*BLADERUNNER*



**Model Mastery**

You have to remember, Blade Runner was made years before digital effects became common. Today, CGI [computer-generated imagery] is becoming a mature art form, but even now there are times you just can't beat doing some effects like these "in camera." Most of these cityscapes are a combination of models and traditional matte paintings. For the aerial shots they used a set about 12 ft. wide, and those towers you see belching fire are about 12 in. high. They're made of etched brass and model parts and use thousands of tiny, grain-of-wheat light bulbs like you'd find in a dollhouse. They filmed some of the fireballs in the parking lot behind the studio, and for others they used stock footage from the 1970 Antonioni film, Zabriskie Point.

<http://douglastrumbull.com/key-fx-sequences-blade-runner-hades-landscape>



**SKY PATROL**

To create the flying police cars, Savage says, "they used different scale models depending on the shot. Some were full size, some about 20 in. long, and some even smaller for distance shots."



**Motion Control**

Take note of the scenes where you're moving through the city and see video billboards the size of buildings. (Today we have billboards like that in Times Square — so, the movie wasn't far off!) The normal way to create these effects would be to build a miniature, shoot it and then composite in the billboards and other elements in postproduction.

But they did all of these effects in camera, which even back then was a much more complex way to execute them. The key to this is a motion-control camera — a smart robot, basically — that moves through the city on the same track, over and over again. It's accurate to within a couple thousandths of an inch. They did separate passes, rewinding the film each time and then re-exposing it to add each new element. So they did one pass for the lights on a building, another for the video projection, then a pass for the rain lighting and so on — as many as 16 passes in some cases. And all that layering is what makes you feel you're in a totally complete world, yet one that's completely alien.

**Timeless Design**

Scott hired an incredible art department, including Syd Mead, who started out designing cars for Ford. Some scenes have almost a 1930s look to them, while others are totally futuristic. But all the technology they designed — like flying cop cars they call "spinners" — meshes perfectly with your idea of this world. It's one of the reasons this movie has stayed at the top of my list. It just doesn't date.

DARK CITY "There's nothing like these cityscapes," Savage says of Blade Runner's dystopian L.A. Shooting these urban landscapes — complete with video billboards — took as many as 16 camera passes.

Read more: Blade Runner at 25: Why the Sci-Fi F/X Are Still Unsurpassed - Popular Mechanics