



The 1976 movie *Logan's Run* is the story of a post-apocalyptic future. The movie (which this article is mainly about) is based loosely on the 1967 book, by the same name, which was written by William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson. In the movie, survivors of some kind of untold apocalyptic disaster are living within a beautiful seaside megalopolis, totally enclosed within protective domes and thoroughly committed to pleasure (hedonism). Those inside have little knowledge of any world "outside" and live dependent on the central computer, so dependent in fact that some parts of the city have fallen to decay. A central artificial intelligence computer solves overpopulation problems by enforcing the idea of "renewal" at thirty years of age as it operates the domed city (in the book the city has no domes and the renewal age is twenty-one). A person's age is revealed by the color stages of a small crystal in the palm of his or her hand, implanted at birth. Eventually, the crystal signifies by its color the arrival of "last day" when the person voluntarily enters the slaughterhouse called "Carousel" with a group of others who are also on last day, and are lifted into the air adorned in outfits for the special occasion, disappearing in quick, brilliant explosions, blindly hoping to be "renewed" (reincarnated) in accordance with a works oriented belief system. Instead of the computer just killing everyone automatically at a predetermined time through the crystal (seen by some as a hole in the script) and probably causing mass rebellion, the people have been given such rituals and myths to live their pleasure filled lives by, hoping for a good renewal. Onlookers who are not yet 30 years of age pack the stands at Carousel like a Roman coliseum, cheering and shouting with delight, "Renew! Renew!" Aside from some rebellious types who have refused to adhere to all this, known as "runners," most people live in bliss and ignorance believing that this is how life should be and how problems of humanity are avoided or solved. Society believes emphatically in "renewal" with religious fervor, even to the point where to question the idea is considered alarming. Stranger things than this have happened in history! Of course these ideas are nonsense, and eventually Michael York's character, Logan, comes to this conclusion.



At first Logan, a "sandman" (an elite law enforcer with considerable privileges), shows the same attitude as others of his trade, but at the same time reveals that he is questioning his society a little bit. Sandmen are responsible for eliminating those people who want to live past thirty (the killing of runners is not considered murder by sandmen). The computer assigns Logan the task of finding the runners' safe haven for those older than thirty called "Sanctuary," and destroying it. In the process, what starts out as Logan's cold hearted, soft-talking use of the female character Jessica (played by Jenny Agutter) to accomplish his mission, turns into a huge adventure consisting of a central upheaval and dramatic change of Logan's beliefs, a determination by Logan and Jessica to escape "outside," a relationship between Logan and Jessica, the discovery of commitment by marriage, and a pursuit to free their society from its inhumanity. The viewer becomes caught up in a story that is more than just special effects. Granted, some people may find it difficult to root for Logan considering he starts out as a sandman. I for one advocate the death penalty by the state for murder under any condition, regardless of a person's change of heart. But, judicial debt notwithstanding, the film does depict that a person's heart can change (though real life murderers rarely ever seem to change their hearts), and it's not too hard to see (or read into) how far Logan has come around by the time of the scene where he risks his life and tries to practically preach to the masses about Carousel being a lie and the truth that exists "outside."



The story has some things to say about how people transfer their sense of priorities as they age. The characters are engaging and their depth develops as the story proceeds. Many of the themes are timeless. Youth-oriented culture, disaster, oppression by government, and courage to go against the flow, are just a few of the elements presented here. The love story implies that this is the first time since who knows when that people have thought and felt in terms of strong emotions for each other. Though affected by the world portrayed in Logan's Run, the love story is touching and depicts two people in love for the first time under such conditions. In Logan's world where people don't normally have lasting emotional ties to one another, it is refreshing to see meaning, intimacy, dependability, and more rediscovered (especially in light of our own culture today).



The director's intent of meaning in the movie, and the many ways one can take the movie itself, has been seen differently by various people. Obviously the movie has some social and religious concepts called into question and proven false. There is a strong sense of the characters learning to rely on their own courage and determination instead of blindly following the crowd. Are the false beliefs of society in the film ripped away only to leave room for a belief in one's self and nothing else? Does the movie contain deep religious or anti-religious themes? Regardless of how far the director may or may not have intended to go with such themes, the film's ending certainly leaves room for the further discoveries of long lost truths.



## SFX

The story has gone through quite a change from its transition from book to screen. Generally this seems to be for the best, but it could be disappointing to some, especially if they're fans of the novel, which is different in some ways, and also more racy in places. As for myself, I enjoyed the movie far better than the book, though it would have been cool to have a few things from the book appear in the movie, such as the stuff about Logan's youth. Regardless, mixed reactions exist about this movie, and some people who watch it are sometimes overly critical. They pick on costumes, actors, sets, etc. There is a parallel soundtrack in the DVD version that explains why many things were designed the way that they were. Are the costumes inseparably dated to the 1970's? It seems to me that such depends on how you look at it, as even the 70's borrowed from other times. Who knows what people may be wearing in the future? Just look at what they have worn in the past, especially in ancient times! These people live in a hedonistic, weather-free society. It's not inconceivable that they would have clothing that would be very revealing and purely cosmetic for those very same reasons. And, in a materialistic, consumer-crazed, sealed society such as the film portrays, of course in some places it looks like a shopping mall. Some indoor scenes that resemble a shopping mall WERE in fact shot in a shopping mall—the same tactic of which was used by Lucas in *THX-1138*. Effects in *Logan's Run* were considered state-of-the-art in 1976 and won the film an Academy Award, a film which at that time was made on a big budget. *Logan's Run* is an example of an important building block in the development of special effects and cinematography as we now enjoy them. Some effects may seem dated while others are downright breathtaking. It's not hard to admire the classic techniques of illusion in film before the digital era, and in all honesty the special effects are not so bad.





In fact, in some movies today, computer graphics are not all that superior to models. Take a look at some ridiculously huge, computer-generated explosion some time (especially ones in space) that look as if several gas stations just went up in some nice sterile manner. Blowing up real stuff is sometimes far more realistic. Dirk Benedict, who played the character Starbuck in the 1978 made for TV sci-fi movie *Battlestar Galactica*, and the first (and only passable) season of the two season series that followed, said in a February 1998 interview in Starlog #247:

"He [John Dykstra, who did special FX for *Battlestar Galactica* and who won a Academy Award for his special FX work in *Star Wars*] was very excited about doing these kinds of FX for television. And unlike today, where the visuals are all computer generated, we did ours on film. They had a beautiful miniature of the *Galactica* and all these little viper models, and they would film them doing battle. The result was fantastic. I like these techniques better. Some people say to me 'oh, you're just an old-timer,' but I maintain I can tell the difference between something filmed, like we did back then, and the computer-generated effects today. Ours looked real on film because they were real."



Though I tend to lean in this direction, I am content with FX either way so long as they appear realistic and don't look too modelish or too computer-generated. Problems exist with both kinds of FX. For now, the cry goes out, "that is so model looking," and already in some places people say, "that is so computer-generated looking." Some day perhaps, people may get a little more balanced about all of this.

## SUMMARY

*Logan's Run* is a timeless work that presents thought-provoking elements with ease. The utopia shown in the film has a quality of realism to it and is not so impossible. This is a society run by a computer (with a female voice), totally provided for, enforced by Nazi like police squads, with healthy citizens who can get plastic surgery on a whim, mandatory euthanasia, sex and pleasure an extremely consuming focal point (and who dress accordingly), marriage unknown, and more. It brings to mind aspects of the hedonistic practices and philosophies of ancient Rome, and has some things obviously in common with society today. Actually, in some ways it stands as a very telling film, a struggle to recover freedom and love. The movie is by NO means perfect, but the acting is fine and the special effects stand up as well as any other film of the time, even better than some. For people who have preconceived notions of how a utopian society must look, this movie may not be for them. For those familiar with history, including how society is progressing these days, the movie can be a ride worth taking.



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