



## RIDLEY SCOTT

**Born:** Ridley Scott, November 30, 1937 (South Shields, Tyne and Wear, England).

**Directing style:** Premier visual stylist; innovator of cyberpunk; pioneer of the director's cut version of films; maker of innovative special effects epics; atmospheric lighting.

A brilliant image-maker by trade as an advertising man, Sir Ridley Scott has since managed to successfully translate lustrous pictures into big-screen stories. This jump from producing desire to constructing narrative is no small issue, because making beautiful pictures is one thing whereas building plot is quite another. But from his early work using simple and beautifully photographed imagery of a boy on a bicycle to advertise Hovis bread, to an alien bursting from the abdomen of John Hurt in *Alien* (1979), Scott's sense of visual impact has been extraordinary.

Having graduated from art school, Scott made his way to Hollywood via advertising campaigns and TV, finally directing his feature debut, *The Duellists* (1977). Stylish and impressive, but relatively unseen, the title led to Scott's breakout, *Alien*. Featuring the biological nightmare of an acid-bleeding, irrational alien on a rampage, the film made space travel blue collar and dirty, and elevated Sigourney Weaver to stardom.

Scott then directed the classic science-fiction movie *Blade Runner* (1982), and *Legend* (1985), a fantasy now remembered for Tim Curry's incarnation of the devil, as well as being an early



RIGHT: William Sanderson, Daryl Hannah, and Rutger Hauer star in *Blade Runner*.



Tom Cruise outing. *Black Rain* (1989) was Scott's mid-career resurrection, proving he was capable of directing glossy action films, then *Thelma & Louise* (1991) made him the critics' darling with the buddy tale of two women on the lam.

Scott's latest streak of commercially successful films began with Russell Crowe in *Gladiator* (2000), with stunning visuals, intense battle scenes, an impressive set, and five Oscars, and continued through *Hannibal* (2001) and *Black Hawk Down* (2001). He teamed with Crowe again for *A Good Year* (2006).

Scott is now preparing for his fourth decade in movies. Detractors consider him a stylish hack, someone capable of dressing up feces. But supporters contend that it is this same talent for rendering the everyday extraordinary that lends him truly awesome storytelling power. Never a shy filmmaker, Scott's cinema reveals characters and situations that are never what they appear at first glance. **GQC**

ABOVE: Russell Crowe gets feisty in the film that made him a huge star, Scott's *Gladiator*.

### For Better or Worse?

So, does the director's cut of a film provide the opportunity to enhance the original work or is it merely a marketing tool? Certainly Ridley Scott's dystopian view of twenty-first-century Los Angeles, *Blade Runner* (1982), opened mostly to critical and popular yawns. However, the director's cut elevated it to cult status and the film is today cited as influential in the emergence of the cyberpunk genre, and greatly admired for its fantasy cityscape and groundbreaking special effects. Whether the re-release is better or worse than the original version though will always fuel a heated debate.

### Top Takes...

*A Good Year* 2006

*Black Hawk Down* 2001 ☆

*Hannibal* 2001

*Gladiator* 2000 ☆

*G.I. Jane* 1997

*Thelma & Louise* 1991 ☆

*Black Rain* 1989

*Legend* 1985

*Blade Runner* 1982

*Alien* 1979

*The Duellists* 1977

*Boy and Bicycle* 1965