley Scott's masterpieces, spawned several sequels, I still feel the original 1979 movie to be far superior to any that followed. I wanted *Blade Runner* left alone. And, of course, the question about Deckard: is he, isn't he...?

Ruth Long: The big one is “what does it mean to be human?” That’s the central theme of the film. Roy’s speech at the end is incredibly moving. Suddenly you start to see things from his point of view and it changes the way you’ve viewed the film. *Blade Runner* can be watched and rewatched and each time I think the viewer brings something different to the experience – one of the beauties of film is not only do you see what the filmmaker wants to show you, you interpret it as the viewer and create your own understanding of it.

Mike Meara: I think there is only one, but it’s a biggie: “what is humanity?”, which is the particular subset of “what is reality?” that Dick chose to grapple with in the book. This is a big, endlessly fascinating topic, as you may have noticed.

How does the movie compare to the novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? for you, and what parts of the book do you feel should have been included in the movie?

Ken Marsden: Like a lot of movie adaptations, sometimes only the main theme is taken from the book and built on. I like the mood machine in the novel where Deckard puts his palm on a device and sets it to how he wishes to feel emotionally for the day. I think everyone had to wear a codpiece too, to protect from radiation. I’m kinda glad they took that bit out. But the title itself is pretty cool: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Maybe a bit long for Hollywood, so borrowing the title *Blade Runner* from William S. Burroughs was inspired.

Lynda E. Rucker: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is a terrific book. Usually, good books make bad movies – and many of the best book-to-film adaptations come from mediocre books.

One of the ways filmmakers can end up with a bad movie from a good book is to approach the material with too much reverence. I’m glad *Blade Runner* doesn’t do that; I really like the way the movie used PKD’s story as a launching point to go off and tell a story of its own. I don’t want more of *DADoES* in the movie.

Okay, there’s one thing I miss –

DADoES, like a lot of Phil Dick’s work, is very funny in places. Probably, though, that would change the tone of the film too much.

And looking back at my earlier answer, I’d get rid of the Rachel/Deckard romance. It doesn’t work and, for me, doesn’t raise the stakes for me, it isn’t convincing.

I think Richard Linklater is the only filmmaker who’s come close to capturing the spirit of PKD’s actual novels.

Mike Meara: A book and a movie are quite different things. One tells you stuff, the other shows you stuff. They work quite differently, and we could spend a whole lot of time discussing that. So I don’t really care to compare the two, so long as they’re both good, which they are, and work well on their own terms, which they do.

What do you honestly think Philip K. Dick must have made of the movie?

Ken Marsden: Philip K. Dick was a mad genius. I don’t know what he would have thought of the movie. As it veers in a fairly different direction to that of the novel he may have had an issue with it. Who knows?

Ruth Long: I thought he would feel detached from it. Books and films are so often completely different creatures, approached in completely different ways.

Mike Meara: You want me to get inside his head? No thanks.

Below is an excerpt, of a letter from Philip K. Dick to Jeff Walker of The Ladd Company, dated 11 October 1981, to illustrate his sentiments after he had seen some footage on television. [A note from James: I suggest, dear reader, that you see it in full at http://www.philipkdick.com/new_letters-laddcompany.html] If this letter surprises you, why do you think that’s so?

“...and especially after listening to Harrison Ford discuss the film – I came to the conclusion that this indeed is not science fiction; it is not fantasy; it is exactly what Harrison said: futurism. The impact of Blade Runner is simply going to be overwhelming, both on the public and on creative people – and, I

believe, on science fiction as a field. Since I have been writing and selling science fiction works for thirty years, this is a matter of some importance to me. In all candour I must say that our field has gradually and steadily been in deterioration for the last few years. Nothing that we have done, individually or collectively, matches Blade Runner. This is not escapism; it is super realism, so gritty and detailed and authentic and goddamn convincing that, well, after the segment I found my normal present day 'reality' pallid by comparison. What I am saying is that all of you collectively may have created a unique new form of graphic, artistic expression, never before seen. And, I think, Blade Runner is going to revolutionize our conceptions of what science fiction is and more, can be..."

Ruth Long: It surprises, and delights me. There's an openness of mind I probably didn't expect (which is probably unfair). His excitement shines through in his words, his delight in the film. It's a lovely letter.

Mike Meara: I can't imagine Harlan Ellison writing a letter like that. Unless he was taking the piss, which Phil might have been. Or there might be Substances involved, perhaps? But if it's straight up, then my impression is of a gushy fan letter showing no hint of the intellect behind it. The fact that he could write a letter like that is what surprises me, rather than his views on the film; I don't understand the guy well enough to ever have even guessed what they might be.

Can you explain what it is about Deckard that makes you identify him as human or Replicant?

Ken Marsden: Aside from the dream sequence/Gaff's leaving a miniature unicorn at Deckard's apartment, there are a couple of reasons I think Deckard is a Replicant. He displays almost superhuman strength and endurance, especially towards the end. He takes a serious beating, has his fingers broken, etc., but still carries on. He is only bettered by Roy Batty, who is after all, the combat-designed-model Replicant. There are also several scenes in the film where the eyes of each Replicant appear to glow, like a red-eye effect from a photograph. Deckard displays this in one scene.

And then there's Ridley Scott eventually admitting that yes, Rick Deckard is a skin job.

Ruth Long: As it's a film that you constantly re-examine as a viewer, I think I've identified him in both ways. Perhaps Deckard is a reflection of us as viewer. We re-interpret it, him and perhaps ourselves based on what we've just seen and where we currently are in our lives.

Mike Meara: No, I can't. Can you? That's the clever bit, the ambiguity, the uncertainty, the stuff of semi-intoxicated late-night conversations (later, arguments) at cons and in pubs. Great! Better than yet another tedious gobfest about religion or politics, for sure. Ford can be completely flat-faced when he wants to be; maybe



he's like that most of the time. But that's not a clue, it's just misleading. Clever old Harrison. Or clever old Ridley. But I note that the person who writes *The Independent's* films on TV reviews for their Information supplement will have none of this idea that Deckard is a Replicant himself. He/she doesn't say why, though.

What I can say is that I think the environment in which the action takes place dehumanises everyone, brings everyone - humans and Replicants alike - down towards the same quite basic level. I had always assumed that Deckard was technically human, but that didn't necessarily mean he was in any way better than the Replicants he was trying to retire. But there are other interpretations. That's fine.

Why do you think that Batty saved Deckard?

Ken Marsden: Batty saved Deckard because he'd nothing left to prove. He knew he was dying, knew his mission had come to an end, knew he could have finished him off. But like any other honourable soldier decided on mercy for a beaten adversary and chose to salute him and sign off. Undefeated. Classic.

Ruth Long: Because he couldn't bear to see another life lost, given how much was being lost with him - all his memories which would be gone forever. No afterlife for the Replicants, no possibility or belief in one. So perhaps he just wanted someone to remember him, if only for a little while longer.

Mike Meara: To prove to Deckard (and to himself) that he was the nobler savage, at least as human as Deckard was, in every way that mattered.

Which characters appeared the most human to you, and what made them feel this way?

Ken Marsden: Rachel and Deckard appeared the most human. Mainly because they were ignorant of what they really were. Deckard experiences nightmares, has a drink problem, surrounds himself with old photographs. Rachel expresses that she too experiences nightmares, and carries an old photograph around with her.

And Leon Kowalski, although he is aware he is a Replicant, places great value in his precious photos. Probably a subconscious behavioural trait, but one where a desire for a past can only be realised through the simple physical keepsakes of old photographs.

Ruth Long: It changes through the course of the film. Ultimately Batty appears the most human. He understands loss and what he is losing.

Lynda E. Rucker: Sebastian, in his loneliness and empathy. Pris and Roy in their fierce love for one another. Zhora, running for her life, wanting so desperately to live.

What science fiction films do you consider to be better than Blade Runner?

Ken Marsden: I don't consider any science fiction film to be better than *Blade Runner*, to me it is peerless. I do consider *The Empire Strikes Back* to be one of the best films ever made also, but I feel it's in a slightly different genre to *Blade Runner*, pure blockbuster space opera SF. *Blade Runner*, I feel, transcends genre, and can stand alone with *Citizen Kane*, *The Godfather*, *Raging Bull* and any other film of distinction. It is a masterpiece.

Mike Meara: Not many, now that I think about it: *2001* - one of the greatest story hooks ever seen in SF - benevolent, unseen elder race travels the galaxy seeking monkeys to save, the best soundtrack of any film I've ever seen, SF or otherwise (though completely opposite to that of *Blade Runner*), and again that WTF ambiguity in the ending;

Solaris by Tarkovsky - *film noir*-ish again, another great premise, more ambiguity at the end;

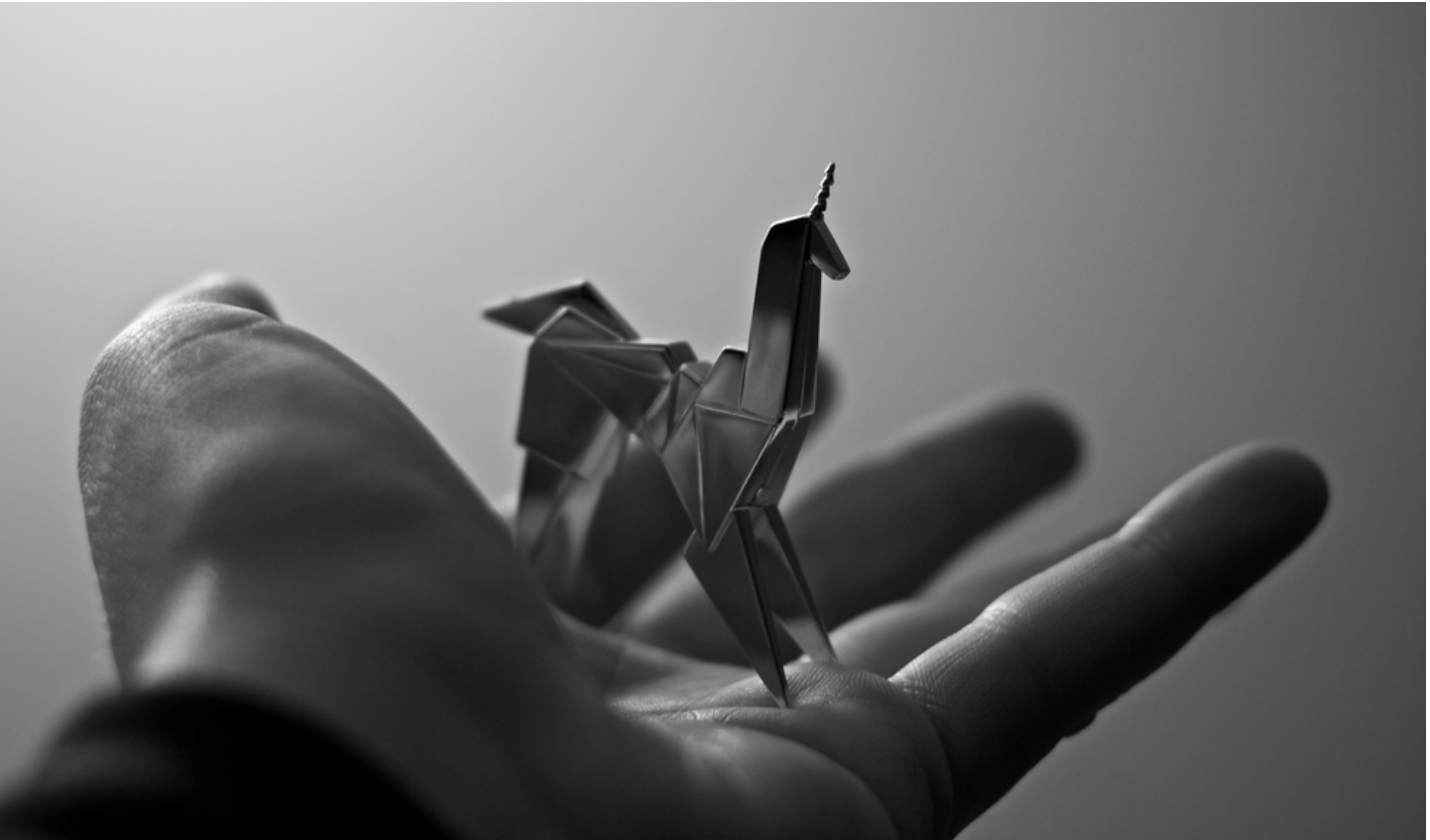
Star Wars (the 1977 original with the added effects) - space opera at its simplest and most joyful.

There are several others which are on a par, and lots more that I like a lot. But you said "better", and of the ones I've seen, that's it.

And now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go and listen to "Tears In Rain" again...

AN INTRODUCTION TO 'DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?'

Graham Sleight



It's a commonplace to say that the works of Philip K. Dick are centrally concerned with the question of what is real. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) looks at a particular branch of that question: what is a fake? And, if you can make a fake seem authentic enough, does it matter? The book's adaptation into Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* (1982) changes a great deal, but keeps this idea at its heart. Someone who's seen the film, but for whom this is a first encounter with Dick's work, is likely to be most surprised by how much time the book spends on character rather than visuals. Dick is always concerned to show the inner life of his characters, and let the philosophical questions that concern him flow naturally from their lives and the world in which they find themselves.

In the opening scene, the protagonist Rick Deckard is woken by music from his "mood organ". As he talks to his wife Iran, it becomes clear that this mood organ can indeed make someone happy, sad, or angry depending on how it's set. That begs the question: what's the line between being "made happy" by a mood organ or a drug, and being made "really" happy by, say, love? Fakes - or what we would consider fakes - are everywhere in the book. Deckard keeps an electric sheep on his roof, but has to pretend to his neighbours that it's real. In this near-future world, much of the ecosystem has been devastated by "World War Terminus", and so to own a real animal, as Deckard pretends to, would be a colossal status symbol.

The central plot of the book (and film) follows Deckard's work for the

▲
'Like Tears in Rain',
2009.
[Michael Shane
@ flickr]

police, tracking down and “retiring” replicants. These are lifelike androids created as, in effect, slaves for humans. A group of them has fled to Earth in search of freedom. An early scene defines the difference between the two: Deckard travels to Seattle, where he uses the “Voigt-Kampff test” to work out whether a woman named Rachel Rosen is an android. The androids are supposed to lack human empathy, so the test is to see whether they exhibit normal human reactions when confronted with various social situations. But Rachel is so sophisticated a creation that she almost defeats the test, and Deckard gradually falls in love with her.

So the central question the book raises is what it means to be human, to have an identity, to exist in relation to other humans. That, and the post-war setting, could easily make it seem like a dry or grim read. But, like most other Dick novels, it has an acute sense of humour and absurdity – who else would come up with a robot sheep, pretending to eat grass atop an apartment building, as a social statement?

In terms of Dick’s career, *Do Androids Dream...* comes towards the

end of his most productive decade; the 1970s would see him producing far fewer novels as he grappled with his own problems and the religious vision that he believed he was granted in 1974. It doesn’t have the nightmarish sense generated by other Dick novels such as *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1964) that its world is a labyrinth with no exit. This is a world, however depleted and diminished, where love and restoration might be possible. What’s not so clear, though, is whether they might be possible for Rick Deckard. After a while, the book’s thriller plot becomes so enmeshed with its questions of identity that many of the assumptions readers will have started with are upended. Yet Dick manages to create pathos in the most outlandish situations – for androids without empathy of their own, for J.R. Isidore, a disabled victim of the war, even for artificial animals. If nothing else, he seems to be saying, the fake has value. If you were an android and dreamed of electric sheep, would it make you less you?

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1968

- Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (*DADoES*) is published.

1974

- *DADoES* is optioned by Herb Jaffe Associates, Inc. for film.
- Robert Jaffe writes the screenplay "Electric Sheep". PKD dislikes it.

1975

- *DADoES* is recommended by a friend of Hampton Fancher to obtain the optioning.

1977

- Brian Kelly and Hampton Fancher buy the option for *DADoES*.

1978

- Michael Deeley begins submitting Fancher's adaptation of *DADoES* to different studios and directors.

1979

- Hampton Fancher works on a second draft of the screenplay, given the title "Android", then later re-named "Mechanismo", then by the third draft, "Dangerous Days".

1980

- Ridley Scott signs on as director.
- Screenplay title changes to "Blade Runner".
- David Peoples is hired to rewrite the script.
- Filming starts for *Blade Runner*.

1981

- Vangelis signs on as soundtrack score composer.

1982

- Philip K. Dick dies while the movie is being edited.
- The Denver and Dallas "sneak previews".
- Voiceover added to *Blade Runner*.
- "Hollywood Happy Ending" added to *Blade Runner*.
- San Diego "sneak peek".
- *Blade Runner* is released to theatres.
- Orchestra adaptation of *Blade Runner* soundtrack is released.
- *DADoES* novel is re-released with John Alvin's *Blade Runner* poster image as cover art.
- Marvel Comics publishes comic book editions of *Blade Runner*.
- Ertle releases their *Blade Runner* cars collection.
- *Blade Runner: A Story of the Future* published by Random House books.
- *The Illustrated Blade Runner, Blade Runner Sketchbook & Blade Runner Portfolio* published by Blue Dolphin.
- *Blade Runner* Souvenir Magazine is published by Ira Friedman, Inc.

1985

- The CRL Group PLC releases the *Blade Runner* computer game for Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum.

1987

- The original "theatrical release" of *Blade Runner* is released on video.

1992

- The "Director's Cut" version of

Blade Runner is released on VHS after being shown at the Toronto Film Festival.

1994

- Vangelis's *Blade Runner* soundtrack is released.

1995

- The *DADoES* audiobook is released.
- The novel *Blade Runner 2: The Edge of Human* by K. W. Jeter is published.

1996

- The novel *Blade Runner: Replicant Night* by K. W. Jeter is published.
- The book *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner* by Paul M. Sammon is published.

1997

- The *Blade Runner* game for Windows 95 and Windows NT is released by Westwood Studios.
- *Blade Runner: The Director's Cut* DVD is released.

2000

- The novel *Blade Runner: Eye and Talon* by K.W. Jeter is published.
- The *Blade Runner* Limited Edition Collector's Set DVD is released.

2006

- *Blade Runner: The Director's Cut* (Remastered Limited Edition) DVD released.

2007

- Release of *Blade Runner: The Final Cut*. DVD Formats available:
 - 5-disc Ultimate Collector's Edition;
 - 4-disc Collector's Edition;
 - 2-disc Special Edition;
 - 5-disc Ultimate Collector's Edition (Blu-ray);
 - 5-disc Complete Collector's Edition (Blu-ray);
 - 5-disc Ultimate Collector's Edition (HD);
 - 5-disc Complete Collector's Edition (HD).
- *Blade Runner: The Final Cut* opens in select theatres throughout the world.

- The *Blade Runner Trilogy, 25th Anniversary* Vangelis soundtrack is released. It's a 3-CD set which - for the first time - puts all the pieces together providing the complete music from the film and a lot more besides. CD1 features the original and remastered soundtrack as it first appeared in 1994, twelve years after the film was released. CD2 contains all the remaining music from the film that did not appear on the original 1994 soundtrack, plus two bonus tracks ('One Alone' and 'Desolation Path'). None of this material has been released before. CD3 will be of real interest to Vangelis fans, as it contains an entire album of newly written material composed by Vangelis to mark the 25th anniversary of *Blade Runner*. The music is strong and flowing, and retains the dark, atmospheric sense of the original score. There are some intriguing spoken word contributions too, from Ridley Scott, Roman Polanski, Oliver Stone and a host of distinguished actors, personalities and world dignitaries.

- Release of the official *Blade Runner* movie tie-in novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick. Contains an article at the end of the book by Paul M. Sammon, titled 'Of Blade Runners, PKD, and Electric Sheep.'

- Release of the official *Blade Runner* movie tie-in novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick, as an unabridged audiobook, narrated by Scott Brick.

- Publication of *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner*, by Paul M. Sammon, Second Edition (hardcover).

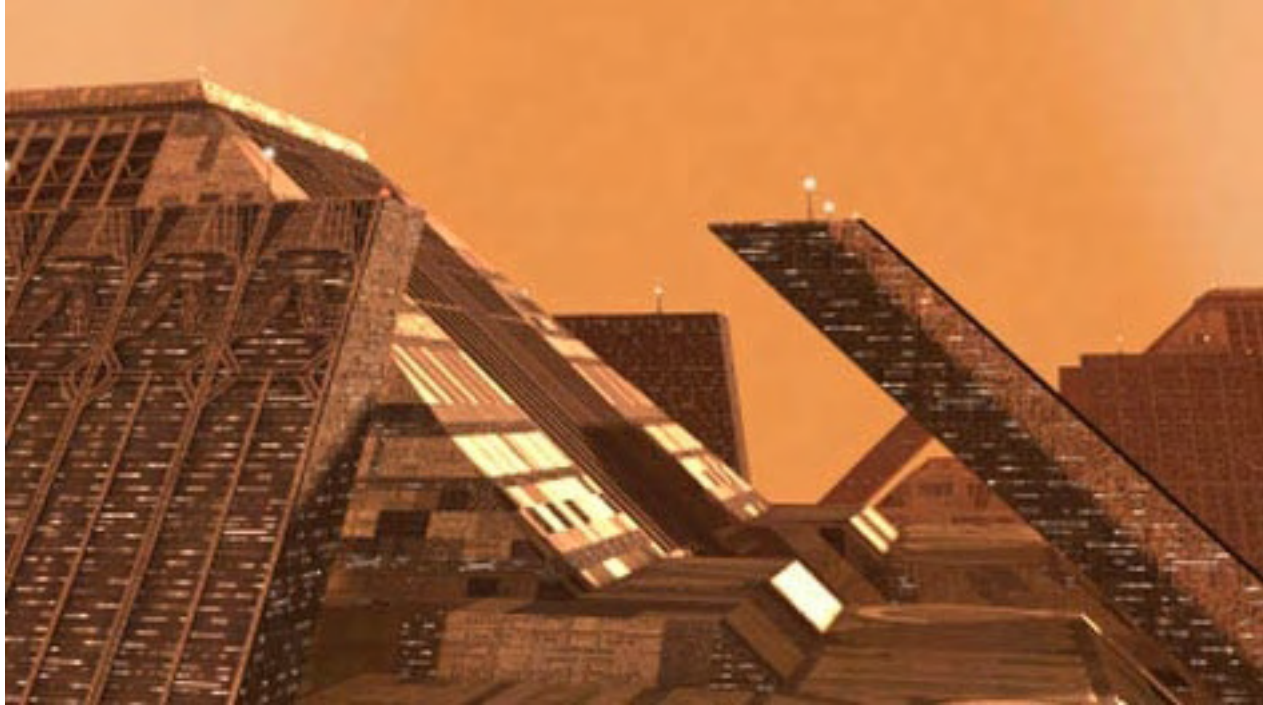
2009

- Boom Studios publishes the *DADoES* comic book series.

2011

- Alcon Entertainment secures film, television and ancillary franchise rights to produce prequels and sequels to *Blade Runner*.
- Ridley Scott signs to direct a *Blade Runner* sequel.

Christopher J. Garcia



You don't just jump in and start watching a movie like *Blade Runner*. I know, I know. *It's just a movie, why would you need to train?*, you're thinking. Well, if you just jump in, you'll likely find yourself blinded by the magnificence and not the impact.

And the best way to train for *Blade Runner* is to go and warm up with various other films that inform the viewer of where *Blade Runner* came from cinematically. While I've never got to chat with David Peoples about his script for *Blade Runner* (I did talk to him about Noir when he was at Cinequest, but for some reason, we never got around to *Blade Runner*. Apparently, Cinequest makes me forget to ask about the obvious (See: Wise, Robert, conversations with).

Let us start with the *noir* aspects. I've seen arguments about what genre *Blade Runner* fits into turn into raging screaming matches. Once, while we were playing *Goldeneye* on the N64, Bobby, Jordan, Film School Chris and I got into it, arguing between all the possible genres that *Blade Runner* might fit into. I took the SF front, along with Film School Chris, while Bobby and Jordan took the Noir route.

They had a point. Not a great point, but this is my make-good for having stormed out after ninety minutes.

Noir has been called America's greatest addition to the pantheon of film genres. It's pretty much boil-downable to the concept of the stylish American Crime Film. There are a lot

of them in the history of film with many historians pointing to Boris Ingster's *Stranger on the Third Floor* being the first Noir in 1940, with *The Maltese Falcon* being considered the first successful Noir, directed by John Huston and released in 1941. *Blade Runner* is the story of a detective, Deckard, and his hunt for Replicants. He's a hard-living (maybe) guy and a great character, so closely related to so many of the earlier detectives of Mickey Spillane, Dashiell Hammett or Raymond Chandler. I tend to think Deck is more Mike Shane than Mike Hammer. Actually, he reminds me a lot of Mike Danger, Spillane's character who appeared in a series of Futuristic detective comics in the 1990s.

The film that most helps get across the idea of Deckard the detective is *Kiss Me Deadly*, one of the Mike Hammer novels of Mickey Spillane adapted for the screen by director Robert Aldrich. While Sam Spade gets pointed to more often than any other detective as the prototypical Noir detective, there is something much more visceral to Hammer. Maybe it's his long history in print that hangs importances on the character like decorations on a Christmas tree, but Hammer has the ultimate hard-living detective rap. Here, he's a sleazy come-on artist, and in every way that Deckard is cold and calculating, so is Hammer. Even when Hammer goes all hot-headed, Deckard would act the same way. The two even fight the same! *Kiss Me Deadly* also

has an Atomic angle, which would be enough on its own, no?

Ralph Meeker's Hammer almost certainly inspired much of Harrison Ford's Deckard. They both seem to be men who are put upon and have a clock ticking over their head. Deckard's scene where he is at the noodle bar feels like something straight out of a Hammer story, only replacing the noodles with beer. The end scene of *Kiss Me Deadly* is much maligned, and like *Blade Runner* it's been cut into different forms more than once.

Detectives are an important part of the Noir thing, and with Hammer, you've got the one to dig into, but the one in which I think you can really discover more about the detective is *The Big Sleep*. Humphrey Bogart plays Phillip Marlowe, the King of Detectives! It's a role that he was so perfect for, especially when he is exchanging amazing barbs with the likes of Lauren Bacall and Martha Vickers. The way he patters formed the basis of many detectives in the history of Noir. There's an amazing pair of scenes in bookshops, one where he is feeling out a hood (a front for a porno-ring) and the other where he flirts with the assistant. They are both prototypical Noir detective scenes where you can see the tendrils that will reach out to everyone from Mike Shayne to Fletch.

Here, it is the performances of Vickers and Bacall that almost certainly led to the choices of Sean Young and, to a lesser extent, Darryl Hannah, both playing the Femme Fatales. Bacall in particular is amazing in *The Big Sleep* and you can see how Sean Young must have picked up bits. Watch Bacall's interactions with Bogey and then watch whenever Young and Ford are on screen together in *Blade Runner*, and you'll see they line up like Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* and *The Wizard of Oz*. The way they both smoke is almost freakily identical.

For a film that is a true masterpiece and one that I really believe influenced the visual style of *Blade Runner*, as well as the pacing and how the entire story unfolds, one needs to see Akira Kurasawa's *Stray Dog*. It's a look at a rookie homicide detective who has his gun stolen, leading to a long run into the dark underbelly of Tokyo's gun racket. It's a great film, and you can tell from the costumes

and the shooting that it was based on having watched *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep* a whole lot. It's a dark film, gritty, but also has all of the things I love most about Kurasawa, including legendary actor Toshiro Mifune as the rookie cop. Watching it, there's a visual clash between the gangster styles and the more traditional Japanese styles. This plays right into *Blade Runner*. It's a gorgeous film and the cinematography puts almost all of the American Noirs to shame when it comes to flat-out artistry.

Let's move on to science fiction, as that is where many of us see *Blade Runner* as living. 1982 was an interesting time in the history of science fiction film. The *Star Wars* films had revolutionized SF film to the core when it comes to budgets and effects, but films like *Scanners* and *Coma* had made it possible to deal with more adult topics in a grittier way. This set the stage for a film like *Blade Runner*.

The first one to start with is a film to set the visual style. *Metropolis* is likely the most famous silent feature film of all. It's gorgeous beyond all possible reason and features some of the most iconic shots in the history of film. The part that is so influential on *Blade Runner* is the set direction, and most importantly, the shots of the city. Look at shots of the 'Tower of Babel' in the film and you'll see the influence almost immediately. The newest version of *Metropolis*, complete with footage not seen since the film was released in 1927, features a lot more of the model work that was done to create the city, including shots of the buildings from above! All the cars are of course from the 1920s, which sort of prefigures the look of *Blade Runner* as well.

Another film that is a must to get a feel for not only the story but the way the setting plays off the mood is *THX-1138*. This is George Lucas' most considered film, far more science fictional than *Star Wars*, and far more layered because of the hand of the Greatest Living American Film Director: Francis Ford Coppola. They shot it in and around the Bay Area and it's a film of paranoia. The use of the settings are what is so important in your prep for *Blade Runner*. The way that Coppola and Lucas took care to choose settings that were all under-

ground made you think that this was a culture that had taken refuge from the sunlight. It was also the sterility of the settings that gave the impression of a future devoid of the kind of grime that humans leave in their wake. This is a direct contrast with the grit of *Blade Runner*, but they both use similar techniques. The absence of dirt is a set designer saying “This is a world that is utterly under control.” The presence of blowing trash is a set designer saying “this is a world that does not live for appearances.” The techniques are so simple and they both set you exactly where you need to be.

The next one is the first one that really goes right to the heart of the science fictional detective: *Alphaville*. It’s a futuristic look at the movements of Lemmy Caution, a detective in Alphaville. It’s French, so obviously it’s weird, but everything is there: the voice-over that is so typical of Noir

(and the best version of *Blade Runner*) and the hard-boiledness. The way it approaches the blending of Noir and science fiction is almost exactly what Scott & co. were working with in making *Blade Runner*, but more than that, they had a way of making the present into something that was much more futuristic than spaceships. The world of *Blade Runner* is much more Today (even when the today was 1982) than it is of the Tomorrow we’ve all been promised, but it still feels like a future even more strongly than things with spaceships, blasters and Robo-Butlers. The same goes for *Alphaville*, proof that a good script and smartly chosen visuals can turn out a future that still bears the marks of the present.

Now you’re ready. You’ve trained, you’ve looked into the elements that built *Blade Runner*.

Don’t bother reading the book, it’ll only confuse things!



►
'Blade Runner',
2008.
[Leo Lambertini
@ flickr]

ARE YOU A REPLICANT?

James Shields will be taking your Voight-Kampff test today



Flease read the questions and circle *A*, *B* or *C* below each of them. Do not pay any attention to the camera monitoring your eye movements as you respond.

1.

Your friend has a face-hugging alien with acid blood stuck to his face. Do you:

- A. Stick him in sick bay and try to remove it surgically?
- B. Put him in quarantine and hope it can contain the creature that will inevitably burst from his chest?
- C. Shove him straight through an air lock into the depths of space?

2.

A tractor beam pulls you into a gigantic space station and you need to escape. Do you:

- A. Sneak off to disable the tractor beam.
- B. Try to break into the detention level in the hope of rescuing a captured princess?
- C. Hide in a cupboard?

3.

You're stuck with an officious, self centered hologram of a dead crew member. Do you:

- A. Study and take the chef's exam in the hope that you'll outrank him?
- B. Ignore him and just eat all the fish from the food dispenser.
- C. Paint a picture of him on the toilet and tell him he's a smeghead.

4.

An alien has stolen the brain of one of your crewmates and left an electronic replacement. Do you:

- A. Go in all guns blazing to recover the stolen brain?
- B. Try to negotiate with the alien captors for the safe return of the brain?
- C. Decide that the electronic brain is actually an improvement?

5.

You are sent back in time to protect the future saviour of the world. Do you:

- A. Go back early and make love to his

mother so you become his father?
B. Steal someone's clothes, boots and bike to convince him you're bad-ass enough to save him?
C. Kill people you meet and steal their identities so you can get close to the saviour?

6.
Someone is trying to steal your brain to repair their ship's computer. Do you:

A. Grab a fire extinguisher in the hope that people will mistake it for a big gun?
B. Go charging in on horseback to save the day?
C. Smash the clock so nobody will hear your motor ticking and hide under the bed?

7.
Your ship picks up two hitch-hikers, one of whom you're almost certain you met at a party once. Do you:

A. Avoid them for as long as possible?
B. Find the most nonchalant chair to be discovered in?
C. Complain about the awful pain in all the diodes down your left side?

8.
You find yourself surrounded by strange bear-like creatures that look like they might want to eat you. Do you:

A. Try to make friends with one of them?
B. Threaten them in the hopes that they will let you go?
C. Pretend to be the creatures' god so they'll worship you?

9.
A giant robot armed with machine guns is demanding you put your gun down. Do you:

A. Do what it wishes and hope for the best?
B. Try to run downstairs in the hope it can't follow you?
C. Get yourself transplanted into a robot body so you can show it who's boss?

10.
You need to get on the last transport ship to Fhloston Paradise, but the airline official says the holder of your ticket has already checked in. Do you:

A. Slip through the back door and

climb in through the landing gear?
B. Call your boss... you're sure he'll accept your apology?
C. Open fire into the crowd and dive into a convenient trash heap?

11.
An alien and his robot bodyguard arrive and want to welcome Earth into the galactic community. Do you:

A. Shoot him and forget the secret words to call off his bodyguard?
B. Tell a human the secret code for your robot bodyguard, then promptly get yourself killed?
C. Destroy everyone on Earth when they kill your master?

12.
Your billion dollar top secret defence project has gone missing. Do you:

A. Set off in your van to track it down?
B. Deploy your other billion dollar projects to search for it?
C. Go on a city-wide search for 'input'?

13.
You land on an alien planet. Everything seems harmless enough. Do you:

A. Wander off to see what trouble you can get yourself in?
B. Look for ways to sabotage the spaceship that's your only way off the planet?
C. Manically screech "Danger Will Robinson!" to alert any hostile aliens to your presence?

14.
You arrive on Mars and need to get to the leader of the mutants. Do you:

A. Get into a fight on the elevator?
B. Hijack a mining machine with lots of spinning blades and huge grinding bits?
C. Rip the head off a Johnny Cab and use the conveniently placed joystick to drive it?

15.
Your twin brother shows up wanting to take your place. Do you:

A. Identify him by his use of contractions?
B. Beam him out to space and be glad to see the back of him.
C. Call your crystalline entity friend to eat the humans so you can have their ship to yourself?

16.
Your family abandon you at the gates of a robot design company. Do you:

- A. Report them to children's services?
- B. Hang out with lost and abandoned robots?
- C. Get taken to a circus where people watch old robots get torn apart for entertainment?

17.
Hostile alien robots that look just like you have infiltrated your ship. Do you:

- A. Give a neurotic scientist a nuclear warhead in the hopes that he can find a way to identify the intruders?
- B. Let some crazy woman with strange dreams lead you across the galaxy?
- C. Take a few random people you don't like out, shoot them and hope for the best?

18.
You are severed from your 'collective' and have had 82% of your cybernetic implants removed. Do you:

- A. Make the most of it and try to learn how to be human again?
- B. Use your unique position to negotiate a peace between your former comrades and humans?
- C. Cut and run at the first opportunity to get re-assimilated into the collective, and offer the humans as bounty?

19.
Your mobile phone company is controlling people through their Bluetooth headsets. Do you:

- A. Join a cell of resistance against this disturbing change?
- B. Insist that your account be deleted immediately?
- C. Make an irate call to the company and demand a free upgrade?

20.
You find yourself in a giant robot factory that is busy manufacturing a robotic army to be used against you. Do you:

- A. Get your arm stuck in a bit of robotic machinery surrounded by hundreds of giant chompy blades?
- B. Try not to lose your head?
- C. Suddenly remember that you've got rocket boosters hidden in your legs and wonder why you've never thought of them the hundreds of other times they would have come in handy?

Now score each answer as follows: A = 0, B = 1, C = 3. Add up all the scores and compare to the following table:

0-20: You're completely human and have nothing to worry about;
21-40: Hmmm, tricky. Perhaps your one of those new Nexus-6 models the Tyrell Corporation are working on;
41-60: No doubt about it, you're a Replicant, but don't worry, one of our officers has been dispatched to see to your needs. Enjoy your "retirement".





BLADDER RUN

or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Android

Mark Hevingham

I was fifteen in the summer of 1982. It was one of the most memorable twelve months for movies that had staying power. *ET: The Extraterrestrial* had grown men blubbing in their cinema seats; *Star Trek II - The Wrath of Khan* had pretty much the same effect on the Trekkers; *Dragon Slayer* had viewers falling asleep whilst *The Thing* sent them running to the nearest bathroom to hide.

I lived in the cinema during my spare time, and I saw a lot of movies. Several including some of those listed above went on to become some of my all time favourites, but one in particular made me want to make movies myself: *Blade Runner*.

Starburst magazine gave away free tickets to a sneak peak - at least a month before it was due to hit UK screens, and I was one of about fifty souls that attended the screening one sunny Sunday morning in the school holidays.

Fast forward a few years and I owned a Sony Betamax camcorder, and together with friends and family members I sweet-talked or co-opted, I would make little movies or skits at the weekends.

I loved to write scripts and many were spoofs of famous films. One such script was 'Bladder Run'. In England when we mock we term it 'taking the piss', so this was a piss-take, and it wasn't a warp jump away to make the leap from *Blade Runner* to *Bladder Run* with that context in mind...

It was an eight-page skit that became a full two-hour movie by the time we actually began full production.

Bladder Run pulls together movie fans, anywhere from talented amateur to professional, from across the UK and in fact beyond. Our goal was to make a spoof/homage that looked and sounded good - and cost less

than a thousand bucks. As we are still in production - although near the end - that goal is still achievable.

Following the plot of *Blade Runner* quite loosely the original script was more Laurel and Hardy slapstick than Ridley Scott future-noir. By draft 83, however, the movie was very similar in looks and tone to its multi-million dollar godfather.

I wrote the script and I am directing. To ensure I did justice to my ideas I gathered together a group of camera guys with 1080P equipment. I learned compositing, and eventually produced too.

Tom Bradshaw, a musician and writer, whom I have known for about twenty years, leads the eclectic cast. Tom will tackle any role with gusto and has become Rex Dickard so much so that to me he *is* the android hunter. His co-stars include Vicki Walkden - a talented painter and actress, who takes the role of Raquel - the closet nymphomaniac android with whom Dickard falls in love.

Better known for her numerous appearances as a *Xena: Warrior Princess* look-a-like, Joanne Marriott is a stunt person, singer, actress and closet sci-fi geek. Her spare room is filled with swords, Bossk and storm-trooper costumes and even a complete *Alien* suit! Luckily her partner Sean (also in the movie) shares the same jobs although he dresses as Captain Jack Sparrow and not, thankfully, Lucy Lawless!

The rest of the cast includes Begona Fernandez Martin - a Pris look-a-like - as Pritt, a very sticky customer. In England Pritt is a well known brand name for stick glue,

Colin Cooper, an actor/singer/producer, is Guff; Steve Evans became Junior (the Leon character, whose favourite expression is "OK George" in his Barney Rubble voice) and Darone Dubois Gayere - who is a very funny J.F.K. Sebastud. Oh yes, and I play the villain, one Ray Botty!

I decided that filming could go one of two ways: low key or with good production values. With that in mind I wrote to many institutions explaining that I was making a zero budget movie, and to my surprise, many came back offering free, and in some cases multiple, access to their facilities and locations.

By advertising online I found composers, costume makers, model makers, SPFX supervisors and extras all willing to give their time freely to make my dream come true. Along the way, it's become their dream too.

Why make *Bladder Run*? As Captain Kirk explained of El Capitan, he did it because it's there. I had to climb my own mountain because it was the monkey on my back that needed to be made.

I plan to take the finished article to sponsors and say - this is what I can do with £750. Please give me a budget and let me make an original piece. That piece is *Girls vs. Ghouls*, a horror/action/adventure with a twist.

But for now life revolves around *Bladder Run* - there's green screen work to complete, dubbing to finish and maybe, just maybe, launching the thing onto an unsuspecting worldwide web.

Then... I wait for Ridley's lawyers to call!





Robert Francis

There is a girl standing in front of me. She is crying, quite a lot, really, uncontrollably I suppose, and her hands are shaking. She is distraught.

Later I wonder if she was at the end cycle.

Meanwhile two streams of tears are flowing down her pretty cheeks, her short hair is stylish, she has a nice nose ring, it's small, discreet and very cute, although as the tears glisten off her face in this darkness illuminated by lights, the ring is unimportant, just the tears, her mechanism that demonstrates distress.

Bright lights shine everywhere, passing us. Our cars had collided; we had suddenly stopped a massive mobile movement of machinery, but the traffic will not allow such a small thing as a young lady's crying to cause any delay, and so the machines snake their merry way around the problem, more in apathetic nuisance than care.

I smile. It doesn't seem to do any good. It's not forced, she is cute after all. "Everything's OK," I say in the warmest and clearest voice that I can muster.

Maybe she is an Android.

The poor thing is very upset. Must be the old Andy clock. In between sobs and gasps of air, she manages to blurt out, "I'm pregnant and had a row with my fiancé." This makes sense. To me.

"Everything's OK," I repeat, and continue clearly, "Are you hurt?" The head shakes.

"There are no problems, you've just had a shock and an upset, that's all." I continue to smile. She is still cute but not as eligible, and now I am protective. An unexplainable, involuntary mode change, there.

"Everything's OK," I say once again, with a voice of reassurance and calm.

"I'm OK, the car is OK, your car is OK, there is only one thing *not* OK, and guess what that is?" I say with a smile. Her head shakes, no doubt confusion from my accent, lack of concentration, wonderment about what's been asked, why the questions, who is this man, what is he about, what'd he say?

"You," I smile, and now touch her forearm, as I continue, turning the focus and hopefully her concentration inward, "You are not OK, but that's alright."

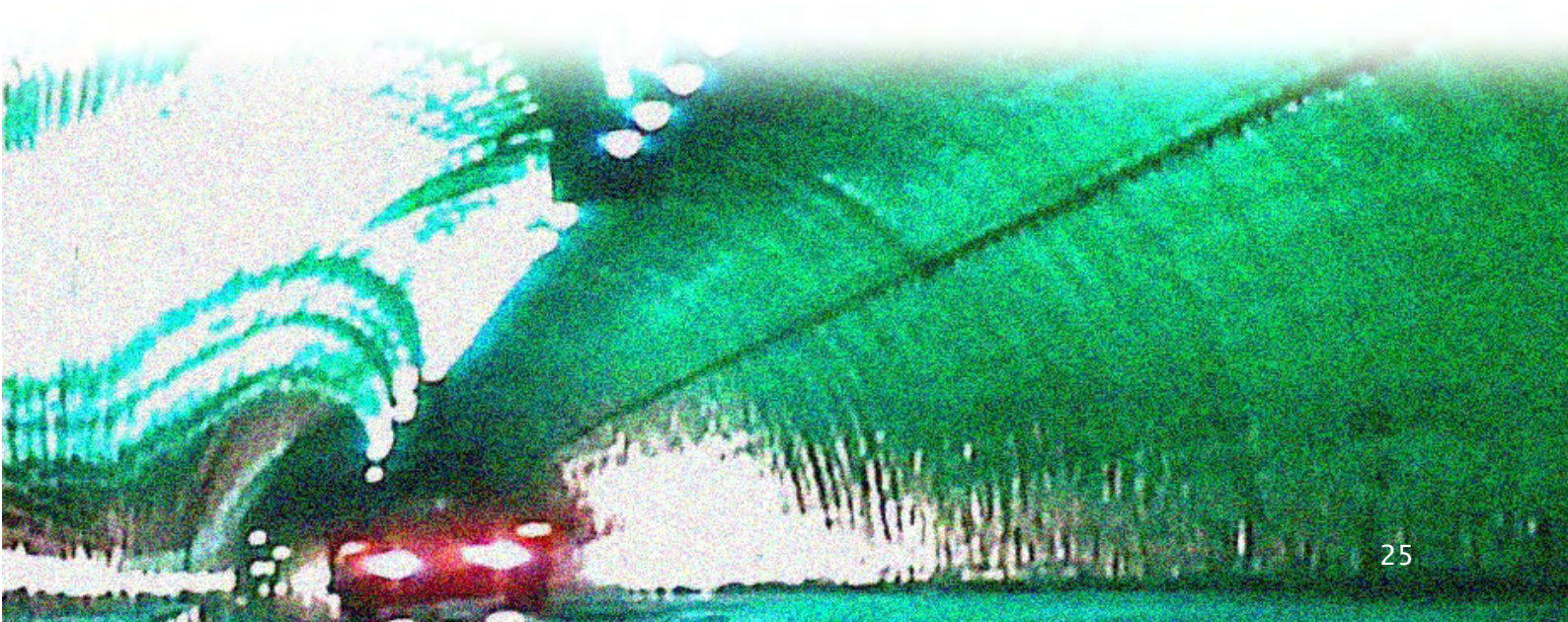
She is still upset, but I think a little less so now. I look for a slide rule that calculates tears multiplied by shakes multiplied by hurt to equal an upset value.

I have seen crashes you wouldn't believe, radiators burst in the front of Opels, side beams crushed in on Hondas, been in crashes where the road glitters with the shine of smashed glass, and I know the sounds. The sickening yet exhilarating sounds, they happen in slow motion after the initial surprise and then soon disappear into silence. A near deathly silence, and I swear I can hear it.

This time it was the dull thump of a low-speed impact. No crunch of glass so the plastic lenses are fine, there is the lack of that sharpness of metal suddenly meeting metal in a minute explosion, it's just plastic bumpers and the foam behind them. Just bumpers. This girl was out of her car fast enough, and I think there isn't a problem. After all, she lost concentration just for a moment, and hit the anchors just a bit too late.

I smile again. "Let's get our cars off the road," I say, and so I do.

She is still upset. I explain that I am not for letting her leave, in fact I explain that she is unfit to drive, hope that she agrees and then politely ask



who is nearby. The fiancé.

Typical.

I worry for a moment and ponder if, by calling him, she will admit some sort of unfair and dishonourable relationship defeat, or will he assume in his vainglorious triumph that in the row they had he is proven right, that the situation is an extension of his righteousness and her wrongness. I hope he doesn't.

"Call him, then," I say, and I continue to smile. Tears are less now, shining in between other involuntary movements, and the focussed action of making a phone call helps. I can hear the conversation. It's going OK. It pauses, and she asks me a question.

"He wants to know how much money you want."

I narrow my eyes, look stern and without a word extend my arm. The device is placed in my hand. Calmness. I adjust the accent: strength, yet pleasant.

"Hi. Listen, I am fine, the cars are fine, everything's fine, but this lady is unfit to drive. We don't want a worse accident, do we?" I labour the point, using the authoritative voice of someone who is certain about a situation.

I get a stream of "Thank you, thanks, thank you."

I continue, the situation agreed. "Very good, now, we are on the main bypass, just past the old garage. Sure you know it? Great."

So I hand back the device. More tears, but they soon cease. Deep controlled breathing, thinking for two now, and then gratitude.

It's understandable why the cost of my insurance went up fifty percent thirteen months ago, after sliding slowly downward over four years. It's the Claim Culture. Me? I'd like to claim Pluto back as a real planet. The world is full of people fucking each other over, all under the guise of professionalism.

Her gratitude is nice, but I need to ensure she is OK. I tell her what to say to the Police, vehicles on pavements are not actually *de rigueur*, and I explain that when all's said and done she will be fine. She smiles, still disbelieving, in a way. I want to leave, so I do, before there is more of the same or I end up asking her on a date.

Android, definitely an Android.

What sort of monster was she expecting? Are we all so base now,

that the default mode is to be prepared for inhuman nastiness?

I select a gear, it's been a crazy time, her tears make me think of a recent conversation, with someone who was indeed quite unpleasant in reality, just as this car crash Android had imagined and expected me to be.

In the world of makeupia.



A Replicant. "Families are dysfunctional," says the man, he is in a way superior to me, of course, a better-paid human, more senior in the structure, the system, the process.

It upsets a few. Fucking Replicant, I think. No, maybe it was Reptile. Fucking Reptile.

"How do you feel about your tax increases paying for civil servants' pensions? Who has a problem with that?" He is appealing to the crowd, and I realise it's all a reptilian ploy to get people to agree that they should get value for money, and in turn *he* wants value for money, or more work for money while we work harder.

I fail to sit quiet. "I think it's fine, they've worked for it," and soon the slithery-tongued bastard is back faux-arguing that I am wrong, but not really, not able to really argue as his argument has no substance, it's just a ploy, a way to find a lever, and anyhow, I am quick when he puts it to me. "Nah, my taxes pay for nuclear weapons or other such stuff I disagree with. You can't categorise taxes I pay like that."

The Replicant is not defeated, but it is unsure. *Take that, you fucking reptilian*, and it slides onward.



Maybe I am not human.

I change gear, it's been a crazy time and the Android's tears make me think of my most recent convention. Tears flowing down the cheeks of women, girls, ladies, whatever. Maybe human tears.

Tears, of anger and frustration, distraught.

I'm lying on a couch, it's spacious, private, in Faroffwesternlandia, and so a lady is about to orgasm, maybe in a moment, maybe a few, maybe a few minutes, probably not, she is close, and I have found what is needed and that is good, she was quick to be naked, excited and aroused, and it's

been good fun so far. I know I have it.

Then she crashes, freezes, solidifies almost, goes cold.

The noises of exhilaration have stopped, and like the aftermath of a car crash there is only stillness and quiet.

And then tears. Did she come to her senses suddenly?

Computer failure, I ponder. I wait and it is explained. I don't deserve an explanation, but then in the nakedness all that we possess is an honesty, all is laid bare, one can be honest when you are like this, if you want. Slowly the story, and it is a foul one, comes out.

Only humans could be so horrible to another human, for she has been violated, as only men can, and so that ceased one of her favourite functions. Reptiles. Not only once, and not in similar circumstances. *Human* reptiles.

What type of rape is worse? My sliderule cannot compute. I don't care. It's all too horrible.

There is more than enough here to burn the harddrive from the board of any console, to short-circuit anyone, to fuck up functions that are natural. It's OK, no need for a rush to the fannish pitchforks, it was the land of real-world horror.

I am a Solution-Focussed Useless Man Bastard. So I try not to be. Much. She holds me. Warm. Pressed against me, entwined. She holds me tightly now, warmly.

With calmness I take the lead, I have found her tears; well, her softness and desire to be held is in some way very arousing, and she is not altering the plan, attempting to delete what's occurred, and she feels in control and willing to persevere, and so her concentration is drawn to me, and we find a route out of the dilemma through distraction. And good distraction it is too, satisfyingly good, very good indeed.

Then I assume, that now she is feeling somewhat whole again, and quite honestly desired and wanted and with the ability to make the most human of functions work in such a raw way, my focus swings again back to her, and so she achieves that which had eluded her. For so long. Too long.

Later she is humming, like a newly serviced and polished machine, as if surrounded by light, and she even admits something has happened, an

unseen enhancement, she exudes more of what I had seen before, a sexuality, desirability, beauty and, yes, intelligence. So after we objectify one another we can also engage the brain circuitry. Well, for a little. I've already changed a gear and am holding someone else.

Just an Android, needing a top up. Look at that smile across an atrium. It's so cheeky.

They were not the only tears that were shed that weekend that I felt running down my cheeks, to drop onto bed linen or my shirt, tears that were lost in loneliness or upset.

Yet there are so many with no tears, just tasting pleasure and sweetness. I have not enough time, I have much real work to do. It's my own kill-switch, in a way.

It is at specifically scheduled free moments, unleashed, that I allow myself to indulge, aware that I roll a dice as I smile. I know its fate, then, as it can be an immediate turn-down, a chase, an arranged frolick or something in between. All human activity, all socialisation in a fleeting few seconds. I frequently fail to roll a six. But often I do.

They look good. They taste better. They don't hate my love of the imagination and artistic stories.

Objects of desire, of beauty, and of course they can show consideration and appreciation for my attempts at artistry, which can vary from raw and brutal to gentle and refined. Sometimes. Art is in the eye of the beholder, and to discriminate in art perhaps makes them human. No two ever exactly alike in their intimate desires, human desires.

I trust I am not a reptilian Replicant. I don't feel it. Sometimes I do. Where's my slide rule?

I sometimes wish people were less human, or more human, or Androids nicer.

I am human, I will go out and meet friends, and drink a beer and dance and jump and laugh and admire, and in a moment I will ask a girl to photograph us all, a mixed bag from four countries and three continents, and then this unknown girl who takes the photo, I will end up kissing her. She likes it. She is cute. To me.

She never calls. That's OK, electronic mail turns up from far away, but close to my hydraulic heart.

Fuck you, Reptiles.

STOPPING THE ARTIFICIAL HEART

Tonya Adolfson



I loved *Blade Runner*. It had a lot of aspects that became poignant to intelligent conversations, from spray-on eye shadow to the soul-to-sentience ratio if an android doesn't know it's an android. Although we have achieved the height of aerosol application to get that smoky eye look, I'm a little concerned about the lack of legislation against cyborgs. I should have marches on Washington by half-machines by now.

In thinking about this, I determined the theme behind this is the same as the theme behind any robotic film: What constitutes a soul-bearing creature? If a robot cannot have a soul because man made it, can it if a man and a woman make it? That's how babies are made and they have souls.

Is it a matter of being squishy? Because something steel and plastic can't be ensouled, so we can't allow people to get too many prosthetics or they stop being people? Is that it? Because if it is, my dog, my cat and

that bag of potatoes in the cupboard I have kinda forgotten about qualify for souls.

Or is it self-awareness? So, infants don't have souls because they don't understand self-awareness?

I got a million of these.

But right now, I want to know why I can't sign up to remove my right arm right now and replace it with an armored machine gun attachment with a lighter in the thumb. For concerts.

More important, I want to know why my friend with kidneys which are down to less than 25% functionality due to an autoimmune problem, who will not be put on a transplant list, isn't able to get an artificial kidney. I'm told it's because the tech doesn't exist. I cry falsehood there.

We have external dialysis machines. They are expensive and inconvenient and require hospitalization or very special surroundings. But the tech exists for me to use my phone to turn on my car, coffee maker and my TV to *CSI: Miami*. Well, maybe not my coffee maker. It prefers *CSI: New York*.

We have the Jarvis artificial heart. Have had for a while now. But I have heard this life-saving mechanism touted as dehumanizing. I worry this is similar to the reason why my friend doesn't have artificial kidneys as an option. I really don't want to find out that the reason he will have a slow, painful death that will cost six or seven figures to his widow is not because it will cost six or seven figures to his widow.

When questioned, it returns to the same discussion: If an android doesn't know it's an android, does it have a soul? If a person has four artificial internal organs because we haven't found a cure for AIDS yet, is it still a human? Where is the line, and at what point does that line finally apply to both creatures? If a person with an artificial heart and prosthetic arms and legs doesn't know he's an android, does that mean he isn't?

Then quit jerking us around, save my friend and give me my bloody thumb lighter.

Weird Al's in town.

Christopher J. Garcia

The entire message of *Blade Runner* boils down to one question: What's the goddamned point?

It doesn't try to answer this question, it doesn't have to, but it asks it and in not answering it, it makes an even bigger point. I'll get to all of this eventually.

Ridley Scott is one of the truly great masters of science fiction film. *Alien*: a classic; his 1984 ad for Apple: spectacular. He's a stud and here he is at his best. Scott understands several things about film that many directors only consider on the periphery. The first is the value of setting. The Los Angeles of *Blade Runner* is unrecognisable from that of the early 1980s, or today, yet it is obviously the same Los Angeles. The Art Direction took the real LA and put it in there with the future, with the megalith that is the Tyrell Corporation building, with the wasted city skyline we see. The scenes where we are introduced to J.F. Sebastian and Pris, we see a garbage-strewn warehouse district that looks like the kind of Los Angeles those of us who hang around in the less-nicer parts of town. If you were to look at those same parts of LA back in 1900, it'd look much the same. Those areas are almost timeless.

The other thing that Scott has is a fine set of cinematographers. Jordan Cronenweth was his Cinematographer, and a fine one. He had done the shooting for *Altered States* and Brewster McCloud, and would later shoot things like *Stop Making Sense* and *Peggy Sue Got Married*, which is a film that has some amazingly subtle shooting that makes a *huge* difference. Interestingly, he had Parkinson's

Disease but still kept working until almost the end of his life in 1996. His eye, and the use of some very simple tricks, made *Blade Runner* into a visual feast. One of them was the use of high angles. These give off some amazing weight to some moments. One, a shot in the Tyrell Corporation, gives the feeling of distance that the film tries to maintain within many of the characters. The way they shot Sean Young's Rachel was the kind of shooting that you only use when you have a face that speaks of beauty but also holds secrets. Watching Deckard give Rachel the Voight-Kampff test is a shooter's dream. It's amazing what he gets out of a pair of performances that at that point are kinda flat.

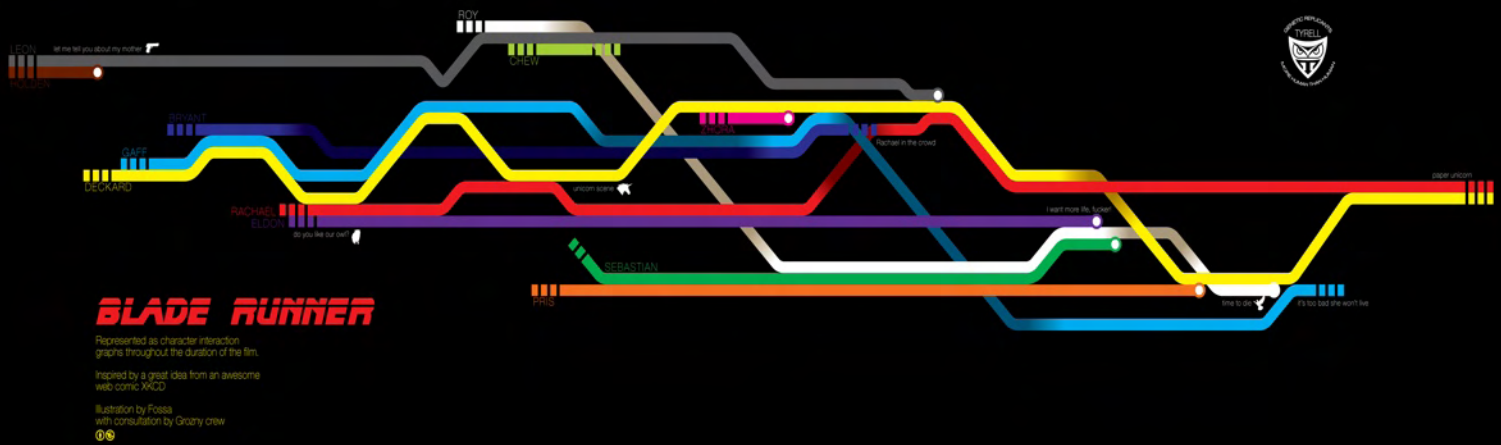
And that's another thing Scott understands: how to reign in actors.

Now, I've made this point before - acting must match the content of the script and not clash with the visual context. That's a tough one. Watch a movie like *The Godfather* and consider the performance of one Mr. Jimmy Cahn. He's the peak, while the performances of Al Pacino and Robert Duvall are the valleys, and if they had gone big (much like Pacino does in *Godfather 3*), it would have thrown the weight of the performances off-balance completely. Harrison Ford's performance as Deckard is sly, only going to extremes at the turn of the most significant plot points. It is Rutger Hauer and Daryl Hannah, and to a lesser extent Joe Turkel, who provide the peaks, the moments of over-topping that gives the understuff weight. It's impressive to watch Sean Young and Harrison Ford work within the valley, to keep it straight and human. Sean Young, who can certainly go into that Peaks section (see her performance in *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*) is particularly good at making her emotional points with little wasted intellectual movement. She works every nuance, has a set of facial expressions that draw in in a viewer to a script that is about as powerful as you'll ever find.

And the script is amazing.

There had been a couple of attempts to adapt *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, one of which had a Robert Jaffe script that Dick thought was true garbage. It was Hampton Fancher who wrote the first good version, and then quit after the producers hired David Peoples to do a





re-write. Peoples, a Bay Area dude, would later write *The Unforgiven* and various other movies. The script is just about as good as you could imagine. It's influenced not only by science fiction visions but by Noir detective novels and film.

It's amazing what they managed to do with what they had. The story went so perfectly, and the way that the characters interact within it made it even better than you could expect. The best moments, though, are one-liners. "I need more life, fucker," when uttered by Rutger Hauer, is one of the truly great moments in the history of cinema.

When they re-edited it and changed the line to "I need more life, father", it ruined a precious moment. The closing line, "You know she won't live. But then again, who does?" is another classic line, and one of the reason I love me some Edward James Olmos.

There are some interesting character choices along the way. My man M. Emmett Walsh played Deckard's boss and it was a nice way to set up the world in which Deckard works. William Sanderson might have the best moments as a toy designer, working a long way to giving a sense of humanity to the Replicants.

The Replicants are a tough set. When you've got Joanna Cassidy, Rutger Hauer, Brion James and Daryl Hannah, you really don't need much more, but they all make the most of it. There is a sort of pathos to their movements, and there is an over-the-top-ness to it that works so well. They are living to the extreme, knowing that they are limited in the amount of time they have. This comes to the point of the film. Why should they keep living with the knowledge that they have so

little time? Why should anything else matter, even the life and freedom of others, when they are about to shuffle off this artificial mortal coil? The entire point of them tracking down their creators is that they need to find a way to extend their life. This is called bargaining, but it doesn't seem to affect them all the same. Pris has gone hedonistic and just crazy. It's hard to say what has happened to Zhora - she seems to just be living which may mean that she's made it all the way to acceptance. I'm not sure whether Hauer's Roy Batty is at depression or denial. I tend to think he's in denial. They're all trying to find out why the hell it is that it has to end so soon.

It is the entire human condition tied down into one film.

The props are superb, the sets spectacular. I have seen the Tyrell Building prop up-close. It is amazing. The effects were probably the best of anything that came out that year as far as simple practicals. The best has to be the noodle bar. The Spinner vehicle is another masterpiece. It's an image that looks great. The kind of effects that they used are less used these days, but the look of the systems are very believable. The screens and the video surveillance systems all look awesomely realistic. The technology in a Ridley Scott film is always perfect, never too big or flashy or forward.

Blade Runner is an essential film. It has a lovely theme, a beautiful sense of flow, and most importantly, it's a film that fully understands what it is doing. Too many films ignore the fact that there is a world outside of what we see through the lens of the camera. *Blade Runner*, on the other hand, is a fully realised world.

▲
'Blade Runner Chart', 2009. Represented as character interaction graphs for the duration of the film.
[Valtteri Mäki @ flickr]

Please see the Contents page for a URL to a Hi-res image which provides far greater detail (and a few laughs).

Katura Reynolds

I think it's safe to say that Philip K. Dick's book *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* has very little to do with *Blade Runner*, the movie that was (vaguely) based on it. The book versus movie debate is one that can easily last all night, all weekend. For what it's worth, this is the sound of my hat swishing into the boxing ring.

Blade Runner is a visually compelling movie: the strange urban landscapes of the future are rich, complex and fascinating. These futuristic habitats are even more lush and dear to me because I saw so many of the sites in real life when I was living in Los Angeles - indeed, the industrial smokestacks that spew the giant goutts of flames early in the film are just down the street from my friend's house, where we used to go for *Star Trek* night every week. But while the textures and colors of the universe are very satisfying, the plot of *Blade Runner* has been squished and squashed and broken down into just one more example of the same old pulpy Hollywood nonsense. Handsome male lead runs around shooting stuff. Handsome male lead is strong but conflicted, may be some degree of bad guy himself. Skinny long-legged movie lady does gymnastics and tries to throttle male lead with her thighs. Weirdo nerdy guy is weird, and dies in a pathetic way. Same old same old. I was bored, and - I know it's bad form to be predictable in my complaints

when accusing Hollywood of being too predictable, but I have to say it anyway - as a nerdy feminist, I was kind of offended by the tired old tropes.

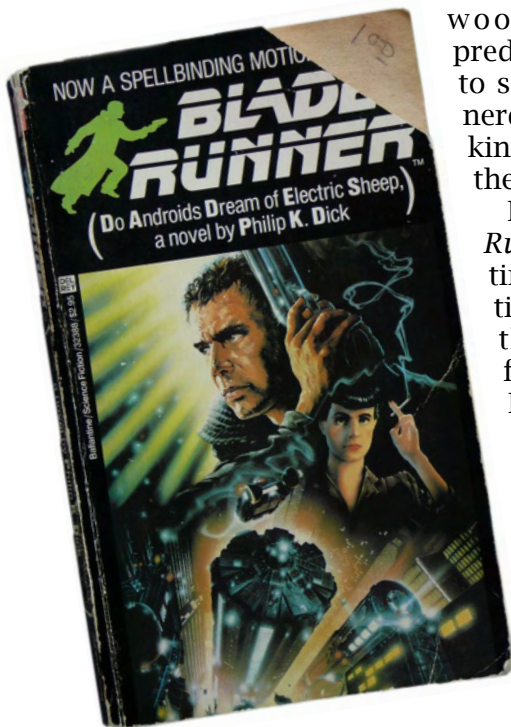
I had seen *Blade Runner* about three times, hoping each time that somehow the switch would flip in my brain and I'd suddenly see why so many think the movie is so ingenious, when I finally picked up a copy of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Yes, the cover art on the paper back

book was compelling enough that I figured it was worth a shot, even having been so consistently underwhelmed by the film. Besides, I love how you can sing the title of the book to the tune of "Greensleeves." (Hey, we all have silly motivations for reading books sometimes, right?)

I didn't expect to adore *Electric Sheep* so much. But man, the book is amazing. It's not about running around and shooting people in the future. It's about the crushing force of middle-class despair, about the hollow zombie-like dance of keeping up with the Joneses. It's about how the mindless struggle to keep up appearances makes us completely unable to distinguish between real and fake, between the living and the robotic. It's about the epic and endless battle that we wage with *junk mail...* and the junk mail is totally winning. It is bleak and it is brilliant and it feels entirely mundane and also entirely original.

You know how Octavia Butler took the concept of suburban cul-de-sacs, and turned them into walled fortresses against a world gone mad and then burned them all to the ground, to kick off her novel *Parable of the Sower*? It's a similar flavor of post-apocalyptic universe that Dick calls up in *Electric Sheep* - bleak, but with traces of hope, only it's really messed-up hope. In a world where most animals are pretty much extinct, city folks spend all their money on more and more realistic robot animals, striving to achieve greater status by owning larger and more sophisticated robotic pets. Folks have grown so unfamiliar with actual living critters that robotic animal repair crews accidentally vivisect a genuine frog, in the pathetic attempt to change its batteries. Yeah, it's a good sign that there's a living frog out there still - or that there *had* been, at least...

When I discussed the book-versus-movie debate with my sweetie, he came down solidly on the side of the movie. The book, he said, was just too depressing. But I ask you this: is it more depressing to watch hours of your life drain away in front of the same old Hollywood approach to storytelling, or to read an original and insightful tale about the pathetic side of our common human experience? You tell me.





LATE TO THE 'BLADE RUNNER' PARTY

James Mason

Back in the '80s, I was more of an *Alien* guy. I was and still am a sucker for the whole deadly discovery-in-space thing. *Blade Runner*, pretty as it was, just didn't grab me as much likely due to more immediately exciting films like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *The Empire Strikes Back* being released around that time. Then as I got older, films like *The Terminator*, *Aliens*, *Back to the Future* and *Robocop* cemented my love for science fiction cinema.

Then in the early '90s there was some excitement building over the discovery of a "workprint"; this would be an earlier rough cut of *Blade Runner* without the controversial voiceover and the ending which used footage from *The Shining* (to make it more upbeat) excised. This was all before blogs and broadband and even dial-up would've been a rarity. This was old-school hype.

Having only seen *Blade Runner* on a 20-something inch TV on VHS, I feel that there's some mitigating circumstances as to me not seeing the worth of Ridley Scott's second science fiction movie. I was also younger and would've have been more easily impressed with the flashy whizz-bang action of the other movies I've mentioned. So when the Dublin Film Festival had this as part of their programme, I was going to most definitely see what all the fuss was about.

The showing was in the now long-defunct Adelphi cinema. It was a late night showing on Screen One and it was billed as a "70mm presentation". The cinema was packed and the excitement was palpable. I was at a film festival, surrounded by others who loved film and in a cinema that was one of the best in the city. If *Blade Runner* was going to shine it was going to be tonight. The lights dimmed, the excited chatter turned to a hushed silence and the film began.

Vangelis's iconic score kicked in along with my senses, and I was in the future. A dark, rainy dystopia was the world I was being transported to (it

may sound like an average day in Dublin, but Scott's vivid visuals of a future LA were far cooler than my "Dirty Old Town"). The absence of Harrison Ford's narration opened the gate into this grimy lived in city and thanks to seeing it in glorious widescreen I now could see why people gushed about this movie.

I could also see just how plausible the conceits of the story were, thanks to being a bit more mature and aware of cloning and genetic manipulation. Themes of "What is it that defines being human?" and "What would we do if we met our maker?" actually got my attention.

Ridley Scott and everyone involved had an exceptionally rough time making this film. Harrison Ford basically does not talk about it, on seeing the very in-depth documentary "Dangerous Days" (an abandoned title for the film). Seeing the producers talk about how they wanted to fire Scott but the Directors Guild of America stepped in and the producers had to back down. Scott had a clear vision and he wasn't letting anyone stop him from getting that on screen. The producers, even years after, still seem to harbour resentment at Ridley but they reluctantly admit that he was right to stick to that vision as now critics and cinema goers and they themselves finally "get it".

Blade Runner was one of the first earthbound science fiction films that didn't deal with aliens, lasers and space battles (although Roy Batty does mention one he fought in) it also set the template of the visual aesthetic for the entire cyberpunk movement. Vangelis's lush electronic score is a benchmark of modern movie soundtracks that composers try to match.

I may have been late to the party regarding *Blade Runner* but thanks to the eternal night of LA in 2019 and large flat panel screens and Blu-ray, it looks like it's still going strong. Welcome to the party.

PLANET LOS ANGELES, 2019: PHILIP K. DICK'S ACCIDENTAL AFTERLIFE

Peter Young



The gigantic mass is immobilised before the eyes. It is transformed into a texturology in which extremes coincide – extremes of ambition and degradation, brutal oppositions of races and styles, contrasts between yesterday's buildings, already transformed into trash cans, and today's urban irruptions that block out its space... Its present invents itself, from hour to hour, in the act of throwing away its previous accomplishments and challenging the future.

— Michel de Certeau, 'Walking in the City', *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1980

Here's an entertaining but ultimately diverting thought: there may or may not be any number of alternate universes in which Philip K. Dick agreed to write the dumbed-down film novelisation he was asked to do for *Blade Runner*, also, in at least one of those universes, Dick did not suffer a fatal stroke during its filming, lived on to regret his decision and in time-honoured fashion tried to buy up every copy to remove it from circulation.

Of course there are both good and bad elements to this scenario: Dick would have been with us for longer, but no artist enjoys living in the same universe as their creative mistakes. And whilst those alternate universes would encapsulate any number of possibilities, of course neither of those events came about: in *this*

universe Dick stuck to his principles and refused to write it, but nor did he, or could he, hang onto life after his stroke. Five days later, like tears in rain, everything was lost. It was his time to die.

Blade Runner contains a number of metaphorical allusions to death and meeting one's maker, although of course there's no afterlife for a Replicant, even a Nexus-6. Given the sad fact of Dick's passing during *Blade Runner's* filming, it is as if, for the film's fans, there has become something singularly inevitable about the circumstances surrounding the film's timing, creation and aftermath. It clearly chose the right time to be born: that's an aspect of *Blade Runner* that ought to give pause for thought to fans of a genre that many believe began with *Frankenstein*. Here in real

▲
'Hong Kong',
2007.
[late night movie
@ flickr]

life, with Dick's early death we lost the creator but were given one further masterpiece, a *de novo* creative work helmed by another hand that has often served as the best entry point into Dick's creative output. If we briefly burden *Blade Runner* with some unintended metaphor, the coincidence of Dick's demise during production has some unintentional synchronicity with the film, in the scene in which the world loses Tyrell, the genius creator, and is left with his creation Roy Batty, the flawed but magnificent Replicant. But *Blade Runner* has hardly killed off the future career of Philip K. Dick in the way that Roy Batty conspired to kill his own creator. In giving us a stripped down and polished version of Dick's novel, retooled for thrills and *noir* and a slow build to such high drama, Scott brings out the essence in what he and screenwriters Fancher and Peoples had understood Dick was getting at all along. Scott was acting as midwife to Dick's central idea and, through a tortuous route and a difficult birth, delivered an inspirational child to the world.



And the world in 1982 was clearly ready, because the universe of *Blade Runner* was already out there - all the film did was capture a particular zeitgeist. It was Scott himself who coined the term "like Hong Kong on a very bad day" to describe the atmosphere of his projected film as it was in pre-production. (It's curious how the film has become identified with both Dick and Scott equally - the same can't be said of any other director with a movie lifted from a

PKD story, even with Spielberg and *Minority Report*). Before he died, Dick for once overcame his distrust of Hollywood and came round to appreciating how Scott was adapting his work: "I saw a segment of Douglas Trumbull's special effects for *Blade Runner* on the KNBC-TV news. I recognized it immediately. It was my own interior world. They caught it perfectly." Dick clearly felt many of the right decisions were being made regarding the film itself, and he also approved of the film's script: "After I finished reading the screenplay, I got the novel out and looked through it. The two reinforce each other, so that someone who started with the novel would enjoy the movie and someone who started with the movie would enjoy the novel."

It's significant that the only indications of the film's setting are in that part of the title sequence that declares "Los Angeles, November 2019", and the use of LA's Bradbury Building and Ennis House as interiors. Unless the viewer knows of these real-world locations they will be lost for reference points in this vast sprawling metropolis that could, effectively, be anywhere. The buildings themselves are used to provide atmosphere, their locations embedded so deep in the city's grand visual magnificence that they are lost in this dark urban future that barely resembles Los Angeles as we are ever likely to know it. What is far more noticeable than Los Angeles, specifically, is how *Blade Runner* focuses throughout on Asia: almost half the film's actors are Asian, the video billboard advertising focuses on a smiling Japanese geisha, and Deckard is introduced in what must

'Tokyo at Dusk -
Blade Runner',
2009.

[**Trey Ratcliff**
@ flickr]



be the city's Chinatown, a locale that fits him like a comfortable coat. As Ridley Scott initially implied, it could even be Hong Kong. Apart from the title sequence the city *as a setting* is never identified recognisably, and it could almost be any major world city of the future. In fact, it could almost be any major world city of today.



Deckard: "You remember the spider that lived in a bush outside your window? Orange body, green legs? You watched her build a web all summer. Then one day there was big egg in it. The egg hatched—"
Rachel: "The egg hatched—"
"And?"
"And a hundred baby spiders came out. And they ate her."

This fictive scene is one of *Blade Runner's* several allusions to death and one kind of afterlife, one that somehow echoes the film's place in the world today. For me it embodies an entire sequence of events, from Dick's inspiration, to the completed novel, and then the creation of *Blade Runner*, and ultimately wherever we notice the film reflected in the real world around us. Those "hundred baby spiders" figuratively encapsulate all those references to the movie that have ever been uttered when exclaiming at the sight of a dark, rain-soaked, neon-lit cityscape, "It's like something out of *Blade Runner*." One of the ways the film has clearly found a place in the world is in our own compulsive and incessant visual referencing of it.

Dick's comment on Trumbull's special effects - "It was my own

interior world. They caught it perfectly" - suggests how the film has become (and let's have fun with the word) a *nexus* point of reference for all the alternate *Blade Runner*-esque cityscapes that already exist around the world. And when the sun goes down, Philip K. Dick, as the figurative spider who laid that egg that begat our common description of those hundreds of alternate cities and/or universes, has an afterlife in every one.



Do we now live in a Dickian world? Or a Ballardian or Brunnerian one? A bit of all three, truth be told, with maybe a little more emphasis on Dick and with a dash of several other literary epithets too. But cities themselves inspire us to look to two enduring SF films, *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner*, for descriptive inspiration. And to what Dickian futures could these darkly atmospheric, horizon-spanning habitats be taking us?

Among other things, *Blade Runner* is about living with - and cleaning up the mess left by - the bad decisions of others who've gone before you. Cities are built on layer upon layer of strategies, good or bad, and are the planet's newest environment. They are simply *there*, for now, and we muddle through as usual. Our inability to determine where we're heading with them makes me simultaneously sad and exuberant, much like the human race itself - the answer is out of reach yet also, surely, within our grasp. Beyond providing for our immediate survival, I simply have no idea to what possible futures these ultra-complex human hives are taking us. Then again, who does?

'Blade Runner's
Manhattan',
2007.
[Thiago Santos
@ flickr]





THE TANNHAUSER GATE

What is it about Roy Batty's last words, and where are those places?

Ken Marsden

And so to the rooftop scene, amid the searchlights from advertising blimps and the pouring rain, where one of the greatest films in movie history comes to a close.

Here we see a soaking wet and battered Deckard, lying where Batty had dropped him after saving his life in a last display of powerful superiority. Up to now, as we all know, they had battled a short and clearly one-sided fight to the death. Deckard would have killed Batty, no question, had he had a clear shot. He didn't get one, alas, and so he suffered at the hands of two physically stronger Replicants.

Okay, he killed Pris after his dreadful experience between her crushing thighs, but Batty was a different matter. Vastly stronger, quicker and sharper, Batty had the edge over Deckard from every angle. It

seemed his number was up.

As we know, though, it was *Batty's* number that was up: his four year battery just about run out and after his quest to increase his life span in tatters, Batty accepts his mortality in a final game of cat and mouse with his tormentor.

There's been much speculation about why he chose to save Deckard from falling to his death. Maybe he just wanted to salute a worthy adversary, or maybe he didn't need to prove his superiority any further and like a fighter pilot who salutes his vanquished foe he decides to give quarter to the doomed policeman. Rutger Hauer claims he discussed this with Ridley Scott at the time: Hauer asked why Batty chose to "save this fucker"; Scott replied that it's in Roy Batty's programming to be purely reactionary. His reflexes are so keen

that it's just lightning-quick instinct. Deckard falls, Batty grabs him, as simple as that. What do you think?

The same can be said, I think, for his final words. He knows he's about to die so he describes his life in a few brief lines, in a few brief seconds to an amazed Deckard:

"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the Shoulder of Orion. I've watched C-Beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhauser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die."

It's fantastic, isn't it? We know, from various sources, not least Paul M. Sammon's *Blade Runner* study, *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner*, that Rutger Hauer chose to alter his lines in what has become a seminal scene in SF movie history. He had been given a much longer piece, but the night before, he chose to change it citing the original to be over-long and clunky. He felt that with Batty's life source just about out of juice he wouldn't have time for a long soliloquy. So, by cutting a few more detailed pieces from the beginning and tacking on his own bit at the end - "*All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die.*" - he perfected it.

Hauer explains, "I didn't think the audience would stand another protracted death scene. So I said to Ridley, 'Let's do it very fast, and do it as simply and profoundly as possible.'" Scott agreed.

Contrary to common belief, Rutger Hauer didn't write or ad-lib the whole scene. It was written by David Peoples (who also wrote the film *Soldier*, more on that a bit further on). Hauer says of Peoples, "I think he did a really beautiful job. I mean, I loved the images he came up with... C-Beams, Tannhauser Gate... I thought they were really interesting, even if you didn't understand them."

On set, when he gave his last words and Scott had called "Cut!", the crew broke into spontaneous applause. Some might say they were happy at the troubled production's conclusion, but I like to think it was because they were genuinely touched by Hauer's powerful final scene.

So, what about those last words? Where, or what, is Tannhauser Gate,

and what happened off the Shoulder of Orion? Well first of all, we need to ask again, "What do you think?" When all is said and done, the beauty of science fiction is the sheer imagination of it all. The joy of imagining what might be can sometimes be greater than the realisation of what is.

Would we be better off knowing what Batty was talking about, or is the mystery the thing? After all, when he said "you people" in his soliloquy, he meant us, did he not? We wouldn't believe the things he'd seen, we humans, and maybe that's the point. Sight and seeing are a major theme in *Blade Runner*. The opening scene is a shot of an eye watching the Los Angeles night skyline, the Voight-Kampff machine that focuses on the eye's responses, the dream sequence, the value of photographs, Chew's eye laboratory where Leon and Roy get directions to see J.F. Sebastian. And then there's the giveaway red glow in the retina that Replicants seem to exhibit (at one point Deckard displays this too, but that's for another discussion). So although Replicants are banished and cursed with a very short life span, they have the advantage of seeing things in a completely different light. And seeing things we wouldn't believe because of the bizarre and fantastic lives they lead, off-world.

Then there's the science fact. What is 'Tannhauser Gate', and where is it? Well, the simple answer is there isn't one. Tannhauser was a poet and courtier in Richard Wagner's opera of the same name, who had fallen from grace with God and men. It's a good parallel with Batty's position but one which I think is merely coincidental. Since its mention in *Blade Runner* there have been various other references to 'Tannhauser' in music and video games, but the two essential references are in *Blade Runner* itself and the 1998 film *Soldier*, starring Kurt Russell in the title role as a futuristic soldier who had fought at the battle of Tannhauser Gate. Some of those battle scenes were depicted in that film, however these were cut due to budgetary constraints. *Soldier* isn't the worst science fiction film ever made but it's still a shoddy attempt at trying to link the two films in some way.

The 'Shoulder of Orion' is easier, because Orion has a shoulder (well,

two actually). Orion, one of the most recognisable constellations in the night sky, has two of the brightest stars at either shoulder: Rigel on the right and Betelgeuse on the left. Batty's reference to "Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion" is a direct reference to his military past and can only mean one of the many battles he's participated in. Once again, though, here is where the reference ends. I like to take Hauer's view and simply enjoy the idea and imagine what they are, even if I don't understand what they are.

So there are many interpretations as to what these lines mean, and will we ever know for sure? I hope not. Decide for yourselves, debate what you think, and do we really need everything explained to us?

There's enough in the film to leave

it as a stand-alone masterpiece, and heaven forbid a sequel ever sees the light of day, although recent reports suggest otherwise. As is the case with the recent news of a new *Watchmen* prequel series in production which isn't needed at all, *Blade Runner* is also a completed story. Anything you need to know about *Blade Runner* is already available.

And here's an afterthought: Betelgeuse, the eighth brightest star in the night sky at the left shoulder of Orion, could become a supernova at any time. It could be tomorrow, or it could be in four years or a million, for that matter. When it does it'll be the brightest thing in the sky apart from our sun, and will even be visible during the day. Its time is nearly up, and it has shone so very brightly.

Just like Roy.





JOURNEY *PLANET 12*

THE BLADE RUNNER ISSUE
APRIL 2012



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