

Proiezione lunedì 9 maggio

Blade Runner (Final Cut) (US, 1982-2007 – Warner Bros)

Director: Ridley Scott

Production Designer: Lawrence G. Paull

Art Director: David Snyder

Visual Futurist: Syd Mead

Ridley Scott started his career in the art department, as an art director in the UK. Generally speaking, this isn't a typical background for a Hollywood, big-budget director. His art director background definitely helped him create *Blade Runner*.

“Ridley really knew how to appeal to the art department, he was very wise about it. What he would say, up in the art department : ‘If you build it, I’ll shoot it.’ And who could resist the temptation of that? Because we’ve all suffered, making films with gigantic sets, and beautiful sets, and all that is shown/shot are talking heads. And that was disappointing. But because [Ridley] was an art director, he knew he could hook us with that bait. And he did it – if we built it, he shot it.” – Lawrence G. Paull

“...It was said that when Ridley takes out a pencil [to draw his ideas for a set], it would cost hundreds of dollars. When he used a pen, it would cost thousands of dollars.” – David Synder

Syd Mead, a futurist illustrator, did the initial concept illustration for the film. Per Ridley Scott's direction, Mead drew inspiration from the sci-fi comic magazine *Métal Hurlant (Heavy Metal)* and artist Moebius (who was offered a position by Scott, which Moebius declined and later regretted). Limited by time and budget, Scott steered Mead to retro-fit traditional buildings with futurist machinery and material. Adding pipes, neon, moulding and other exterior decor was something the *BR* production could do to the existing Warner Bros. backlot buildings, instead of building new facades and structures. Mead also designed many of the vehicles and machines featured in the movie.

Based on Syd Mead's illustrations, an army-sized art department led by production designer Lawrence Paull and art director David Snyder (but in fact Ridley Scott himself stayed pretty much at the helm of the art department), and the Actors' Strike of 5 months providing the incredible leisure of 5 months of prep/set building – all of these elements contributed to the immense production design of the film. *Blade Runner* was the first of its kind – no other movie or show looked like it before. Trail-blazing is often a grueling task, and this film production was no exception. The crew faced nearly-insane obstacles and difficulties during the film shoot.

Day 1 of Principal Photography. For some reason, Ridley Scott hadn't walked through the Tyrell Office set before this day. Scott turns to his PD and Art Director, and basically says: "It looks great. But the columns are upside down. Could you flip them over?" Scott later insisted that he had passed a note about the columns numerous times, prior to the Day 1 set walk-through/opening. Whatever happened, the art department suddenly had to flip over 10-20 huge, heavy columns that day, on top of a glossy, smooth floor. Thus delaying shooting for about 6 hours.

"I went over to the key grip, whom I'd worked with for five minutes at this point, and told him that we needed to make the set bigger. As we walked over to the grip truck, he was really angry with me, with the art department failing to do its job. Weeks later, working together, he apologized for being angry with me that first day. Because he did not realize, he said, that we would be making the sets bigger every day." – David Snyder

"Ridley knew what he wanted, but unfortunately, sometimes it was only like 24 frames before the clapper hit together. And you had that much time to make the changes." – Lawrence G. Paull

There is so much color in *Blade Runner*, even though it is overwhelmingly dark in frame and feeling. The old WB backlot did eventually become totally unrecognizable.

Some sets were not just complicated to build, they were also logistically difficult to shoot in. For Hannibal Chew's eye factory interior, the set was literally frozen and clogged with atmospheric fog – threatening the respiratory health of everyone on set.

Working on a film that takes place primarily at night, on wet and/or foggy sets, is not exactly comfortable for any crew member or actor. *Blade Runner* had at least 40 days of work in these conditions. Crew members began to wear gas masks to counter their exposure to the tons and tons of fog that had to be pumped onto the sets for photographic purposes.

Blade Runner also utilizes several historical Los Angeles locations. Some of the city's best architectural sites got a beautiful, dystopian makeover in the movie. The Bradbury Building in Downtown Los Angeles was one of the main location sets. Many people on the *BR* team were hesitant to use the building, seeing it as overused by previous TV and film productions. Unfamiliar with Los Angeles at the time, Ridley Scott had fresh eyes on every LA location and could approach each one in his own, unique way.

The Bradbury was occupied by tenants at the time, and part of the location agreement was that the crew had to clean up the entire building every morning, after the night shoots. The interior had to be wet, dirty and full of garbage for filming. To make this task bearable, Paull and Snyder decided to use crushed cork for dirt. Easy to clean up, and it soaked up all of the water spray down. Daily, at-dawn clean-ups were easier with this little innovation.

The Ennis-Brown House built by Frank Lloyd Wright was the source for Deckard's apartment. Syd Mead designed the set

interior, and Lawrence Paul took casts of the Ennis-Brown bricks and built the set on stage. The juxtaposition of the neon/zero gravity dystopian Los Angeles streets and the Ennis-Brown bricks yields so much texture and information to look at.

For the rooftop raining set, Ridley Scott was not getting the performance and scene coverage he needed for this key end scene. He then ran out of night-time, filming on a real location rooftop. Needing the darkness of night-time, the art department literally cut the rooftop set pieces off the location and transported them to a soundstage within the day, so they could complete filming.