RANDOM HOUSE eBOOKS

Virgin Film: Ridley Scott

James Clarke

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About the Book

‘I’m one of those people who find the real world of no particular interest.’

With the dystopian sci-fi of *Blade Runner*, the feminist road movie *Thelma & Louise* and the Roman epic *Gladiator*, Ridley Scott has demonstrated that he is an astonishingly versatile director, equally at home with ancient history as he is with the distant future. Combining vivid imagery with rich drama, Scott’s films are the epitome of intelligent cinema, a powerful marriage of style and content. Scott has worked with many of Hollywood’s most accomplished stars, including Sigourney Weaver, Brad Pitt, Russell Crowe, Anthony Hopkins, Susan Sarandon and Tom Cruise. *Alien*, only his second feature as a director, remains one of the most enduring and influential examples of the science fiction and horror genre and, with *Black Hawk Down*, *Hannibal* and the magnificent *Gladiator*, Scott’s career has regained the prominence it had in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

This indispensable guide provides a thorough chronological examination of Ridley Scott’s directorial career. All of Scott’s films are included, along with information on his frequent collaborators, his thoughts on his own films, and a section on his unrealised projects. This is the essential reference guide to one of mainstream cinema’s most diverse directors.

virgin film

RIDLEY SCOTT

James Clarke

Dedicated to

Tim, Sarah, Catie and Ben and my good pal Oliver – keep on trucking

Introduction: Welcome to Ridleyville

‘Light is beautiful’ – Ridley Scott[1]

On his commentary to the film *Thelma & Louise*, Ridley Scott makes a definitive comment about his work. It is also the kind of thing you would expect, or rather would hope, any true director in command of all the resources at their disposal to say: ‘My performance is everything you see on the screen.’[2]

As with so many of the best Hollywood directors, there is a totality to the way Scott works. He is unafraid of integrating effects, of maximising the voice of the music, of amplifying the impact of lighting and camera moves. Throughout the process of drawing these diverse pieces together, he roots the illusion in the believability of the actors he has cast. Scott is as impassioned about filmmaking as his movie heroes are about fulfilling the demands of their missions, journeys and destinies.

In late April 2002 the film fan community was abuzz with news about a possible new Ridley Scott movie. It came at a time when his career was benefiting from its second wind after the one-two-three punch of *Gladiator, Hannibal* and *Black Hawk Down*. So many directors seem to have this experience, where their work is somehow revived and reinvigorated. It happened with Spielberg on *Schindler’s List* (1993), with Scorsese on *GoodFellas* (1990), with Lynch on *The Straight Story* (1999).

After 25 years, Ridley Scott, the director of smart and snazzy popular movies, continues to elicit excitement. Like his hotshot contemporaries Scorsese, Spielberg, Lucas, Cameron and Tarantino, just the mere thought of what a new Scott film will *look* like is enough to whip film fans into a frenzy of debate and anticipation, as evidenced by so many messageboards on the Internet and column inches in magazines.

On 15 July 2002, somewhere in LA, the cameras rolled on Ridley Scott's new movie *Matchstick Men*. It tells the story of a con-artist named Roy (Nicolas Cage) who has a host of phobias. He and his protégé Frank (Sam Rockwell) are about to pull off a lucrative con when Roy's teenage daughter Angela (Alison Lohman) turns up and throws everything into disarray. The screenplay has been written by Ted and Nick Griffin from the novel by Eric Garcia, and the film's producers are Robert Zemeckis and Jack Rapke. Scott reteams with John Mathieson, cinematographer on *Gladiator* and *Hannibal*, and, in a break from Scott's recent and brilliant collaboration with Pietro Scalia, *Matchstick Men* is to be edited by Dody Dorn, whose highest profile credit so far has been his editing work on *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000). Already, the film has been described as being in the same vein as Peter Bogdanovich's terrific comedy drama *Paper Moon* (1973). *Matchstick Men* began shooting in July 2002 with Nicolas Cage in the main role. The premise of a control freak clearly losing control continues a fine Scott tradition of characters.

Scott's immediate follow-up will then reunite him with Russell Crowe for the film *Tripoli*.

In late May 2002 it was also announced that Scott had finally expressed interest in a Western from a pitch by writer Bruce C McKenna. The other project Scott was connected to in spring 2002 was an adaptation of Patrick Suskind's novel *Perfume*, originally published in 1976. Stanley Kubrick, one of Scott's big influences, had once

shown interest in adapting the material. Other directors had considered the project, including Martin Scorsese, Shekhar Kapur, director of *Bandit Queen* (1994) and *Elizabeth* (1998), Jean-Pierre Jeunet, director of *Delicatessen* (1991), *City of Lost Children* (1995) and *Alien: Resurrection* (1997), and Tim Burton, director of *Beetlejuice* (1988) and *Sleepy Hollow* (1999). *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* is set in eighteenth-century France where a baby is born with no scent. However, he grows up with a perfect sense of smell and can identify his origin immediately. The boy is an outsider. One night, he follows the scent of a beautiful girl through Paris and her odour is so sublime it overwhelms him and he kills her. He becomes obsessed with copying her smell and will do anything in his quest to do so. One scene has the protagonist about to be hanged. He unleashes a perfume which is so powerful it throws the assembled crowd into an orgy. This premise seems ripe for Scott's eyes, ears and cinema savvy. *Perfume* is also the latest in a long line of possible projects for the director that have emerged over the past year and a half (for more on this see **Ridley's Unrealised Visions**).

At the Top of His Game

'I find it hard to be disapproving.[3] The movies would be duller without Scott's chronic eye for flash, sheen and instant spectacle,' writes David Thomson in *A Biographical Dictionary of Film*. It is common knowledge that everyone loves a comeback kid and currently Ridley Scott is experiencing something of a return to form and popularity. Call it Ridley's Renaissance if you want.

Scott has reasserted his place as a major popular moviemaker, with all that entails in terms of the kinds of projects available to him and a way of translating them to

the screen with a big budget and the brightest acting talent.

With *Gladiator, Hannibal* and *Black Hawk Down*, Scott's career has reclaimed the prominence it had in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In February 2001 at New York City's Screening Room there was a *Ridley Scott Retrospective* which showcased a selection of his best films.

As with many directors, it is a small number of films that have shaped Scott's reputation. With this book all of his films are treated with equal interest regardless of their cinematic and pop culture standing. The idea here is to take a look at what binds the films together. What is Scott's approach to storytelling? What seem to be his favourite kinds of characters? What kind of situations and – deep breath, here – themes preoccupy his films? What kind of settings does Scott seem to favour as part of his work? What cinema techniques and smoke and mirrors does he draw on to create a vivid illusion as he repeatedly thrills, scares, astounds and moves you?

Before getting to grips with Ridley's cinema stylings there's an influence that needs a name check and a quick look at what that influence was about. The person in question may be unexpected, given the emphasis on Scott's visual focus. Nonetheless, a love of one art form does not exclude an appreciation of the others and one of the key influences on his work is not even a cinematic one. Instead, it comes in the form of one of the great early twentieth-century novelists. One of his works, a novella entitled *Heart of Darkness*, ultimately led to Francis Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979). The writer in question is Joseph Conrad, a Polish author who advanced the art of English literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and who believed firmly in the possibility of unity amongst men.

Conrad wrote numerous novels and short stories. One of his biggest novels was *Nostromo*, a film adaptation that had

once been due for David Lean to direct, with Steven Spielberg producing. It now looks as though Martin Scorsese may work on it, using Lean's notes as a starting point. Of course, Scott's debut feature, *The Duellists* (1977), was an adaptation of a Conrad short story. The director's affinity for Conrad seems to go to the heart of many of the films he has chosen to direct.

Frequently, the stories that Scott tells focus on the inherent corruptibility of man. This is a theme played out in *G.I. Jane, Gladiator, The Duellists* and *Hannibal* at the most obvious. Indeed, Scott's heroes often possess that Conradian sense of men (and women) who must redeem themselves, or their larger society, and find the means to act honourably against other, less honourable forces.

Like Hitchcock, Kubrick, Ford, Cronenberg and Spielberg, to name just a few, Scott is a total filmmaker, utilising all the toys and tools of filmmaking at his disposal. Refreshingly, Scott is a director who acknowledges that film is about more than just the actor's performance. He comes from a tradition of filmmakers that emphasises the craft element of building a film, of creating a world beyond the written and spoken word – though Scott, like any filmmaker, has his critics, who regard his work as frequently lacking coherence and for being predictable and lacking in subtlety.

Ridley Scott is able to make visual effects expressive and has worked with some of the great visual effects designers, notably Doug Trumbull, HR Giger and Rob Bottin. In his book *The Biographical Dictionary of Film*, writer David Thomson describes Scott as being very much in the mould of an old time Hollywood director like Michael Curtiz who directed, amongst others, *Casablanca* (1942), *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1939), *Mildred Pierce* (1945) and *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942). In the June 2002 issue of *Premiere* movie magazine, Scott gets a listing in their fun, but ultimately facile, Power List for Hollywood, a slight

guestimation about influence in the industry. Speaking about Scott with *Premiere* movie magazine on the release of *Black Hawk Down* (2001), Joe Roth said, 'He's a guy who, at 64, is right at the top of his game.'[4]

British film producer David Puttnam has been famously quoted as referring to Scott's 'erratic greatness'. For some, Scott is just too commercial a director who is only ever able to make places, people and situations look very appealing and attractive, rather like a commercial is always in the business of making you want to get what you are being shown. There is a similar kind of reservation towards his contemporary Steven Spielberg. Scott, too, has found ways to reinvigorate genre material to such an extent that it redefines a given genre for a whole generation of filmgoers.

Like Spielberg, Scott, at a certain point, began to diverge from the path that had made his name. Scott began his career by making what he calls 'fairly exotic movies'.[5] In 1987, after four very fanciful features, Scott released *Someone to Watch Over Me*, followed by *Black Rain* and then *Thelma & Louise*. With *Someone to Watch Over Me* and certainly *Thelma & Louise*, Scott began to shift the audience's perception of him with a story that was really just about two characters. Scott has always tried to promote some form of female equality and this is no clearer than in his landmark film, *Blade Runner*.

As with many film directors, at least in American cinema, Scott celebrates the individual effort. His romantically informed heroes overcome the challenges of the threatening and disorientating world through a combination of resolve and intelligence. Scott's movies follow genre formulae but do the right thing by using these frameworks to tell stories about compelling characters. With *Gladiator*, for example, Scott revived the Roman epic genre (partly due to the economic benefit of computer-generated environments) through a combination of spectacle and stirring personal drama. For some critics,

though, Scott's eye for the memorable image is not enough. Where is the coherent drama? they ask. Where is the complexity? Maybe a film does not have to be complex, though; perhaps it is enough that the situations and images resonate with the audience. That is why Maximus in his moment of death strikes a chord – he wants to go home to his family. That is why, in *Blade Runner*, Roy Batty, for all his futuristic theatrics, stays with us – he wants to find out who he is. That is why Chuck Gieg's upbeat voice-over to close *White Squall* rings true – he now has a better sense of what his place in the world is, having survived the adventure.

Scott may be synonymous with science fiction and fantasy themes but his work is also bound up in a Romantic sensibility. This Romantic tradition places an emphasis on humans returning to nature in some way, on the relationship between man and nature, though not necessarily literally. The other key interest of Romanticism is its images of the unconscious. Many of Scott's films draw on both these outlooks, notably his earliest films most fully, but the strains remain in his later work too. *Legend, Alien, Blade Runner* and *Hannibal* all put different spins on these issues within the demands of their genres. The Romantic tradition also explores a certain sense of doom; Pauline Kael called Ridley Scott a 'visual hypnotist'.

Ridley Scott makes fairy tales, make no mistake about that. Every film he has directed has this element. Scott's heroes are frequently strong individuals, and sometimes innocents abroad in a world of darkness. In all his films there is a clash between the civilised and the wild. The director also brings to his work a connection and fondness for literature and, most significantly, visual art. Alongside Joseph Conrad, the other literary influence on Ridley Scott, directly or otherwise, is Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher who developed the concept of the Superman, driven by force of will. Whilst working in a cinema financed

by American studios and, for the most part, drawing on American ways of storytelling, Scott's British origins and broader European sense shines through in all his work. Yes, it is mainstream Hollywood moviemaking, but never completely. His films have a certain kind of restraint and willingness to explore the shadows. In an interview during the release of *Black Hawk Down*, Scott said he was keen to tell more stories based on events that have actually occurred, contrasting with the impulse of his earlier, more fanciful movies.

One of the key influences on Ridley Scott's cinema must be German Expressionism with its emphasis on décor, lighting, props and costumes rather than just traditional, stage-inspired dramatics. German Expressionist cinema is characterised by movies like *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919) and the films of Fritz Lang, who directed *Metropolis* (1926), and who many years afterwards emigrated from Germany to America.

Scott is an inherently cinematic director because he absorbs influences and precisely because of the factor he is often criticised for: an appreciation for the dramatic potential of décor and artifice to enhance the human drama. Hollywood directors of European origin, like Josef von Sternberg, Alfred Hitchcock and Vincente Minnelli, worked in the same way during Hollywood's Golden Age. Stanley Kubrick, Jean Cocteau, Andrei Tarkovsky (*Solaris*, 1972) and Ingmar Bergman, whose *Summer with Monika* (1952) was the first Bergman film Scott saw, can all be pointed to as key moviemakers for Scott.

There is a feeling of the baroque in so much of Scott's work. Over the years, interviews with Scott have also made clear his deep-rooted interest in architecture. All of his films show an affinity to and interest in shapes and structures as important elements in telling the story and suggesting the mood of an environment. In his talk about scripts, Scott has frequently referred to them as blueprints

from which you build a film. One of his acknowledged favourite parts of the process is the script read-through stage, just prior to filming.

Like any director, the films Scott has not been able to make are as telling as those he has. The undeveloped projects remain like B-sides, offering further clues to the preoccupations of this storyteller. For more on these see **Ridley's Unrealised Visions**. Scott has openly stated that he thinks audiences should walk away with something after watching a film.

Since he is famous for his background in directing commercials, you could say a snobbery to this form has meant that critics have had their eyes covered by prejudice and have not been able to fully acknowledge Scott's achievements. For Scott, commercials were the perfect training ground and he felt unfazed by the experience of making his first feature.

When people call Scott a stylist it is not a specific enough description. You could say anyone is a stylist. But the style of Ridley Scott's movies is based around artifice and the fantastic in its broadest sense and neither of these things are crimes of cinema. Far from it. Scott draws on the tools of filmmaking, amplifying them and combining them to support the drama of the characters. Artifice is what art is, the act of interpretation.

Throughout his feature career, Scott has continued directing commercials, including those Guinness ads starring Rutger Hauer and more famously, in America at least, an ad for Chanel back in the 1970s entitled 'Share the Fantasy'. In 1986, Scott directed an ad for Pepsi, 'The Choice of a New Generation', that featured Don Johnson and Glenn Frey. Frey's song 'You Belong to the City' was the soundtrack for the ad. Ridley Scott excels at combining and referencing a vast range of art. In the best tradition of postmodernism, for Scott there is no distinction or problem in mixing some piece of classical music with the story of a

rampaging space monster. Scott's heroes are frequently mavericks challenging the accepted order. Sometimes they are something of the wild child, other times they are absolutely of the civilised world. For Scott the wilderness is environment, character and situation.

Whether it is a creative sensibility or more a turn of character, Scott's films, for their frequently larger than life stories, are not as 'bubblegummy' as the adventure and fantasy movies of Spielberg and Lucas who were making their mark on popular cinema at the same time as Scott directed his debut feature. Ridley Scott had begun to wonder if he ever would direct a feature film. He is more interested in the elemental and psychological than the social. In this way, he differs considerably from many British film directors, particularly the generation that came to prominence ten years before he did, filmmakers such as Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson and Ken Loach.

Scott's films have a more sombre quality and as such are more akin to the films of James Cameron, who of course in 1986 made the terrific sequel to Scott's *Alien*. Maybe it is just that American popular stories have an inherently fun and carefree aspect; there is melancholy in all of Scott's films.

Working within the classic genres of cinema (horror, epic, war movie, adventure, science fiction, road movie) Ridley Scott has injected these tried and trusted formats with vigour and his trademark panache. In doing so he has shown himself to be as vivid and powerful a film director as Cameron, Lucas, Scorsese and Spielberg. Like those directors his work has influenced not just other films, in terms of the kinds being made but also their look, television programmes, music videos and commercials. Over the course of his 25-year feature career, Scott has told stories set in the past, present and future, crossing a range of exciting and intriguing settings. Movies such as *Black Rain*

and *Black Hawk Down* are in stark contrast to those such as *Legend* and *The Duellists*. Or are they more similar than a first glance would allow us to see?

Like all of the celebrated cinema directors, Scott synthesises genres, styles, narrative tricks and conventions. The world shown in Scott's cinema is unmistakeably his. As his track record indicates, Scott has repeatedly fused commercial imperatives with an approach that is singular and unpatronising. His work exemplifies intelligent mainstream cinema and in some ways his films have frequently been attuned to the kinds of concerns and hopes that seem to be looming large in the public consciousness at a given point in time.

Scott has never failed to make intelligent popular films and lend them an adult sensibility, even in his most fanciful work. 'You're the central artery,' is how Scott has described the director's role. Scott's *Black Rain* star Michael Douglas has said of the director, 'Ridley can see things that I can't see. When the celluloid comes back, there are things there that you don't see with the naked eye – it's a really incredible talent.'

Scott's movies centre on protagonists who are driven by deeds not words. Thankfully action, décor and composition all inform the narrative. From Maximus's quest to win his freedom and return home, to the urgency of Ripley going up against the alien, the heroes of Ridley Scott's films are heroic, stoic, determined and always able to rise to the challenge. Regardless of their settings, each film is a true adventure piece. Known for his whizz bang visuals and his background in commercials, Scott has proved his skill at fusing powerful images with rich drama and even some neat symbolism. He is equally at home on the desert highways of *Thelma & Louise* as he is on the high seas of *White Squall*. In each film, the environment is very much a character.

One of Scott's great skills that frequently gets overlooked is in his casting and directing of actors. He has worked with many of contemporary cinema's most accomplished stars and in several instances provided them with opportunities to revise their image. Just consider Harrison Ford's work in *Blade Runner*. Repeatedly, Scott has also cast actors who have gone on to big-time careers that continue today.

In all of his movies, Scott acknowledges the rules of the genre game whilst also pushing its limits. Regarding science fiction, the genre he has so boldly contributed to, Scott once said, 'I'm beginning to wonder if, frankly, some of the best material isn't emerging from the SF field … Some of the most original thinking and ideas are in fact emerging from the SF genre.'[6] One day, we can only hope Scott will return to the genre whose potential for human drama and intriguing speculation he has done so much to promote.

Ridley Scott's cinema emerges as a cinema of archetypes rather than more obviously apparent social milieux. Refreshingly, Scott's cinema circumvented naturalism for something more symbolic and heightened, as such making him a stylist and fabulist rather more in the grain of Michael Powell. In his stellar career Michael Powell advanced British cinema with films such as *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), *A Matter of Life and Death* (1947) and *The Red Shoes* (1948), all of them combining real world settings with a more Romantic sensibility and an affinity for the fantastic. Powell's films, in collaboration with his co-screenwriter and producer Emeric Pressburger, held a huge influence over directors such as Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola.

Over the past 25 years of Scott's feature-directing career he has moved confidently and always intriguingly between distinct genres, ranging from historical drama (*The Duellists, 1492, Gladiator*) to contemporary drama

(*Black Rain, Thelma & Louise*) and perhaps most famously science fiction (*Alien, Blade Runner*). As with all directors, it is frequently the less remembered films that engage most. Consider *Legend*, starring a very young Tom Cruise, or *Someone to Watch Over Me*.

Scott's work, perhaps a symptom of nationality and all the tensions and freedoms that can bring, does not do what a lot of other mainstream genre movies do which is to take a triumphalist approach to the action, to make it all dazzlingly comic book and thrilling. Scott's emotional palette tends towards the muted and sombre. Given that everyone is the sum of their experiences, Scott's art school background perhaps lends his work a wider range of informing sources, a finer sense of combing forms and fusing functions giving maturity and intensity to genres previously treated pejoratively. *Alien* is both a science fiction film and a horror movie, dripping with allusion and suggestion.

In his book, *Film as Film*, the writer VF Perkins says of mainstream movies, 'The belief that popularity and excellence are incompatible dies hard.[7] It survives in the pejorative undertones of the word "commercial" and in the equation of significance with solemnity and obscurity.'

Scott's films run a little against the grain of most genre cinema, going for a strongly muted tone right across the board. In 1982, *ET: The Extra-Terrestrial* was the big movie. *Blade Runner*, released the same summer, just didn't have enough smiles for many people; it went for something less surefire.

Scott has hit the highway and the stars, taken us to enchanted forests and bloody war zones and every time he has made us root for the underdog as they find a way to make their mark. This might be a little surprising but, for Scott, part of the mission for him is to tell stories that are life affirming. As he himself said of his make-the-most-of-

life outlook, ‘That is a point in all my films. It’s my philosophy …’[8]

Born on 20 November 1937, Ridley Scott grew up in South Shields in northeast England. Scott’s father Frank Percy Scott was a partner in a successful shipping business and was then in the military and involved in preparations for the Normandy landings. From all accounts, Scott grew up in an environment of order and discipline. About his mother, Scott has said that it was her strong character which gave him his admiration of powerful women. A child of the Second World War who, with his military father, lived in several places both in the UK and abroad, Scott grew up in an age of apocalypse and mighty machinery. Surely these things must have tattooed themselves on his young imagination.

After what seems to have been a fairly mundane school life, Scott attended art school at West Hartlepool College of Art. In 1958, he was all geared up for the military but his father dissuaded him. In a neat moment of destiny calling, Scott received a scholarship to the Royal College of Art, going in as a graphic designer. As part of his study he was able to study film and in doing so the potential of cinema opened up to him.

At the RCA, Scott made his first film. He wrote, directed and shot a film, called *Boy on a Bicycle*, which told the story of a boy, played by Tony Scott (Ridley’s brother), bunking off school and exploring his seaside town. The short was in a sense an environmental film, a melancholy mood piece that indicated things to come, and which Scott has said focuses on being isolated. Like *Blade Runner*, the film features a sequence where old photographs play a major part in the main character’s memories of his mother. Scott’s father appeared as the tramp in the film and his mother appeared as the boy’s mother. In a display of perseverance typical of many of his movie characters, Scott

persuaded John Barry to provide music for the short: Barry specially recorded a condensed version of his tune *Onward, Christian Spacemen* after Scott hassled him for about seven months.

At art school Scott was able to pursue his love of art and in conversations and interviews he has described it as a passion. Many of the heroes of Scott's films exhibit a passion for something – sometimes for better, sometimes for worse.

Like his on-screen heroes, as a director Scott works with efficiency. He has acknowledged many times that he does not like to hang around and just prior to *Gladiator* made the decision to ramp up the number of movies he would look to make in the future. Thus, the sudden torrent of Scott films since 2000.

After completing his studies at the RCA, Scott went on to a travelling scholarship with TIME Life publications to New York and worked in magazines for a short time and then in the production company run by documentary filmmaker hotshots Richard Leacock and DA Pennebaker, who most recently directed *Down from the Mountain* (2001), the concert film showcasing music from the Coen Brothers film *O Brother Where Art Thou?* (2000). Scott worked as an editor at the company, developing a familiarity with documentary aesthetics that has stayed with him and benefited all of his drama films. At the same time, he was being asked by the BBC when he would return to take up a position in the art department.

Before heading back to London, Scott took off on a road trip around America and then returned to the UK and worked as an art director at the BBC. Soon after he had the chance to enrol on the broadcaster's trainee director scheme and began working in episodic television, rather like Spielberg and John Frankenheimer had done in America in the 1960s. As the summation of the training programme, each aspiring director had to make a test

episode. Scott chose to adapt a piece of literature, as he has done several times since in his feature career. In what might have been a little homage to one of his movie heroes, Stanley Kubrick, Scott chose to adapt Humphrey Cobb's *Paths of Glory* which Kubrick had made in 1957 with Kirk Douglas. Scott's version starred Keith Barron. The material was rehearsed for one day and then shot the night of that same day. Scott directed, designed, scripted and secured the props for the piece and the show was recorded, making a positive impact on the BBC producers. Scott swiftly found himself working on shows including *Adam Adamant Lives, Z Cars* and *The Informers*.

Alongside his episodic television work, Scott began art-directing commercials. He soon found himself frustrated by the limits of television drama and he made the jump into full-time work in advertising. The first commercial he directed was for Gerber's baby food and he was off and running. In 1967 he established Ridley Scott Associates (RSA). The company continues today with great success. At this time, other British directors were also breaking through, notably Alan Parker with whom Scott felt a healthy sense of competition. Parker made the break into features first. Like many directors, Ridley Scott has opted to work with a core team over the years on a series of films. He has also worked with many of the biggest names in the Hollywood film industry, and in each chapter there is an overview of the people whose work you will have seen or heard before and since working with Scott. Notably, Scott has frequently supported the careers of colleagues who began working with him on commercials.

Scott became a big name in commercials directing and would frequently shoot an ad in a day for clients including Levi's, Chanel and Hovis. By the mid-1980s, an established and successful feature film director, Scott would continue to direct commercials as a way of maintaining his skills and updating in the longeurs between feature projects. Scott's

‘1984’ ad for the debut of the Apple Mac is considered a commercials classic, paving the way for the kind of event advertising we are now so familiar with.

Feature Future

In 1971 Scott was getting hungry to make the break into directing feature films. He self-penned *Running in Place*, a low-budget heist film in which Michael York was interested in starring, though in time it was *The Duellists* that would prove to be Scott’s debut.

As of 1977, Scott’s feature directing career was up and running. By the mid-1990s he was in a position to extend his activity to embrace more work as an executive producer or a producer with both feature films and television series. As such he is a mini movie mogul in a very American tradition. In the late 1990s, Ridley teamed up with his brother Tony Scott on the TV series *The Hunger* – Tony Scott had directed the feature back in 1983. Together the brothers head up a consortium which owns Shepperton Studios (see **Ridley Scott’s Business Ventures**) and Scott has interests in London and LA-based visual effects house The Mill. Ridley Scott now stands where he once did before as a major box office draw, his name alone promising a cinematic treat which will never be boring.

So, how does this book work? This book follows a similar pattern to previous titles in the series. Each of Scott’s films gets placed within a sense of his consistency and repetition of themes and forms. The different aspects of interest about each of Ridley Scott’s films are broken down. Each chapter deals with an individual film and the chapters are arranged in chronological order. Like the other titles in this series the fun of the format is that you can go from one film to another regardless of chronological order. Read where you are most interested. Think of it is a free association guide

to Ridley Scott's movies. You're the boss and soon you'll find yourself making connections between the movies.

These film-by-film chapters follow a general structure. Where appropriate certain chapters contain further subdivisions. All chapters include the name of the studio that originally released the film, the running time for each film and also their original American (MPAA) and British (BBFC) certification. Basically, the format goes like this:

CREW AND CAST: this lists the folks behind and in front of the camera.

SUMMARY: this provides an outline of each film's storyline.

THE CONCEPT: this takes you through the development of the idea for each film prior to the director's involvement and then how things progressed once Ridley Scott became attached. In certain cases, Scott developed a film from scratch, notably *The Duellists* and *Legend*.

CASTING: this takes a look at certain actors involved in a given film, including references to other notable films you may have seen them in.

MAKING IT: this concerns itself with the key stages that the film developed through. In some cases this process was especially labyrinthine and on others appears to have been a walk in the park. Basically, though, getting a film made is just plain difficult. Or challenging, depending on your point of view.

THE SHOOT: this section charts the course of the filming of each film. As with the **MAKING IT** section, some projects had their share of drama while others ran more quietly. In certain chapters, this section is further

subdivided to make the amount of information more reader friendly.

COLLABORATORS: a look at the talent who teamed up with Scott to realise each film. As with many top directors, a core team emerges through the years.

MUSIC: Ridley Scott describes music as the final adjustment to his film and its performances and his movies brim with strong music scores. Later in the book (see **Soundtrack Listing**), each film's soundtrack is noted including their track listings.

THE OPENING: being such a visually driven director, Scott always makes the most of his opening credits or opening sequences to reel in his audience. In some cases they are like mini movies all by themselves – not surprising given the director's commercials background.

ON THE SCREEN: this explores the visual design of the film, considering the way that the visual elements come together to create drama and meaning.

HEROES AND VILLAINS: this explores the key characters of each film. In certain cases, this segment is broken down further.

PICTURE PERFECT: this explores Scott's visual motifs and tricks.

TECH TALK: this explores the frequent and dazzling use of special effects in Ridley Scott's movies. The section also notes any other quirky details in the nuts and bolts department of getting a film made.

MOVIE TALK: a listing of memorable dialogue from each Scott film.

THE BIG IDEA: this section explores the bigger themes of each film and sure enough you'll see that auteur spirit come shining through across the span of Scott's movies.

CRITICAL CONDITION: excerpts from reviews of each film and, in certain cases, other comments.

GROSSES: a note about the film's budget and then what it pulled in at the box office.

POSTER: a note about the image comprising the film's promotional posters.

HOME ENTERTAINMENT: details about the availability of each film for viewing at home and a mention about what extras you can find on the DVD releases. Let it be said here that Ridley Scott is a big fan of the DVD format.

AWARDS: a listing of those nominations and awards given for each film.

GREAT SCOTT: an overview and opinion of the individual film within the bigger Scott picture.

SCOTT FREE: a Scott quote about each of his films rounds out each film analysis.

The Duellists (1977)

(Colour, 95 minutes)

CIC Release of an Enigma Production
Producer: David Puttnam
Screenplay: Gerald Vaughan-Hughes from the story *The Duel*
by Joseph Conrad
Cinematographer: Frank Tidy
Editor: Pamela Power
Production Designer: Peter J Hampton
Art Director: Bryan Graves
Music: Howard Blake
Fight Arranger: William Hobbs

CAST: Keith Carradine (*D'Hubert*), Harvey Keitel (*Feraud*), Cristina Raines (*Adele*), Edward Fox (*Colonel*), Robert Stephens (*Treillard*), John McEnery (*Commander*), Albert Finney (*Fouche*), Diana Quick (*Laura*), Tom Conti (*Dr Jacquin*), Alun Armstrong (*Lacourbe*), Meg Wynn Owen (*Leonie*), Jenny Runacre (*Mme de Lionne*)

BUDGET: $1.2 million

MPAA: R

BBFC: A

SUMMARY: 1800, Strasbourg: on a quiet country lane a gooseherd girl comes across a duel between French soldier,

Feraud, and the local mayor's nephew. Feraud severely injures the man and causes a ruffle in the local military garrison. D'Hubert, a higher ranking soldier in the same regiment as Feraud, is charged with bringing Feraud in for a hearing. Feraud is something of a firebrand and ladies' man and has gone to spend time with Madame de Lionne but D'Hubert tracks Feraud down and arrests him. Feraud is furious and, against D'Hubert's wishes, they duel. D'Hubert defeats Feraud, but D'Hubert's friend, Jacquin, a doctor, later advises him that he has heard that Feraud intends to kill D'Hubert.

1801, Augsburg: a soldier's tent in the battlefield of a Napoleonic campaign. There is a break in hostilities, and under these circumstances duels are permitted. Feraud sends an officer to trail D'Hubert and soon D'Hubert is duelling with Feraud again. This time Feraud wounds D'Hubert.

A colleague, Lacourbe, tells D'Hubert that one more duel would make his reputation. D'Hubert's lover, Laura, then tries to convince him not to fight again but he resists her plea. Laura goes to the soldiers' camp to find Feraud, who she tells, 'I believe you feed your spite on him.' Laura has her fortune read by a card lady and the foretelling is not good so she leaves D'Hubert. Another duel occurs between D'Hubert and Feraud and the meeting has a real savagery to it. Laura watches from the shadows, unseen. D'Hubert is seen by the General who orders him to duel no more. D'Hubert also learns he has been promoted to command a troop.

1806, Lübeck: in a boarding house/inn, D'Hubert, now a major, learns that Feraud. is in the same room having not initially seen him. Attempting to make a getaway, D'Hubert is sighted by Feraud. D'Hubert walks away. He later bumps into Laura who has left France. D'Hubert and Lacourbe talk about Feraud and duelling. Clearly, D'Hubert has misgivings. Another duel is arranged, this time on

horseback. D’Hubert and Feraud charge at one another and D’Hubert wins this challenge and rides to victory.

1812, Russia: amidst the snow and cold of a camp at night, D’Hubert sights Feraud watching him. They are both bearded and exhausted and go to duel again, this time using pistols. Their duel is cut short by Cossacks before it even begins and D’Hubert and Feraud fight side by side for a moment, firing at the Russians.

1814, Tours: D’Hubert is limping now and is spending time with his sister and family at her chateau. She tells her brother he should think about marriage. There is a neighbouring family who have a daughter – D’Hubert meets the young woman and sure enough they fall in love and marry. Napoleon’s reign ends and Louis is once more the King of France. D’Hubert is visited by the Colonel who informs him he is not a Napoleonic supporter, despite fighting in his army. Feraud describes D’Hubert as a traitor to Treillard.

1816, Paris: D’Hubert comes across the Colonel again who informs D’Hubert that Feraud has been arrested as a Napoleon sympathiser. D’Hubert goes and sees Fouche, the commander of the army, and has him strike Feraud’s name from the list of suspected dead men, though he says Feraud should never know he has done this. Feraud walks the streets and is informed of where D’Hubert is based.

At home, D’Hubert takes a walk and is met by two of Feraud’s associates who say a final duel is necessary. D’Hubert is reluctant but accepts and he and Feraud duel once more in the woods and the grounds of a castle. When the moment comes, D’Hubert has the advantage but chooses not to kill Feraud.

D’Hubert returns to his family and Feraud wanders alone through the countryside.

THE CONCEPT: Scott teamed up with writer Gerald Vaughan-Hughes and they developed two screenplays: one

based on the the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, one of the first terrorist efforts in British history in which a group of Catholics led by Guy Fawkes tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament. The other project, which Hollywood studios felt was too intellectual, was a drama based on a real nineteenth-century palaeontologist in America: 'Indian' Capwell. A keen reader, Scott had also recently been going through the works of Joseph Conrad and was excited by the possibilities of his short story, *The Duel*.

The film was originally to have retained the original title, but Scott and Vaughan-Hughes began working up a script entitled *The Duellists*. It was initially intended as a sixty-minute TV drama piece and they pitched it to French television company Technicinol. The company put up a budget of around £150,000 but soon the script mushroomed and Technicinol were unable to remain committed to the project at its new scale. Scott then took the project to America to Hallmark Hall of Fame who had moved into producing TV drama. Again, the proposed budget proved too high for TV. However, Scott was advised by the Americans to pitch it as a theatrical feature and so he returned to London and went to David Puttnam and his company Enigma. Puttnam agreed to produce the film.

Puttnam had been in Cannes with *Bugsy Malone* (Alan Parker, 1976) when David Picker of Paramount Pictures asked if he knew any other hot directors and Puttnam put Ridley Scott's name forward. He then called Scott urging him to come and meet with Picker. Scott jumped on a plane and flew to Cannes the next day. Puttnam and Scott offered Picker *The Gunpowder Plot* and *The Duellists. The Gunpowder Plot* film was budgeted at about $2 million and *The Duellists* at $1.2 million. Picker went with the cheaper production.

The film got good reviews but not such good distribution. There were only seven prints ever made.