

12 MONKEYS

THE FUTURE IS HISTORY



CONTENTS

4 **Cast and Crew**

7 **The Audacity of Hopelessness: *Twelve Monkeys'*
Grim Vision of the Future and the Present (2018)**
by Nathan Rabin

18 **Gilliam on Gilliam: *Twelve Monkeys* (1999)**
by Ian Christie

42 **About the Restoration**

CAST

Bruce Willis James Cole
Madeleine Stowe Kathryn Raily
Brad Pitt Jeffrey Goines
Christopher Plummer Dr Goines
Frank Gorshin Dr Fletcher
Jon Seda Jose
Ernest Abuba Engineer
Bill Raymond Microbiologist
Simon Jones Zoologist
Bob Adrian Geologist
Carol Florence Astrophysicist
H. Michael Wells Botanist

CREW

Music Composer & Conductor **Paul Buckmaster**
Costume Designer **Julie Weiss**
Film Editor **Mick Audsley**
Production Designer **Jeffrey Beecroft**
Director of Photography **Roger Pratt** B.S.C.
Inspired by the Film 'La Jetée' Written by **Chris Marker**
Screenplay by **David Peoples & Janet Peoples**
Produced by **Charles Roven**
Directed by **Terry Gilliam**





THE AUDACITY OF HOPELESSNESS: TWELVE MONKEYS' GRIM VISION OF THE FUTURE AND THE PRESENT

by Nathan Rabin

Terry Gilliam has a reputation as one of cinema's purest dreamers. Multiple generations have revered the Monty Python alum as a visionary genius who has bumped up hard against the cowardice and limitations of the film business over the course of a frequently glorious career as director, most notably in his decades-long, appropriately Quixotic attempt to bring Cervantes' *Don Quixote* to the big screen, a heroic quest preserved for posterity in the 2002 documentary *Lost in La Mancha*.

Gilliam's bad luck is a key component of his legend, yet his iconoclastic vision has resonated with mainstream audiences on more than one occasion. *Time Bandits* (1981) was a sizeable hit and 1991's *The Fisher King* was an Oscar-festooned box-office success (nominated for five Academy Awards; winning the Best Supporting Actress for Mercedes Ruehl). But the idiosyncratic filmmaker and animator did not score an out-and-out smash until 1995's *Twelve Monkeys*, an instant cult classic built upon the sturdy foundation of Chris Marker's seminal short film *La Jetée* (1962). The film brought together two titans of post-apocalyptic cinema in Gilliam, the man responsible for *Brazil* (1985), and David Peoples, who wrote the script with wife Janet, and had earlier explored the grimmest of possible futures with his 1989 directorial debut *The Blood of Heroes* (aka *Salute of the Jugger*) but more fruitfully with his screenplay for Ridley Scott's timeless and massively influential 1982 science fiction masterpiece *Blade Runner*.

With *Twelve Monkeys*, Scott and Peoples helped create an indelible vision of a nightmarish future every bit as grim as *Blade Runner* and *Brazil* in the surrealist tale of a brutal, sadistic future where a terrible 1996 plague has killed five billion people (that's a lot) and left the surface of the planet uninhabitable, leaving the scarred survivors of this global holocaust to recreate their civilisation underground. In a desperate attempt to undo the horrible damage, the grim overlords of the future send imprisoned 'volunteers' back in time to prevent a terroristic, extreme animal rights organisation called the Army of the Twelve Monkeys from unleashing a virus that will single-handedly wipe out most of humanity.

Bruce Willis plays James Cole, an emotionally shattered convict haunted by images of a man being killed in front of him as a small boy. He's a volunteer, after a fashion, but really



doesn't have much of a choice. Backed against the wall in a 2035 that's no fun at all, he's forced to choose between his current state, a fate worse than death where every day is a waking nightmare, or being sent back in time to save humanity on what is essentially a suicide mission cooked up by sinister authority figures who make no attempt to hide their indifference as to whether their reluctant guinea pig lives or dies.

James is expendable and a warm body. Those are pretty much the only things he brings to the table as a time-travelling aspiring saviour of humanity. When a man like James is among the best hopes for salvation, humanity is indeed doomed. If James is a questionable choice for a gig like saving mankind from itself, the folks sending him back don't seem much better suited to the task. Like everything in the sick, sad, decaying, half-mad world of *Twelve Monkeys*, time travel is imperfect and flawed in a way that reflects humanity's own innately, tragically flawed nature. So, instead of being sent back to 1996 as planned, James unexpectedly finds himself alternately hurled back in time to World War I and 1990, where he connects in a mental hospital with Jeffrey Goines (Brad Pitt, in a performance that went a long way towards establishing the actor as something much more than an absurdly pretty face), the wild-child son of Nobel prize-winning virologist Dr Goines (Christopher Plummer).

Jeffrey is also the leader of the Army of the Twelve Monkeys, although leader implies that he cares about anything beyond himself, which does not seem to be the case. In his desperate hunt to stop the virus from being unleashed and ensure a less hopeless future, James kidnaps Kathryn Raily (Madeleine Stowe, rock-solid in the essential but ultimately thankless role of the straight woman who helps ground the fantastical, mind-bending action in reality), a psychiatrist who initially sees James the way everyone else does – as a lunatic peddling a far-fetched conspiracy that's clearly evidence of a violent disconnect from reality – but he eventually manages to infect her with his madness and wins her over to his side.

When it came to the cast, Pitt's performance got most of the attention, as well as an Academy Award nomination and a Golden Globe win for Best Supporting Actor. Roles like Jeffrey Goines don't just invite awards consideration and attention: they angrily demand them and generally receive them. It's easy to see why Pitt's performance here attracted such deafening buzz. He is both blessed and cursed with physical perfection. In his star-making turn in *Thelma & Louise* (1991), he was pure sex, an androgynously gorgeous creature with a unique combination of macho swagger and feminine beauty. Pitt has spent his career atoning for his astonishing natural beauty. God gave him the face and physique of an angel who moonlights as a Ralph Lauren underwear model and an excess of matinee idol charisma and magnetism. Yet in movies like *True Romance* (1993), *Snatch* (2000), *Burn After Reading* (2008) and *Twelve Monkeys*, Pitt has pursued the path of the character actor

all the same, seeking roles in challenging fare that taxed his talent to its breaking point instead of allowing him to coast on his good looks and natural charm.

In *Twelve Monkeys*, this feline sexuality is buried under layer upon layer of grit and grime, madness and physical and emotional decay. He's ugly on the outside and the inside, a twitching, manic, chatterbox whose overactive mind is forever pulled in a million different directions at once, taking his perpetually babbling mouth along with it. As Jeffrey, Pitt acts with his whole body, with his whole soul, with every molecule of his being. His hyperactive mind won't let him rest for a moment, so he's always moving, twitching, shaking, eternally animated with an incoherent hunger for destruction, for violence, for breaking down the stuffy, hypocritical pillars of the straight society his powerful, respected and consequently resented father embodies.

Pitt nails Charlie Manson's hipster-of-the-apocalypse free-associative rhythms, the sense that life is just one truth bomb-filled manic monologue guaranteed to blow the minds of squares if only they possessed minds keen enough to grasp the heady concepts that he's laying down. Like Manson, Jeffrey talks for the sake of talking but also because he sees talking as his art form, the most direct possible vehicle for disseminating his Big Ideas to a world that needs them but cannot possibly comprehend them. How could they? He's a mystery even to himself that can never be solved. Jeffrey is a clown, a big, boisterous man-child patently uninterested in anything outside of his own wildly firing synapses. But he's a sinister clown in the Heath Ledger Joker mould who really just wants to see the world burn and couldn't be more excited about being the instrument of its destruction.

If Pitt has the infinitely showier role, one that practically screams For Your Consideration, Willis might actually have the more challenging part. Willis's trademark as a seemingly ageless workhorse of an action star is brash self-assurance. We just know that he's going to kill the bad guy, and get the girl, and survive for the sequel should the worldwide grosses be sufficient. *Twelve Monkeys* turns that dynamic on its head. Like Dwayne Johnson's similarly masterful, similarly against-type turn in Richard Kelly's cult classic *Southland Tales* (2006), Gilliam's beloved science fiction blockbuster casts a macho exemplar of macho cockiness as a broken man overwhelmed by the madness and anarchy around him and terrified of making the wrong choices, and even the right ones.

Pitt got all the credit for uglying himself up in a decidedly Oscar-friendly fashion, but Willis is equally committed to looking terrible. For much of the film he looks like a shrunken, shrivelled miniature Jason Statham, dying slowly from consumption. He's sweaty. He looks like he hasn't slept in decades. He's covered with external as well as internal scars. His baseline state is one of confusion and sadness, exhaustion and creeping despair. Willis is



one of American film's most dependable and consistent action heroes. He's a man of action, a blunt, uncomplicated weapon to bash the bad guys over the head with. *Twelve Monkeys* subversively casts him as an inaction figure, a perversely passive anti-hero who has a mission of profound, world-changing importance yet who seems fuzzy on where he is, who he is and what he's supposed to be doing much of the time. In a boldly unselfconscious performance, Willis plays the film's bruised and battered hero as a shambling mess of a man. Travelling through time and the stress of being responsible for man's future have enacted a huge toll on James, physically and emotionally. He's the antitheses of the usual wisecracking, deadpan Bruce Willis. This certainly wasn't the first time Willis played an accidental hero. God knows John McClane wasn't planning on spending Christmas defeating Hans Gruber and saving the Nakatomi Plaza in *Die Hard* (1988), but he went ahead and did so anyway. But Willis's brand of accidental heroism has never felt anywhere near as accidental or non-heroic as it does here.

From the perspective of a dystopian future, even the crappy present (which is now, of course, our collective past) can't help but seem like an impossible paradise of simple pleasures and unimaginable abundance. As an actor and an icon, Willis is not generally associated with vulnerability or child-like joy. Yet there are heartbreaking moments throughout *Twelve Monkeys* where he radiates a child's boundless, unselfconscious joy listening to songs like 'Blueberry Hill' and 'What a Wonderful World', putting his head out the window of a car like a friendly golden retriever on a leisurely summer drive and luxuriating in the banal joys of a world where hope had not yet been extinguished and life wasn't a grim death march to a crowded, unmarked grave. When our hero tells Kathryn, "I've never seen the ocean," it's impossible not to feel for this depressed man-child from a nightmare world so desperate that it views a battered victim like James as a potential survivor.

Gilliam's film is so bleak and despairing in its treatment of mankind's irresistible hunger for its own flamboyant self-destruction that it seems kosher to ask whether mankind even deserves to be saved instead of punished for its hubris. Man destroyed the planet in his greed and short-sightedness. Do we not deserve this? Are the lunatics and the extremists right? Are the mad men the only ones who truly understand the fundamental nature of reality and its underlying futility? *Twelve Monkeys* raises all these questions without answering them because, on some level, they cannot truly be answered. The film seemingly inhabits a world without happy endings, without hope, without safe places free from the ugliness of the human condition and the unholy messes we make as we try to atone for our sins and undo our horrible mistakes. The fleeting glimpses of beauty only make the hopelessness of it all more acutely painful. With *Twelve Monkeys*, a quintessential cult auteur connected big time with a large mainstream audience and an enduring cult not by watering down the grimness of his aesthetic but rather by making a pitch-black science

fiction neo-noir so entertaining and involving that audiences couldn't resist its bracingly dark, uncompromising vision.

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GILLIAM ON GILLIAM: TWELVE MONKEYS

Ian Christie: *How did Twelve Monkeys get started after the years of frustration?*

Terry Gilliam: It was a guy named Barry Isaacson, a Brit working at Universal, who slipped me the *Twelve Monkeys* script and I thought it was terrific. Chuck Roven, the producer, started coming over to London, and was very enthusiastic and tenacious. And, of course, I loved David and Jan Peoples' writing. The irony in all this was that Chuck's wife was Dawn Steel, who had taken over at Columbia during [*The Adventures of Baron*] *Munchausen*.

It wasn't a case of saying, "I have to make this at all costs." But sometimes that's good, because having this overweening passion to do things isn't necessarily the best way to make them. I did Richard LaGravenese's film [*The Fisher King*, 1991] and now I was going to do David and Jan Peoples' film. In my own mind, I became a total servant of a project which was someone else's project. In the other cases, I'm the servant to the project and the project is really me. All the elements in *Twelve Monkeys* were things I understood and felt close to. I don't know how the script had been developed, but I've met people in the States who had read the script and then gone to see the finished film and thought I'd completely transformed it. I didn't think I had, and it may be that there are certain scripts people just don't know how to read, but which I can, and that's the difference.

How did the writers feel about your realisation of their script?

I don't believe that what I imagined was very different from what David and Jan imagined, because all through the making of the film we maintained contact; we only had one fight, and that was just something silly that they were completely wrong about. It's when the thugs attack Raily and Cole and he kills one of them. In fact, I had him kill both, but in the end we left the bald guy alive: you couldn't tell if he was breathing or not, so on the soundtrack I put a little moan, a breath, and hey presto, he's alive – but, in fact, he was dead. We had a fight because David, or rather Jan in particular, thought that the fact he killed the black guy who was trying to rape Raily was politically questionable, and might imply that Raily would fall for Cole because he had saved her from the unspeakable act of rape. I said that I didn't think that's what you see in the scene: you don't get the feeling that she's been out there alone and he comes riding in on a white charger and saves her from the rapist and now she falls into his arms. I just don't think that's what was in the scene





at all, but when they saw the rushes, they thought it was and we had a big fight about it. We put the moan in to keep David and Jan happy: they thought he would be too much of a killer otherwise and, to be honest, it didn't bother me enough to make a thing out of it, considering how violent the scene is anyway.

When news of the casting of Twelve Monkeys first broke, many thought Gilliam had indeed sold out to Hollywood. How did Bruce Willis and Brad Pitt come to be in it?

The first names I came up with were Nick Nolte and Jeff Bridges, because both of them are great actors, but the studio wouldn't do it with them. So I pulled away from the whole project. I felt I could do it if we had control over it, but it was clear from the problems over casting that we didn't quite have the kind of control I wanted. So I walked. Then a few weeks later I got a call to say that Bruce Willis was interested. "Uh-huh," I thought. We talked to David and Jan a lot about whether we thought Bruce could do it. I had met him on *Fisher King*, when I was casting the part that Jeff played; he was really keen to work with me and we spent a very enjoyable afternoon together. Something that had intrigued me was the scene in *Die Hard* when he's picking glass out of his feet while on the phone to his wife and he's crying. He told me this wasn't in the script but was his idea, and I like that, so when the prospect of Bruce doing *Twelve Monkeys* came up, I said, "Let's talk to him."

Chuck and I went to New York and spent an evening with him. I'd been warned about his entourage, about people who interfered, and I told him that he couldn't bring any of them with him if was going to do this; he'd have to isolate himself, to become a monk and lose himself in the role. It was a nice evening: he really wanted to do it and was determined to try. I thought it was perfect timing. We got Bruce when he had made enough money to feel secure, and was now trying to prove himself as an actor, so he was willing to place himself in the hands of a director. *Pulp Fiction* had opened this little door: he'd proved something and he wanted to go further with it.¹

Had his performance in Pulp Fiction convinced you?

I thought *Pulp Fiction* was fine. He didn't blow me away like he blew a lot of others away. But we agreed to have a go, on our terms. One of the reasons I've avoided working with stars in the past is that I don't want them dictating the terms of the movie. I want to be in control, or what I really mean is the movie's got to be in control. So Bruce was coming to us as a supplicant with the right frame of mind, willing to take a chance, and I thought he was great.

1 - After establishing his *Die Hard* tough-guy reputation, Bruce Willis sought to broaden his range in the early nineties, with cameo appearances (in Robert Altman's *The Player*) and untypical roles, like the washed-up boxer in Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, followed immediately by *Twelve Monkeys*.

When it came to casting Dr Raily, we sat down and wrote names – as we always do – and the minute Madeleine Stowe was mentioned, that was it. I'd met her when we were trying to make *Tale of Two Cities*, and I liked her a lot. She's beautiful and funny and intelligent – and she has the most raucous horse laugh, totally at odds with her looks.

Next we started thinking about the Jeffrey part and Brad's name came up. At first I didn't think he could do it: I'd seen nothing that convinced me. The casting director thought he could; he'd seen something long ago that hinted he could do it. I wasn't certain, so we kept looking. Then I got a call saying that he wanted to meet and was coming to London. It turned out that what he was interested in was the Cole part, which would indeed make more sense – this laconic, poetic, brooding character. I told him that it was already taken and then – like all actors good at tap-dancing – he said it was *really* the other part he wanted. But I didn't buy that. Nevertheless, he came to London, we had dinner and I liked him. He was fast and funny, trying to prove he could do the part. I began to think maybe he could, but I still wasn't sure. There were a couple of other people available and I was vacillating, then we had another meeting with Brad and I said OK. He was so determined to prove himself, like Bruce, and I thought that was great. I'm always a sucker for people trying to break out of the mould.

Then we went into a long period when I sent him to a voice coach and, after the first few sessions, Stephen Bridgewater – who'd worked with Jeff on *Fisher King* – was complaining, "What have I ever done to you, Terry, to deserve this? He can't do it. He's got no breath control and a lazy tongue and he's just not working at it."

What did you do? In the film, Pitt achieves an extraordinary rapid-fire delivery and physical mannerisms.

We just kept at him. We got him off smoking, and little by little he started improving, and eventually Steven said, "He can do it, I really think he can do it." What was driving me crazy was that he was supposed to be sending me tapes of the progress, but he wasn't, so I was getting more and more nervous. I kept thinking I'd made a huge mistake and, right up to the moment of shooting, I was on edge, knowing I'd turned down other people who could have done it. The studio, of course, couldn't believe that I was hesitating about Brad Pitt. Most people probably thought I had just gone for the big stars, whereas in fact I was taking a huge chance because both of them were trying to do the opposite of what they normally do, but that's what excited me. I mean, who would believe a film like this could get through the Hollywood system?



The problem was that, while we were trying to get our film off the ground, *Waterworld* was slowly sinking the studio.² That film was completely out of control; on the other hand, we had a firm budget of \$29.5 million and two big stars, but we still couldn't get a green light. All their efforts were going on *Waterworld*; executives were flying out to Hawaii weekly, but of course it was too late – the train had left the station. Meanwhile, Chuck was very clever at prising little bits of money out of the studio to keep us alive, so we gradually accumulated momentum and suddenly the film was going. I don't think we were ever formally green-lit: it just happened.

It was frustrating because, compared with all the waste and profligacy on *Waterworld*, we had a budget which, below the line, was more like a low-budget film. But because we had big stars, the crew couldn't understand that we didn't have much money to work with. The fact is that Bruce worked for scale, which is almost nothing, and Brad did it for half a million. Yet you can't tell the crew these guys aren't getting paid much, because what's visible are the perks, like Bruce's big trailer and the huge gym that went along with us, pulled by an articulated lorry. We had a massive army of camp followers and security because of Bruce and Brad, yet we were making a comparatively low-budget film.

You were able to have at least a few familiar Brits in an otherwise all-American crew?

I had Roger Pratt as DP, Mick Audsley came over as editor and Ian Kelly looked after all the video equipment; but the rules of the game were that we had to use as many local people as possible. The heads of department were from LA or New York or London, but the rest were local.

We went to Philadelphia and Baltimore because that's what the script said, only to discover that, having chosen to work there, neither David nor Jan had ever been to either city. That's what's so funny about the way films work. I'm very literal – the script says Baltimore and Philadelphia so we go to Baltimore and Philadelphia – then it turns out these were just names the writers picked out of a hat. And when we get to the scene where Cole and Raily drive overnight from Baltimore to Philadelphia, it's only two hours so you don't have to drive overnight!

Have you read any of the *Dirk Gently, Holistic Detective* books?³ Well, I've become a holistic director: I just walk around and eventually things start to fall into place. We went to this town by chance and several things started happening. The mayor of Philadelphia turns out to be keen on films, because he knows that putting his city on screen makes it famous.

2 - *Waterworld* (1995), starring and part-directed by Kevin Costner, eventually cost \$175 million.
3 - Douglas Adams, *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* (1987) and its sequel, *The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul* (1991).

When we were shooting there, someone was always coming up to us and asking where were the steps that Rocky ran up – in fact, it's an art gallery.⁴ So the Philadelphia Film Office offered us all sorts of help. We were able to use City Hall, the Convention Centre and many other extraordinary buildings that they controlled. All the decay we found in the city made it the right place.

The film is nostalgic about a sense of loss, a doomed civilisation; and there's Philly, the former capital of the country, with two big power stations empty and redundant because all the industry moved west after the war. So there's all this stuff left over, waiting to be used by people like us, and that worked out really well.

This is mostly the same approach that you used in Brazil – a mixture of real, mostly derelict, locations, and bold, architectural set-dressing.

Yes, the found-art approach. You want to find real places to lock it down into some kind of reality, but even then it's not literal reality. For instance, our mental hospital was actually a penitentiary. Modern mental hospitals don't look like that, they look like office buildings, but I wanted to use this place because I liked it and it felt right. I worked out a justification for it later, which is that it's Cole's point of view: he's probably schizophrenic, so he doesn't know what's real; and here's a room that's trifurcated, with three archways to escape by, but he doesn't know which way to go, which path to take, because he's lost in this world. Basically, it was an interesting room. I'm completely instinctive in the way I work and I don't want to have to justify why certain things feel right on any level than *they just feel right*. But I do justify and explain to keep other people happy.

And if other people offer different justifications or interpretations?

When that happens, I just go along with it. It becomes their version of the film. I'm not proprietorial about the films; once they're done they belong to anyone who wants to watch them, and each person who watches creates a different film in their watching of it. But I also like throwing in things that don't quite add up, that aren't completely sensible, to create questions for which people can supply their own answers. *Twelve Monkeys* has thrown up a lot of these. Somebody sent me a lot of the FAQs from the Internet; there was a huge debate there about *Twelve Monkeys* and what each thing in it means. Now, I know exactly what everything means – or at least, what I intended it to mean. As I went along, it all made sense to me and I argued it through with David, but that doesn't mean there aren't a hundred different versions of the film out there. In this case, it was important to create a very tangible, real, tactile world, one that's solid and stacks up, with enough familiarity in

4 - Sylvester Stallone's fifteen-year five-part saga as Rocky began in Philadelphia in 1976.



the architecture of things so that you know this isn't just a complete fantasy. It was like that in the early Pasolini films: however magical they were, the baskets were woven by hand and the dirt was real. You could see this, so your feet are on the ground.

So how do you interpret Twelve Monkeys, apart from its science fiction aspect?

For me, the film is very much about the twentieth century's inundation of information and deciphering what among all the noise and imagery is useful and important to our lives. This is something we're all trying to sort out. Cole has been thrust from another world into ours and he's confronted by the confusion we live in, which most people somehow accept as normal. So he appears abnormal, and what's happening around him seems random and weird. Is he mad, or are we? Is our society mad? These are the aspects of it that I liked and wanted to preserve. Unlike what I think Peter Greenaway's doing – disguising his points and hiding his information, creating a riddle that only he has the answer to – I'm not trying to confuse or hide anything. But I'm also not trying to make it a totally defined and pinned-down affair.

There's a scene towards the end when they both discover from the phone calls that Cole's not crazy: a police car goes by and they turn and see a bank of video monitors with their image on them. That wasn't in the script; I just wanted to do it because I loved the idea of them thinking they were hiding, yet being totally exposed by technology. It also related back to the video ball in the future, with all those faces and bits of faces. The video ball wasn't in the script either; it simply had people across a table doing an interrogation. So, although I think I'm not changing anything, I suppose I am. When you put a guy on a chair that slides up and down a wall – so that he's like a butterfly on display – with this ball of partial magnified images, that's different from you and me talking across a table. What I'm doing is taking the situation, an interrogative system, and making it highly subjective, but in an external, physical way. I know how vulnerable I would feel if my feet couldn't touch the floor.

In fact, there are two subjective points of view: the scientists are seeing their subject – a guy up there on a wall – in a clearly defined way; while, from his point of view, it's just chaos and confusion, and he can barely see who's there. His viewpoint is a more confused one, because his direct view of them is interfered with by the technology. So what's the statement here? That we use television and movies as mirrors that supposedly show us the world, but it's distorted; or that we communicate to each other through these things less and less directly. But the possibility of all this was in the script; the characters actually say that their technology was a patchwork of all the things they'd been able to keep as they went underground – so that's, in effect, what we're showing.

But the showing of it, in all the extravagant detail you conjure up, adds extra layers of meaning or implication.

My concern was that this was what we had done in *Brazil* too, and I was trying to make it different, although essentially it's very similar.

Interrogation is very much at the heart of Twelve Monkeys. There's an interesting contrast between Cole's interrogation by the scientists of the future and his questioning by the psychiatrists of the present, which is equally stylised.

You would never do that in a psychiatric hospital, of course. The doctors wouldn't be lined up as severely as that, and Cole wouldn't be as isolated in that tiny chair with all the space around him. I set it in this classical room, which is clean and reasonable, as a contrast to the darkness and messiness of the underground laboratory of the future. *Paths of Glory* was probably also at the back of my mind, with that great room where the court martial takes place, and I think there's the same tracking shot. But [Stanley] Kubrick tracks during the whole thing, while I just opened out the start of the scene with a great sweeping move – having cut from a very tight shot of Bruce's face. Interestingly, nobody complained about how the mentally ill were portrayed in *Twelve Monkeys*, whereas there had been a lot of discussion about the homeless in *Fisher King*, which seemed to be about where our group conscience was focused at that particular moment. In fact, there was very little said about the general social picture in *Twelve Monkeys*, except for the usual thing about Gilliam going over the top again.

The film only becomes stable towards the end when we realise that everything really is true: the future is there and they're all going to die. The script wasn't like that, but I wanted to delay that moment and keep open, as long as possible, the doubt about whether he's mad. This is a dangerous thing to do, but I was intrigued to see if I could keep an audience engaged all the way through without them just throwing up their hands. And I remember the first time my daughter Amy – who was nineteen – and a friend saw it at Technicolor. They wanted to go to the toilet but they couldn't because they thought they'd miss some vital piece of information. They were really engaged by the puzzle.

The core of the puzzle – the idea of someone haunted by an image of his own death – comes from Chris Marker's 1962 film, La Jetée. Was he involved at all in Twelve Monkeys as a kind of adaptation of his short?

Chris Marker was involved right at the beginning. One of Chuck Roven's associates had gone to him, and I think he knew David and Jan Peoples' work. Chris didn't want them to try



to do a remake, nor did they want to, but his film was definitely a kernel. Actually, he wanted to be excluded from the process after that. They sent him a full-scale contract, but he sent it all back, saying, "If you can't describe what we're doing here in one page, then forget it."

But you hadn't seen La Jetée when you signed up for Twelve Monkeys?

No, I hadn't seen it. It was odd to have everyone writing how I'd been inspired by Marker's film, but any inspiration came through what David and Jan had taken from it. In fact, I'd seen stills from it – well the film consists of stills, but there's a book of stills, with the voice-over text, which I didn't read. I remembered the image of the man being shot and the long jetty or pier, although I didn't really know what it was. I remembered a guy with a mask over his face and glasses, so our scientists had glasses. But I don't think our underground looks much like the underground in *La Jetée*.

The climax, the shooting, takes place at an airport in both films.

Yes, but in *La Jetée* it takes place outside – the images are all air and space – whereas in ours, he's shot running down a tunnel. Is that the medieval tunnel going to heaven? Is it death, or the birth canal? All these associations were present, which is why I liked that tunnel. But I didn't choose it, the tunnel sort of chose itself, because our location was a converted railway station in Philadelphia which had been tuned into a convention centre that was just breathtaking to walk into. This was what we had to make into an airport, and what we did was put a big scrim at the end of the tunnel and pass light through it, making it an infinite passage of white. We kept that the brightest thing, while the rest was of a grey open space, with some post-modern marble and monolithic cenotaphs, which we made even taller, until it became like some kind of mausoleum.

Believe it or not, we couldn't get any airlines to give us free signage – because a man is killed at the airport. So we had to invent all those names – which cost us money – and be inventive in other ways. In the scene where Bruce and Madeleine arrive in a taxi and we track them inside, the first, exterior, part of the tracking shot is at Baltimore Airport, while the second, interior, is in Philly. We brought one piece of set with us, which became the cutting piece: they walk in, we go to black for two frames, then out the other side into Philly.

When did you finally see La Jetée and what did you feel about it after all the build-up?

At the Paris premiere of *Twelve Monkeys*: it was shown as the short. I thought it was fantastic. It wasn't translated and my French is terrible, but that didn't seem to matter, since the story is so simple. The girl isn't a real person, she's just a dream image, so David and

Jan wrote a real woman. The play with all the animals is quite extraordinary – when we're in the zoo – and then the tree, which goes into *Vertigo*.⁵ And that moment in *La Jetée*, where the girl moves – does she actually look at the camera or did I just think she did?

Everyone's reaction first time is to wonder if she really moves. Before the days of video, people used to debate this. But you realised that various things in the script of Twelve Monkeys related to it?

The images from the book that I'd remembered were the underground, the guy with the glasses and the jetty itself, but I didn't really pay much attention to the parts in between these images. What's fascinating is that it's all done with cutting, creating rhythms in the editing; it's pure cinema, with no dialogue, only voice-over. The interesting thing about *Vertigo* was how it started working its way into the film far more than originally planned. What was in the script from the start was the scene in *Vertigo* where Jimmy Stewart goes to the redwood trees – which, of course, comes from *La Jetée*. There were a couple of references to the original dialogue from *Vertigo*, but when we shot the scene we kept strictly to David and Jan's dialogue.

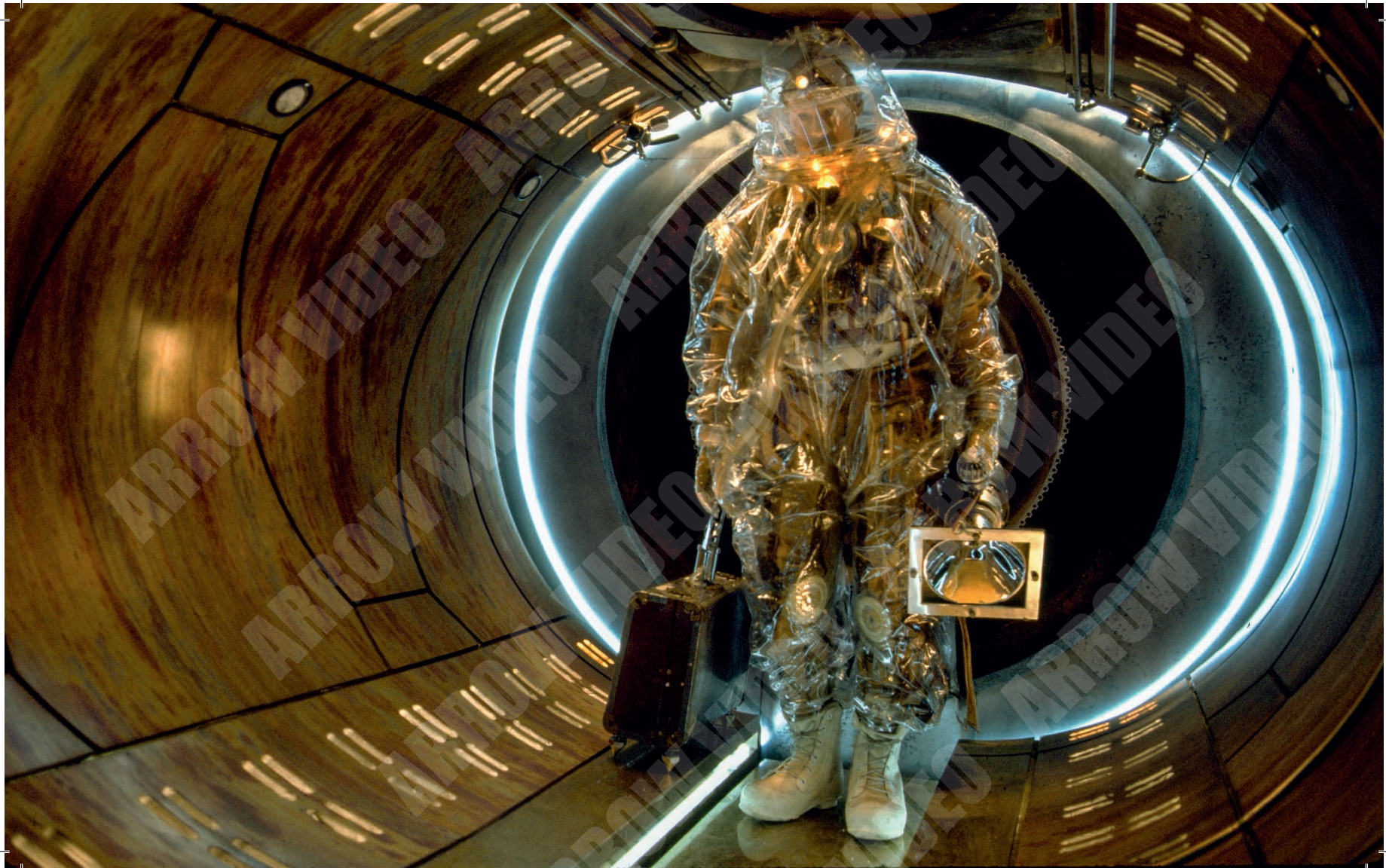
When Mick Audsley started cutting it together, he made a different scene from what was written because there was more on the actual *Vertigo* soundtrack that started working in a quite magical way. Mick created an extraordinary dialogue between the script and the film.

In the script Katherine was a blonde and she puts on a black wig as a disguise. Since Madeleine has dark hair, we gave her a blonde wig and put a trenchcoat in her, with the result that, when Bruce sees her in the lobby of the cinema, it's a totally Hitchcockian moment... with a Hitchcock blonde to boot.

You mean it recapitulates Stewart getting Kim Novak to dress up like the woman he thinks he's lost?

The music in the background is from *Vertigo* and Mick had grabbed a piece that seemed to work. Then we needed a better version of it, which involved going back to the film to find where exactly it came from. None of us had looked at the video while working on the film, and we discovered that the music came from the scene where Madeleine (Kim) has been remade as a blonde and appears before Jimmy – and the scene is cut exactly as we had cut ours, even up to the end where they embrace and the room starts spinning. I'd actually done a shot in the cinema foyer and, because it was circular, I'd put Madeleine and Bruce

5 - The lovers from different times who meet in Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) are seen looking at a cross-section of a sequoia tree, in a reference to the scene in *Vertigo* (1958) where James Stewart and Kim Novak contemplate a similar tree, showing the brevity of their lives compared to the tree's.



on a turntable so that they floated while the room spun around them. Was this not *Vertigo* remaking itself without us realising it? We sat in the cutting room and couldn't believe it. It was spooky. If I had left in the spinning kiss, it would have been the exact *Vertigo* scene – and people would have said I was just stealing from it – but, since it was unnecessary, I left it out.

I suppose David and Jan had foreseen that these would begin to interact, even if you weren't mimicking Vertigo consciously.

No, they hadn't. *Vertigo* was purely and simply a reference in the script and the fact that Katherine would be blonde wasn't predicted – it only happened because of casting Madeleine Stowe. You begin to think there must be Platonic scenes already in existence, which just have to be remade.

Did you fine-tune the film as a result of test screenings?

At our first NRG screening in Washington, we discovered that we'd pushed the music too much. What emerged was that the audience didn't buy the relationship between Rilly and Cole. They'd seen him kidnap her, then she took the bullet out of his leg, and the music we had put to the scene was definitely romantic. They said that she wouldn't fall for him like that; I realised the music was too definite, so we went back and changed it to something very ambivalent. That worked much better, letting the audience decide what's happening, instead of being Spielberg and telling them how to respond. The more ambiguous we kept things, the better it went: any time we made a definitive statement, musically or otherwise, it didn't work.

You can see in *The Hamster Factor* how we were convinced we'd get them, until the numbers came in and it was, "God, we've failed again!"⁶ We had a few minor changes, apart from the music, and – surprise, surprise – we had a hit on our hands. Interestingly, the distribution and marketing people decided to release it on 27 December, after the pre-Christmas bloodbath. *Clockers* and *Casino* had come out and they'd killed each other. I thought no one would be paying attention by the time we appeared, but we got very good reviews and the audience came in numbers we didn't expect. Perhaps that was because of Bruce and Brad, but the point is that they came and kept coming. And the way distribution works now, if a film is wounded in the first week, the exhibitors get twitchy and are ready to sacrifice it. We did really well in the US – between \$65 and \$70 million – and abroad we did even better – a total of \$175 million around the world. For a film that complex to do so well

says something: it's here to keep telling Hollywood there's an intelligent audience out there. But a month or so after it was out, we had a meeting with Warners about *The Defective Detective*, which Bruce was interested in doing. They were congratulating me on the great success of *Twelve Monkeys* and I started to say, "Yes, isn't it wonderful that an intelligent –" But they said it was down to two words: Brad Pitt. It doesn't matter how many times you do a film with Harrison Ford or Brad Pitt that falls on its face, they still want to believe in those two words, whether it's Brad or Harrison or Bruce.

6 - *The Hamster Factor and Other Tales of Twelve Monkeys* (1996) is a fly-on-the-wall documentary about the making of *Twelve Monkeys* by Keith Fulton and Louis Pepe.



ABOUT THE RESTORATION

Twelve Monkeys was exclusively restored by Arrow Films and is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with stereo and 5.1 sound. The original 35mm camera negative was scanned in 4K resolution on a Lasergraphics Director at EFilm, Burbank. The film was graded and restored at Silver Salt Restoration, London. Grading was supervised and approved by Terry Gilliam. The stereo and 5.1 mixes were remastered by NBC Universal.

Restoration supervised by **James White, Arrow Films**

Silver Salt Restoration **Anthony Badger, Steve Bearman, Mark Bonnici, Lisa Copson, Simon Edwards, Marie Feldman, Ray King, Tom Wiltshire**



All original materials supplied for this restoration were made available by NBC Universal/Peter Schade.

Very special thanks to Terry Gilliam for his participation in this project.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Anthony Nield**
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert** and **Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
QC Manager **Nora Mehenni**
Authoring and Subtitled **The Engine House Media Services**
Artist **Gary Pullin**
Design **Obviously Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, James Blackford, John Carino, Ian Christie, Terry Gilliam, Nathan Rabin,
Jon Robertson, Jonathan Romney



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