



By Marko Peric

This Week: Do androids dream of electric sheep?

Blade Runner

Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, and Daryl Hannah
Directed by Ridley Scott
1982. 117 minutes. Colour
Rated R.

Blade Runner is only fifteen years old, and futuristic Los Angeles is hardly the image that springs to mind upon the mention of classic film. But this movie is something of substance, and under the science fiction covering there is a very human story. This film will become increasingly regarded as an enduring classic in future years.

The story deals with renegade replicants, which are artificial humanoids created for slave labour. Several of them steal a shuttle and return to Earth from the off-world colonies. These replicants have been designed with a four year life-span, and their time is running out. Desperate to prolong their lives, they try to contact their designer, a tycoon named Tyrell. Replicants being stronger than humans, they are considered dangerous and are forbidden on Earth. Deckard (Ford) is the hesitant Replicant hunting cop, or blade runner, assigned to find and "retire" this particularly nasty party of

fugitives.

Using detective skills and imaginative technology, Deckard closes in on the Replicants. He also meets Rachel (Young), a Replicant who thinks she's a human. When the truth is revealed to her, she disappears and Deckard is ordered to eliminate her as well. The only problem is that he falls in love with her.

That's plenty of plot for now. Let me say that although the film is almost two hours in length, it unfolds with considerable swiftness. The story is very absorbing, and within a few short minutes of pressing <Play> you will be thoroughly involved with the characters.

Blade Runner is not for everyone. People die, and several of the deaths are very unpleasant. As well, the tone is dark, and the subject matter is not for all tastes. Even if science fiction is not your cup of tea, however, there is still plenty of enjoyment in this film. There is no shortage of substance here, both in character and plot.

Acting: Harrison Ford shines in this departure from his Han Solo/Indiana Jones characters that were/are still are popular. Deckard may tote a gun, but he is quite intelligent, very human, and not especially heroic. By the finale he is broken and

pathetic. Rutger Hauer is also impressive. As the leader of the renegade Replicants, he is relentless and thoroughly vicious. Even so, Hauer remains charming enough that the audience cannot help but empathize with him, even after he commits murders. There is just enough humanity in the character for the observer to relate to. The other standout has to be Sean Young, who is very good in her screen debut. The character of Rachel is not an easy one, with conflicting emotions and uncertain loyalties, but Young does an excellent job.



Direction: This is a addition to the column, but Ridley Scott's role in making this film cannot be overlooked. As in most of his work, the visuals are impressive and arresting. In fact, this is considered by many to be the most visually perfect movie ever made. There is only one visual mistake, which involves the number of wounds on Rutger Hauer's face toward the end. I was not able to spot it. Can you?

The musical score is also excellent, with Vangelis doing his usual exquisite work. Unlike some of his films (1492: *Conquest of Paradise* comes to mind), the visuals and sounds do not run away with the movie. He gives

ample time to character and plot as well the rich backdrops.

There are two versions available -- the original and the director's cut, which is done in a widescreen format. The key difference lies in Ford's voice-over narration, which is entirely omitted from the latter. As well, Scott cuts part of the ending, and includes some footage cut from the original, including a unicorn vision that should raise some questions in the mind of the viewer. The original is easier to follow, but if one pays close attention and has patience, the director's cut is quite enjoyable, especially in the letterbox format. If you enjoy the film, you should watch both versions.

Memorable Scenes: Several come to mind. The entire fight scene between Ford and Hauer is intense, with plenty of action and great visuals. It resembles a twisted and deadly game of hide-and-seek. The dressing room scene is twisted and amusing, but does contain a few seconds of nudity. Consider yourself warned. Other things to watch for are the product placements. You'll see a Coke billboard, and an Atari sign (this was made in 1982, remember), among others.

Best Line: There are not a huge number that jump out, but Young has several. Probably the best takes place during the test that reveals what she really is. I do not have the exact quote, but it involves her wondering if this test is supposed to find if she is a Replicant or a lesbian.

Bottom Line: As said above, this is not for everybody. There is blood, violence, brief nudity, strong language (surprisingly little, however -- I counted less than ten words) and overall mature subject matter. If this does not bother you, however, *Blade Runner* is highly recommended. It is best watched in a single sitting. Do not even get up to make popcorn.

The film is based on the book *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* by the late Philip K. Dick. If you liked the film, read the book. I intend to as soon as I can track down a copy.

Available: Most video stores will have a copy of the original. The director's cut may be a little harder to find, but Blockbuster has two copies, and some of the other large stores may as well. This movie is on CTV's late night movie list, but was aired last July, so it probably won't be televised again for some time.

