

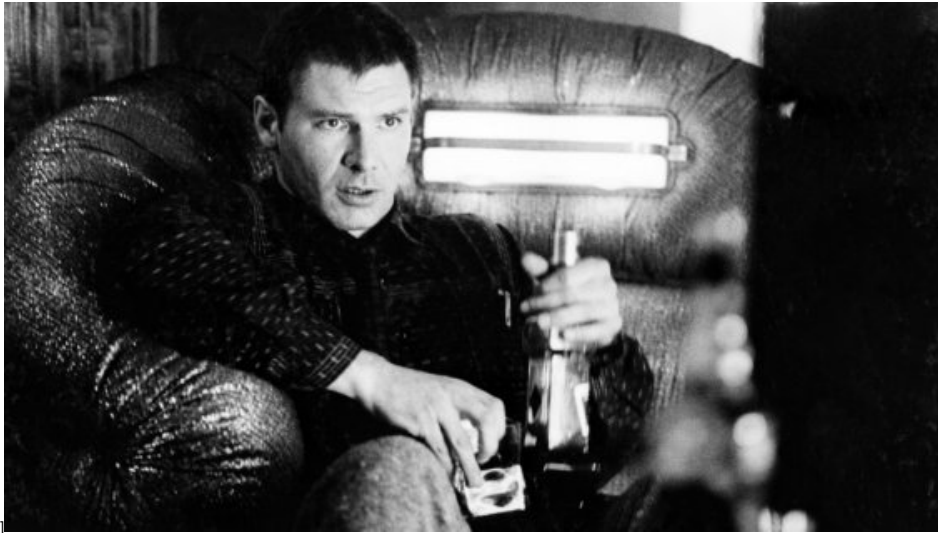
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## This Is the 'Blade Runner' Cut to Watch

9:30 AM PDT 10/5/2017 by Jacob Oller

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**Only one version truly captures the intention of director Ridley Scott after a negative test audiences reaction watered down the movie that hit theaters.**



[1]

Warner Bros./Photofest

Before traveling to 2049, now is a perfect time to prepare for the new film by (re)watching Ridley Scott's 1982 original *Blade Runner*. Or one version of the original, at least — because there are a lot of them. Films are often recut and redistributed, like the extended editions of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy or the multitude of retinkered *Star Wars* films that continue to revise the memories of the fandom. *Blade Runner* is a bit more complicated. It doesn't have a director's cut, or even two. *Blade Runner* has had seven different versions. The very loose adaptation of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is a seminal piece of cinematic sci-fi — but which version should you watch?

This debate surrounding which version is best actually mirrors the themes of the movie. What does it mean to be a real human as opposed to a replicant that is all but indistinguishable from one? Is the Director's Cut (1992's rushed re-edit) any less *Blade Runner* than what was originally shown in theaters? The answers here are almost always (like good sci-fi) matters of degrees.

First, let's look at things chronologically. In early 1982, two versions were shown to audiences before release: a workprint and a sneak peek. The workprint version, still watchable on the five-disc 2007 Ultimate Edition DVD set, is a bravado-filled work the studio had yet to tinker with. The film lacks almost any voiceover and non-diegetic exposition. There is no opening crawl explaining the bioengineered robot replicants. It's brief, bare-bones and ballsy. The sneak peek was shown only once, in San Diego, and was almost exactly the same as what was shown in theaters (aside from three sequences, which Paul Sammon's 1996 book *Future Noir: the Making of Blade Runner* describes as containing basically no must-see content).

That theatrical edition is what many people remember, notably through its VHS run, as great science fiction hamstrung by tired voiceover mandated by the studio and delivered (some believe intentionally) with palpable boredom by star Harrison Ford. It also features a tacked-on happy ending that doesn't even use footage shot by Scott, but came from the scrap pile of unused aerial shots filmed by Stanley Kubrick for *The Shining*. Almost identical to this release is the international or Criterion Edition that adds back some violence to three specific scenes of the film. You may have caught this version on HBO or as

your friend's "10th Anniversary Edition" when it was re-released in 1992. That ending, below:

That this international cut screened on HBO is significant, because otherwise television audiences got the CBS-edited broadcast version. This took out the nudity, violence, and cursing, like you might expect. But it also took out any ambiguity from one of the film's central questions: Is Harrison Ford's character a replicant? CBS decided maybe this was a bit much for audiences, so they nipped that particular query in the bud. Deckard is portrayed clearly as being human, thanks in part to a network-run teaser that explains the premise and literally says "The problem: He's human, they're not." (Below.)

Now we come to the two contenders for "best" *Blade Runner*: the Director's Cut (1992) and The Final Cut (2007). The former came out of a resurgence of popularity after Warner Bros. found an old workprint version and touted it (in theaters across 15 cities) as a director's cut. Scott disowned the rough cut and was compelled by the studio and the re-release's popularity to cut a quick new version alongside preservationist and the film's original assistant editor. The result is a better version of the film than what previously hit theaters, if only because the voiceover and happy ending have been cut out, but with the film's heavy-handedness intact. Time and money constraints prevented this from being Scott's definitive version. But The Final Cut allowed Scott the time and resources to get the film closest to his original vision, without test audiences and studio pressures twisting it.

This Final Cut is where newcomers should be dropped in. It trusts its audience and it leaves big questions vague and (relatively) unanswered. A surreal dream sequence adds layers of depth and meaning, completely altering the interpretive heft of a final scene, while continuity errors are scrubbed away with the same polish keeping the visuals spick-and-span. Come for the quality of the image transfer, stay for the quality of the idea transfer. The only reason to visit one of the other cuts is, as [IndieWire notes](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, a killer line from Rutger Hauer (giving a now-legendary performance as the replicant Roy Batty) in the theatrical version that is sadly declawed in The Final Cut. Hauer's deliveries are some of the film's greatest pleasures, so seeking out alternate takes of his snarls is admirable no matter how many recuts, reshoots and replicants you have to sift through. Value can be found in any of these versions, but for your money, The Final Cut is as "real" as you can get.

**Links:**

[1] [http://pinterest.com/pin/create/button/?url=www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/blade-runner-original-final-cut-version-watch-1044897&media=https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/thumbnail\\_570x321/2017/08/blade\\_runner\\_1982\\_91.jpg&description=This Is the &#039;Blade Runner&#039; Cut to Watch](http://pinterest.com/pin/create/button/?url=www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/blade-runner-original-final-cut-version-watch-1044897&media=https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/thumbnail_570x321/2017/08/blade_runner_1982_91.jpg&description=This%20Is%20the%20Blade%20Runner%20Cut%20to%20Watch)

[2] <http://www.indiewire.com/2014/04/directors-cut-10-theatrical-versions-vs-the-filmmakers-final-vision-87520/>