

NEWS

What Saved Blade Runner, According To Visual Futurist Syd Mead

BY MIKE REYES 9 MONTHS AGO 27 COMMENTS



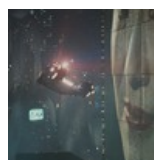
If you ask any modern science fiction fan to give you a list of classic Sci-Fi films from the last fifty years, they are without a doubt going to name *Blade Runner* somewhere in their top 10. Ridley Scott's iconic film has had quite a shelf life, despite a disastrous box office run in the summer of 1982. A success that, according to the film's "visual futurist" Syd Mead, is owed to the then burgeoning VHS market.

During this year's Visual Effects Society Awards, Mead was honored with the organization's "Visionary Award." With his resume filled with films like *Tron*, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, and most recently *Elysium*, his contribution to the world of futuristic sci-fi is undeniable. But perhaps his greatest success was the film that, in Mead's own words with *Collider*, succeeded only because of the following scenario:

The movie comes out, if enough people like it, fine. If they don't, it doesn't go anywhere. And the VCR saved Blade Runner. It was one of the top rental movies for a couple months.

When you take into account the fact that *Blade Runner* was made on a \$28 million budget and only took in \$27 million at the box office, the film can basically be considered the *Tomorrowland* of 1982. Though over time, and with a couple theatrical re-releases, box office records site *The Numbers* has clocked the film at grossing \$33 million worldwide by 2008. Still in the same summer that *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* was made for \$10.5 million, and brought *Blade Runner's* current total in its first two weeks of release, the fact that Ridley Scott's masterpiece couldn't even cover its budget is astounding. Of course, it didn't help any that *Blade Runner* opened in the second weekend of *E.T.'s* then record breaking run, but Scott's film did beat Steven

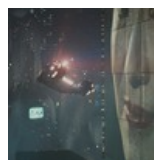
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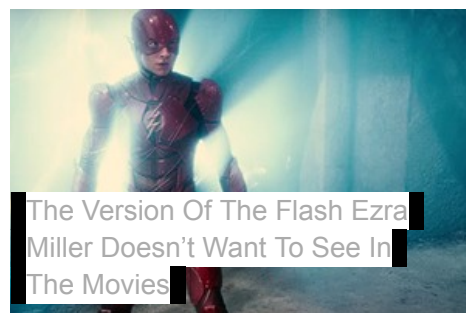


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Spielberg's massive hit in one respect: it was out on video first.

Despite *E.T.* being a top draw at the theaters, the film wasn't released on video until 1988 – six years after its original theatrical release. *Blade Runner*, on the other hand, was out on video the year following its less than spectacular finish. This ensured that fans could get their fill and spread the gospel to their friends who were lucky enough



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There are quite a few franchises who have seen their reputations bolstered by home video sales, the most recent being that of Guillermo del Toro's fan favorite *Hellboy* movies. Sadly, the DVD and Blu Ray markets aren't what they once were, which is one of the reasons del Toro has cited when telling his fans that *Hellboy 3* probably **isn't happening**. But maybe, if the fates are kind, he'll be able to pull a *Blade Runner* and find himself making **a sequel** a couple of years down the line.



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After all, that same strategy worked on Syd Mead's other legendary cult hit, *Tron*, and now *Blade Runner* will soon see its day in sequel court. Which is funny, because if you were to tell any of those first wave fans for either of those films that a second film would make its way to their eyes decades later, they'd have probably laughed. Right before they rewound their VHS copy for the seventeenth time, in the name of perpetuating the *Blade Runner* legend.

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 **Steven** · 9 months ago
 I am 51 years old. To this day, I have never seen ET and refuse to do so. It is literally a self imposed ban that is over 30 years old.
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 **Dagny Taggart** · 9 months ago
 I did not own a VCR until 1995 yet by that time I had seen BR dozens of times, all at an actual cinema mostly at late night shows. Anyone remembers repertoire

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