





OMNI CONSUMER PRODUCTS

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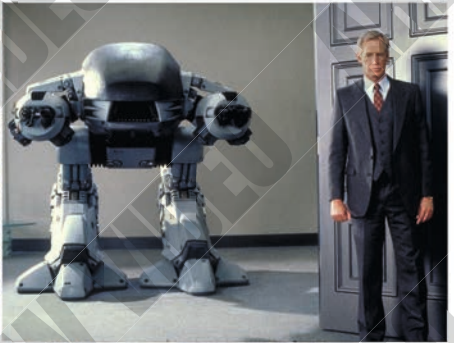
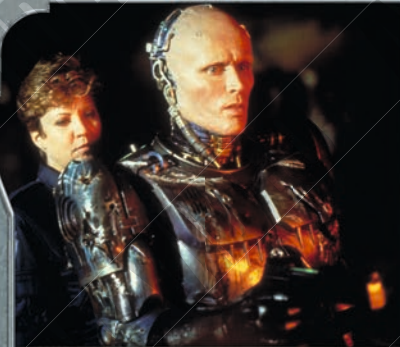
ROBOCOP™

CAST

Peter Weller Murphy/RoboCop
Nancy Allen Lewis
Daniel O'Herlihy The Old Man
Ronny Cox Jones
Kurtwood Smith Clarence
Miguel Ferrer Morton
Robert DoQui Sgt. Reed
Ray Wise Leon
Felton Perry Johnson
Paul McCrane Emil
Jesse Goins Joe
Calvin Jung Minh
Del Zamora Kaplan
Rick Lieberman Walker
Lee DeBroux Sal
Mark Carlton Miller
Edward Edwards Manson
Michael Gregory Lt. Hedgecock

CREW

Directed by **Paul Verhoeven**
Written by **Edward Neumeier & Michael Miner**
Executive Producer **Jon Davison**
Produced by **Arne Schmidt**
Editor **Frank J. Urioste**
Director of Photography **Jost Vacano**
Production Designer **William Sandell**
Music by **Basil Poledouris**
RoboCop designed and created by **Rob Bottin**
ED-209 Sequences by **Phil Tippett**



TALES OF BLOOD & STEEL

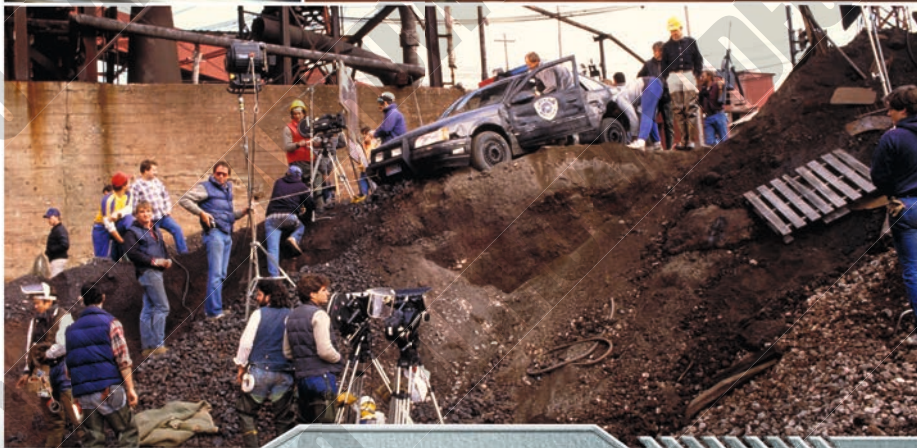
By Omar Ahmed

Detroit, some time in the future. Airlifted from the abandoned steelworks where Officer Alex Murphy (Peter Weller) has been shot to pieces, his body is transferred to a stretcher and carted into a hospital where a flock of medics try to save his life. In the operating theater, a series of POV shots from Murphy's perspective creates a dissonance. His lifeless eyes seem to say he is dead. But the constant use of the POV shot looking up at the medics trying frantically to save his life is unsettling. This is because we are given access to something sacred, unconscious, and conjectural. The first memory is of Murphy's son watching a TV show titled 'T. J. Lazer' about a fictional sci-fi Westerner. This is followed by a second memory of Murphy's wife telling him how much she loves him. The third and final memory is of his wife and son standing outside their suburban home waving. Murphy might be dead, but his memories connected to his soul live on. As the medics use the defibrillators to revive Murphy, the electric shocks that resound through his body trigger the faces of Clarence Boddicker (Kurtwood Smith) and his unsavory gang, the men who perpetrated the violence against him. The reliving of this traumatic event is the first of many flashes in the film that gradually come back to haunt Murphy in his incarnation as RoboCop. Irrupting through memories that OCP (OmniConsumer Products) cannot repress with a fleeting refrain and unremitting intensity, the trauma eventually awakens RoboCop from his technological corporate slumber.

RoboCop (1987) is often interpreted as a political satire, a treatise on corporate power, the melding of man and machine and a critique of 1980s Reaganomics. It is of course all of these things and embodies a visceral power that has rarely been matched by Hollywood science fiction films in the contemporary era. However, two major themes often go amiss when *RoboCop* is talked about; trauma and memory, both of which are intertwined and connect with Verhoeven's

subsequent sci-fi film *Total Recall* (1990). The impact of a traumatic event is an occurrence that brings with it conditions of repetition, lucidness and pain. Trauma is often only really ever felt or realized until after the event in question. In *RoboCop*, the trauma takes on an added resonance since Officer Lewis (Nancy Allen), Murphy's partner, witnesses the event. The central goal for Murphy is not just to reclaim an identity that has been stolen from him but to also come to terms with a personal trauma. In this respect, could we argue that *RoboCop* is a trauma film? If so, this is no ordinary trauma film, but one about a homicidal trauma inflicted upon society by a pathological corporation. Images of trauma proliferate in *RoboCop*. In the notorious opening sequence, the demonstration of ED-209, the latest in hi-tech law enforcement, goes violently awry, resulting in the grisly murder of Kinney (Kevin Page), an overenthusiastic corporate newbie. But the trauma of such images is rendered into something far more satirical. The endless squibs, the near evisceration of Kinney's body, the two-faced corporate executives scurrying to take shelter in the boardroom segues into Dick Jones' (Ronny Cox) glib retort about the murder of Kinney as a 'glitch', a hilarious retort that cuts through the violence to remind us of the wit that resides amongst the dread in the films of Paul Verhoeven.

When *RoboCop* awakens from his technological slumber and abruptly leaves the police precinct, we are told he had a dream, something that is inexplicable to Bob Morton (Miguel Ferrer), Head of the Security Concepts division of OCP. It is memories of a past life that come back to haunt *RoboCop*, reasserting the traumatic event as something he has to overcome. Dreaming and memories are two existential and temporal concepts that recall the wider cultural influences of Cyberpunk. Expressly, the works of William Gibson and Philip K. Dick imagine the cyborg as more than a machine but as a sentient being imbued with spectral, haunting characteristics. In the latter's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), later adapted into *Blade Runner* (1982), memories are implanted in replicants (mechanized slave labor) to simulate human qualities such as intelligence. In the case of *RoboCop*, the corporation attempts to erase



the memory of Murphy but OCP cannot account for the ways in which trauma leaves a trace, often enough to forge a path to recovery for the victim, as is the case with Murphy. Lewis first recognizes RoboCop is in fact Murphy when the micro gesture of the gunplay at shooting practice, a memory linked to his son, reconnects with the opening when Murphy performed his gun skills for Lewis. Indeed, memories of a past life seep into many of RoboCop's gestures, taking on a ghost-like quality.

Having fled the police precinct after his initial awakening, RoboCop runs into one of the criminals, Emil Antonowsky (Paul McCrane), who perpetrated the violence against him. This stand-off between RoboCop and Emil unfolds late night at a petrol station. "Dead or alive, you're coming with me" is the ultimatum given by RoboCop. The déjà vu of this ultimatum is enough for Emil to recall the man under the mask is Murphy, the police officer they brutally gunned down. Emil has to do a double take, perplexed how someone who is dead can return to haunt them. And when Emil tells RoboCop they have killed him, this leads to a momentary paralysis. RoboCop's physical state is seized by an uncanny memory recall that is fragmented and indistinct. This is the first of many decisive moments in the film where RoboCop is confronted about his true identity, forced to relive the trauma of his death as Murphy, but one that he does not fully realize has taken place until he accesses the restricted OCP records and begins to uncover the truth. The encounter with Emil also opens a wound that was never healed, left exposed by the hijacking of Murphy's body by OCP.

It is often said the emotional core is the 'going home' sequence in which RoboCop comes face to face with his deceased self. When RoboCop returns to his now empty house, this constitutes the first stage of an attempt to heal a wound first opened when he was massacred. And as RoboCop walks through the ghostly spaces of his house, it is the same fragmented memories of a lost past that maps a disjunction in which RoboCop is out of synch with reality. The sterile and empty spaces amplify the deep sense of loss he feels. Along with a repetition of

the same memories, a new memory also surfaces; this one shows Murphy with his wife and son taking a timed Polaroid selfie at Halloween. This new memory hints that a recovery is underway in which RoboCop is retrieving a past that has been repressed by the corporation, memories of a human life re-emerging. But how is this at all possible? Murphy is dead after all. We saw that happen and the medics declared the time of his death. There is something inexplicable at work here, a strange duality about the human mind. The suggestion that the brain, a repository of data, a memory store, can be revived after death through a technological resurrection is a metaphysical subtext that lingers through many of the sequences in which RoboCop is overcome with the trauma of the past. Memory is an aspect of human existence the corporation attempts to regulate. And erasing the memory of Murphy after he undergoes full body prosthesis is a gesture of the totalizing ways in which corporate ownership extends to our very bodies, the next lurid step in the evolution of capitalist colonization.

When RoboCop removes his battered helmet, the fusion of old flesh and new steel melded together is the man-machine aesthetic that imagines the cyborg as a technological hybrid over which the corporation wields a startling power, ownership and control. But what exactly does RoboCop mean when he says: "I can feel them...but I can't remember them"? It is a pitiful line delivered after his unmasking in the steelworks when he questions Lewis about the whereabouts of his family. Looking into a makeshift mirror held up by Lewis, RoboCop finally 'sees' Murphy. Running his cumbersome fingers over his baby like face, reclaiming a human identity disrupts the fabricated narrative weaved by OCP. While the removal of the helmet is connected to the recovery of a body stolen by OCP, the recovery of a past life is only partial. RoboCop comes to realize that remembering remains an impossible act in the face of pathological corporate machinations. In this respect, Murphy is only resurrected emotionally, although the biblical allusions to Christ point to another kind of resurrection altogether. More suggestively, the removal of the helmet uncovers the unseemly sight of the bullet hole in RoboCop's forehead, a literal scar and visual reminder of the

trauma perpetrated against Murphy.

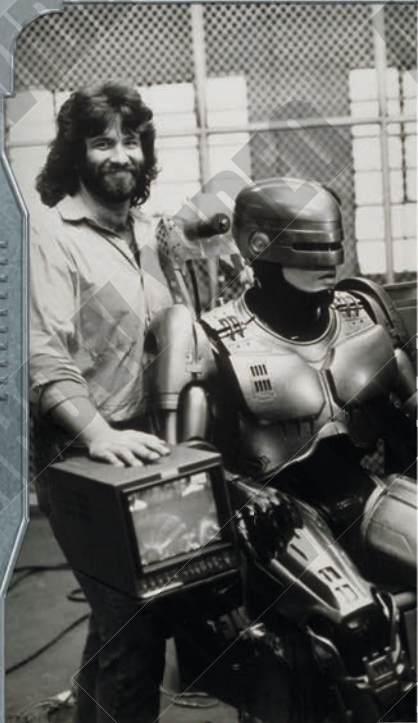
If the trauma of an event repeats itself, materializing in different ways, the final confrontation between RoboCop and Boddicker becomes an absolution, a belated and cathartic coming to terms with the horrors of the past. Returning to the scene of the crime, the ugly industrial architecture is the ideal Jungian landscape against which to stage RoboCop's recovery, a battle of blood and steel. Now unmasked, Murphy walks again, a traumatic victim and survivor seeking to avenge those who once tried to annihilate him. There is a swagger to Murphy's actions now, gliding and evading with guile the unchecked destructive force of his villainous perpetrators who fire clumsily with their outrageous military hardware. Murphy is made to suffer once again, reliving the pain of the original traumatic event. But this time Murphy fights back, driving a spike through Boddicker's throat, killing him. It is the same titanium spike RoboCop used to unlock his human past, inverted now for an altogether violent source of retribution and spectacle of power. Since Boddicker is an extension of the corporate machine, a proxy for Dick Jones, the violence inflicted on both Murphy and RoboCop reiterates the trauma of capitalism as something uncontrolled, destructive and perpetual.

Trauma and memory make up the subtext of a work that has grown in critical stature over the years. This to some degree has to do with the increasing ways in which Hollywood sanitizes the action film or panders to an unending nostalgia industry. What sets *RoboCop* apart from 1980s hard body action films like *Predator* (1987) and *Die Hard* (1988) is essentially the darkly comedic vein. Let's not forget *RoboCop* is a very funny film, a comedy in fact, expressly about American culture in an age of reactionary Reaganite politics. And the mischief that writers Edward Neumeier & Michael Miner along with director Paul Verhoeven orchestrate is vividly brought to life in the now famous 'Mediabreaks' that punctuate the narrative with an eviscerating satirical vibe. While so many of the film's best lines have found their way into popular culture, the epoch defining

“I’d buy that for a dollar!” is a lasting punchline that seems to have cultivated its own subculture of memes. *RoboCop*’s cinematic riches also include Rob Bottin’s inspired RoboCop design, the intricate model work of Phil Tippett and that rapturous anvil clanking score by composer Basil Poledouris. Ultimately, the creative intelligence of Verhoeven’s *RoboCop* and its enduring appeal resides in the Euro-American mechanics of a film that imagines a critical dystopia in which science fiction, the Western, the action film and horror intersect with a resounding vitality.

Omar Ahmed is a UK based film scholar and has written the first full-length monograph on RoboCop (Auteur) as part of the Constellations series on sci-fi films.





ROBOCOP AND THE GENERATION THAT GREW UP WITH IT

by Christopher Griffiths

“The thing that is most interesting to me, and I could have not predicted it and I couldn’t be more pleased, is how *RoboCop* is this cultural thing that young men and some young women really embrace. There’s something really masculine about this movie and it almost becomes a rite of passage. 30 years later, I hear people say, “This is my Dad’s favorite movie” (and it was he) who first showed it to them. “Don’t tell your Mom!” they would say. And kids would sneak off to see it over other people’s houses. This was part of their ritual of becoming young men.” - Ed Neumeier, writer of *RoboCop* (1987)

If ever there was a question I wanted to put to the *RoboCop* cast and crew, it was what their thoughts were on how their ultraviolent satirical masterpiece managed to find an audience like myself and many others at such a young age. Speaking from my own experience, I have come across very few people who had not seen *RoboCop* when they were growing up and heard their many stories of just how they came to see that film. It might have been on television late one night when they snuck downstairs to watch it; at their friends’ house on VHS; or simply their dad knew that it would appeal to them and let them watch it. There’s not one solid answer to why they were drawn to it, more so a series of events that culminated in kids re-enacting the signature *RoboCop* stomp and

firing their index finger weapons at each other on the school playground. I was one of those kids.

RoboCop arrived at the peak of Eighties excess. Hollywood was already saturated with explosive action and explicit violence thanks in part to the boom of the 'franchise'. On the one end of this colorful spectrum, shiny, musclebound war heroes were mowing down the bad guys with heavy artillery; whilst at the other end, hockey mask-wearing maniacs were dismembering horny teenagers at summer camp. "The 80s just happened to be a time when Hollywood finally discovered that they could make 'A' movies out of 'B' movies – and they just went wild with it!" explains *RoboCop*'s on-set publicist, Paul M. Sammon.

Like its peers, the film offered up plenty of action and a plethora of blood-spattered spectacle to the point of being challenged by the MPAA who would give its initial cut an X rating. But despite all of this, *RoboCop* would somehow make its way into children's bedrooms in varying forms, from toys, to costumes, and even an animated series. It's hard to imagine what the mindset was when transforming an ultra-violent satirical science fiction film into a Saturday morning kids show, but it happened. Co-produced by a fledgling Marvel Productions (with Stan Lee acting as executive story editor), *RoboCop: The Animated Series* ran for a single season consisting of twelve episodes in 1988.

RoboCop was certainly not the first R-rated property to go from the silver screen to toy shelves. Industry giant Kenner produced an 18-inch action figure based on the hideously terrifying Xenomorph from Ridley Scott's not-so-child-friendly *Alien* (1979). In an unsurprising turn of events, Kenner would recall the figure due to lack of sales and above all, an outcry from angered parents as the toy was deemed too terrifying for children to play with, given that the source material derived from was an R-rated movie. However, this would not be the final attempt made by the company.

Throughout the 1980s, other R-rated properties would be converted into toy

lines, including *Commando* (1985) and *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985), the latter of which, like *RoboCop*, had been adapted into an animated spin-off series (1986's *Rambo: The Force of Freedom*). This model of creating a watered-down animated show would work as the perfect go-between for these adult oriented properties and children's toy lines.

Though never quite equalling the success of *Transformers* and *Masters of the Universe*, or even Kenner's successful *The Real Ghostbusters* range, it would be thanks to heavy marketing on Saturday morning television, and promotional ads in catalogues and comics, that the *RoboCop* toy line (re-branded *RoboCop and the Ultra Police*) would raise children's interest in the new cyborg crusader.

There were action figures of the titular character and his cartoon sidekicks, a pretty neat ED-209 (renamed ED-260A in the animated show), and even accessories, including Robo's helmet that was often two sizes too big for the kids that attempted to wear it. For those kids, however, it would come to their attention that there was more than just action figures and a cartoon chronicling the iron hero's adventures – there was also a feature film!

Upon its theatrical release, *RoboCop* would prove to be a box office success, gaining \$53.4 million during its North American run in the summer of 1987. However, in February 1988, it would go on to find a much larger audience in its home release, earning \$24,036,000 from video rentals in the United States alone. Not only did the film gain new audiences made up of those who may have overlooked such a frivolously-titled film in the theaters, but more importantly, it would find an entirely new demographic.

"I was probably about 10 years old and saw it on VHS at some friends' house who probably had neglectful parents," explains pop culture journalist Alex Pappedemas who, like many, would discover *RoboCop* for the first time on home video. "I don't think I recognized that there was this satire of Reaganomics that was taking place, I was not awake to that sort of stuff. It was just a cool

movie about a robot with a human inside it.”

For me, it was a VHS recording from the film’s British terrestrial TV premiere on ITV in 1994, which had been heavily edited, the channel having acquired the US TV version that omitted every ounce of profanity and violence. Furthermore, my diligent mother recorded over anything that even hinted at the excessively violent sequences with Colgate adverts; but I got the general idea of what was happening. It was thanks to a friend in school who had snuck out his dad’s VHS double bill of the first two *RoboCop* films that I would finally see the film in all its uncut glory. Like Alex, I just enjoyed the movie on a surface level: a nonstop action adventure with really cool robots. It would be some time before I began to understand the existential dilemma of the protagonist, the humor and the satirical quirkiness; but nonetheless, I quickly became obsessed with what I had seen, and 25 years later, that obsession has not subsided.

Paul Sammon explains: “Those of us who love film, music or books will have a defining moment as a child where you’ll see a group of pictures or a picture that will shape you the rest of your life.” This was mine. Although shocking and in some ways terrifying, *RoboCop* enthralled me and I have never found anything else quite like it. “There is a phenomenon of *RoboCop* and young people, and how this is a touchstone film in lots of ways,” explains Ronny Cox. “It tapped into your humor, your sense of absurdity. I know that there is something there that speaks to young guys through adolescence.”

Though the idea of such a brutal movie being embraced by a young audience may be something to be frowned upon, the appeal to children is explained by Leeza Gibbons (the actor behind *Mediabreak*’s Jess Perkins): “*RoboCop* appealed to kids because he was this very straight, down the middle moral hero. When *Mediabreak* ask if he has a message for the kids watching at home, he says, ‘Stay out of trouble.’ That sums it all up. He has his three prime directives: *Serve the public trust. Protect the innocent. Uphold the law.* So this

was quintessential hero stuff, and that works for kids!”

That very notion would be the rationale for the film’s hugely successful game adaptation courtesy of UK developer Ocean Software, which had been responsible for the *Rambo* video game adaptation a few years prior. “Although these films were violent, there was a morality to them. The heroes were genuine



heroes.” explains former Ocean Software VP Gary Bracey, who had previously worked with Orion Pictures on the video game adaptation of Oliver Stone’s *Platoon* (1986).

Bracey was sent the script of *RoboCop* as the next tie-in video game which he would take on and oversee. “It was the perfect storm of a great IP (intellectual property) which had tapped into the culture. The game was released at the same time as the home video, and it was rare you had all these components at the same time. I don’t think we realized how well it would do. It was the first game to break the million mark and it set a template for the games industry.”

Bracey elaborates: “*RoboCop* was the first time that the movie companies started to see not just more revenues over and above the guarantee, but serious revenues. So they started taking the games business more seriously.” It would come as no surprise that a year later, Ocean Software would acquire the game rights to Tim Burton’s *Batman* (1989), and that very same template would be applied in the creation of another milestone in the history of tie-in video games.

With the massive success of both the home release and the games, it seemed that the financially strapped Orion Pictures had found a winner with *RoboCop*, and executives immediately greenlit a sequel. Ultimately *RoboCop 2* (1990) would not fare as well as the first film critically or commercially, being branded mean-spirited and lacking the satirical punch of Verhoeven’s original. The once successful tie-ins that had boosted the reputation of *RoboCop* would ultimately lead to the franchise’s downfall, as it began to struggle to identify just who the target audience was. Nonetheless, Orion sought to continue capitalizing on the Robo-brand by greenlighting *RoboCop 3* (1993) almost immediately after *RoboCop 2*’s release. This time round, their intent was to make a PG-13 movie, thus opening the franchise up to a younger demographic.

Although not the sole reason for its success, *RoboCop* was an adult movie with excessive violence and biting satire. It seems the dilution of these elements

in *RoboCop 3* was not what original fans wanted, and arguably contributed towards the franchise's demise. Regardless of all that followed the success of the original *RoboCop*, it remains both a critical and fan-favorite that is fondly remembered by many as the first 'adult' movie they ever saw. It was a unique situation where both the adult and kids' markets crossed paths, creating a singular "rite of passage", in writer Ed Neumeier's words.

A lot has changed in the years since *RoboCop*'s release. Gone are toys aimed at young audiences for the likes of *Game of Thrones* (2010-2019) or *Deadpool* (2016), but instead expensive collectibles aimed at the same generation who once owned the classic Kenner toys, and which now reside in glass cabinets as opposed to underneath their beds. For myself and likely many others, the discovery of *RoboCop* at such a young age, and my gradual understanding of its many layers over the years, has been a rewarding experience that has allowed me to appreciate the film more as the years go by.

Christopher Griffiths is a documentary filmmaker based in Northampton, UK, and a co-founder of Cult Screenings UK and Dead Mouse Productions.





ROBOCOP: DISMANTLED AND REASSEMBLED

By Henry Blyth

Film fans in the DVD/Blu-ray era have rejoiced over the release of comprehensive video editions highlighting different versions of the same film. Often the result of corporate interference or industrial necessity, and usually dismissed as ephemeral trivia in the past, now these collections of alternate and restored material serve as a testament to the way a film's impact can be quantifiably reshaped through even just a few subtle snips in the cutting room. The most famous example is arguably Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), which has been released on video in at least five different cuts (from the 1982 "Workprint" to the 2007 "Final Cut") over the years. *RoboCop* (1987) is no exception, and while the differences between the three versions on this Arrow Blu-ray release are relatively small in comparison – no major narrative restructuring or deleted scenes, for example – the various reasons for their existence form an interesting tale of their own.

ROBOCOP VS. THE MPAA

Ultraviolent action cinema ruled the American box office in the Eighties, one-upping the gory body counts of the slasher horror films that preceded them and giving Reagan-era audiences a vicarious vehicle to quench their bloodlust, thanks to the shoot-first-ask-questions-never exploits of testosterone titans like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone and Chuck Norris. Most of these films were rated 'R' – admission restricted to anyone aged under 16 without parental supervision – by the industry ratings board MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) without much incident. *RoboCop*, however, would not prove so lucky. While it was every bit as bombastic and thrilling as other action films of its era, Paul Verhoeven traded the easy, escapist thrills of

his contemporaries for a unique mix of comic-book extravagance and queasy body horror, aided in no small part by the inventive make-up effects overseen by Rob Bottin. Though it was filmed with an R rating in mind, the MPAA instead gave the film an 'X' rating – a commercial kiss of death that would necessitate further editing.

The X rating had achieved a short-lived legitimacy in the late-60s and early-70s thanks to mainstream taboo-busters such as Best Picture winner *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) and Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), but as the decade wore on it became inextricably linked with hardcore pornography. As the MPAA had not trademarked the 'X', it quickly became co-opted by distributors of erotic films as a selling tool – the more X's on the marquee, the more taboo the content onscreen. This unfortunately tainted the X rating's reputation in the marketplace, and many media outlets refused to promote or review X-rated (or unrated, also an option) films, inevitably leading to lower box office returns. As a result, risk-averse major studios often made it a contractual mandate that filmmakers had to deliver an R-rated film at most.

Paul Verhoeven was no stranger to the MPAA before *RoboCop* was submitted. *Spetters* (1980) was shorn of eight minutes of "graphic" sexuality to receive an R rating, and *Flesh + Blood* (1985) also got an X before some of the nudity was reduced to achieve an R. (Both films are available in uncensored and unrated versions.)

Speaking to Laurent Bouzereau in 1994, Verhoeven sounded surprisingly even-handed when reflecting on his interactions with the MPAA:

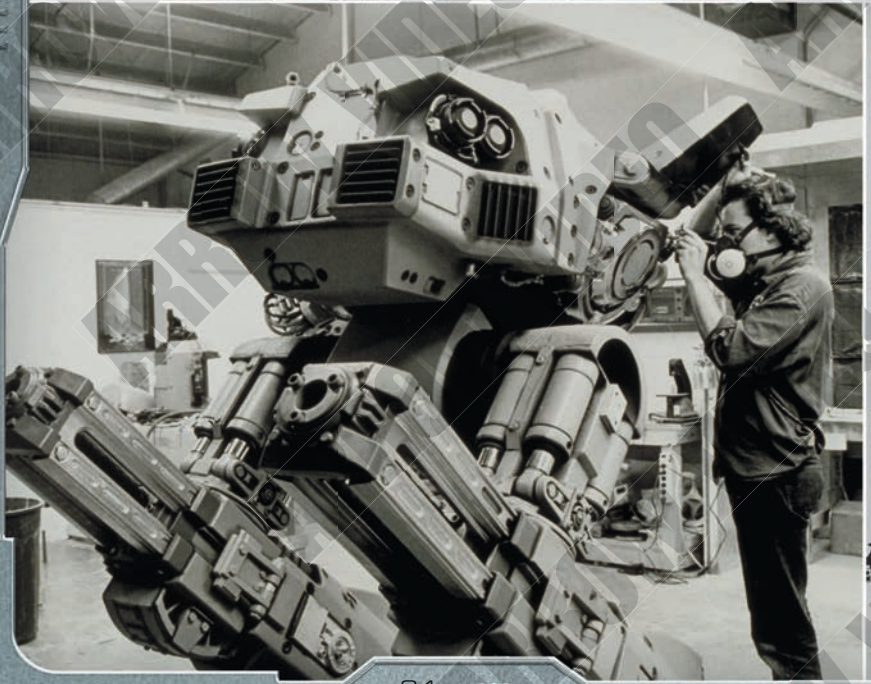
I want to be clear that I don't think the MPAA is crazy or something. I have done four movies in America, and I had to deal with the MPAA on all of them... If you want to use the term censorship, which I'm hesitant to use, I think you would have to call it more of an economic censorship. They don't censor

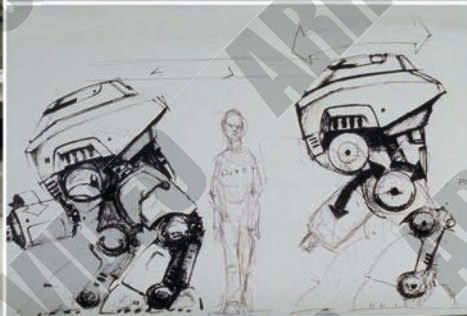
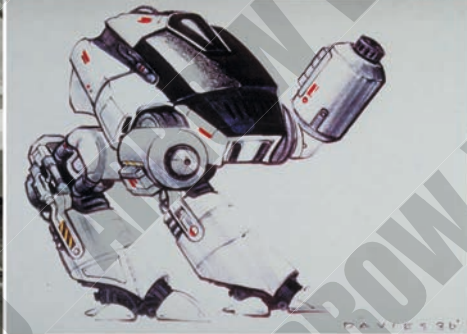
your movie. They don't say you cannot release your movie. After showing the MPAA the first cut of *Basic Instinct* (1991), they said this is great, it's a wonderful movie, please don't change it, it's an NC-17. They wanted to protect children or warn parents, but also they felt that it was a powerful movie, done with artistic integrity. They wanted to legitimize the NC-17. Then, of course, the studio said we cannot release this film with an NC-17 because in a lot of cases, and that's why I call it an economic censorship, theaters won't show NC-17 movies, especially in malls... It would have done half the business it did. ¹

Asked to sum up the function of the MPAA, Verhoeven described the organisation as “warning-system agents or something... it is supposed to be a system to warn parents about what their kids are going to see – that's the essence of it.”

The makers of *RoboCop* scored an early victory in convincing the MPAA to back down over the sequence where bad guy Emil starts melting after exposure to toxic waste and is splattered over a car windshield. Speaking to Paul Sammon for *Cinefex* magazine in 1987, executive producer Jon Davison elaborated on how this scene escaped unscathed: “That was one of the scenes that the MPAA wanted to cut out... but we fought like crazy to keep it in. One of our weapons was the fact that during some early screenings, The National Research Group had asked people what their favorite thing in the movie was – and the answer was the Melting Man. At that point certain people took a stand against the MPAA, because it just seemed ridiculous to cut out the one thing that audiences liked best!” ²

Despite this, four other scenes were edited before the film received an R rating: the explosive death of unfortunate OCP underling Kinney thanks to ED-209; a close-up of gang member Bobby being shot in the leg; Murphy's protracted, brutal murder at the hands of Clarence's gang; Clarence dying as he gets a spike







through the neck courtesy of RoboCop. The issue, according to Davison in the same *Cinefex* article, was that the MPAA did not think the over-the-top violence was suitable for children. Davison tried to reason that they had not made the film with children in mind, but was overruled; the very nature of the R rating meant that small children could conceivably see the film if accompanied by an adult. This confusion over *RoboCop*'s intended audience would later arguably lead to the franchise's decline.

When interviewed for *AMC Backstory* in 2002, Davison said: "*RoboCop* got an X eleven times at the MPAA. They finally refused to even watch the film anymore!" (In earlier interviews, Davison and Verhoeven both say it took eight submissions to get an R.) Interviewed for the same documentary, Verhoeven added: "I fought them, I tried everything to do it my way, but of course they have the power; and in my contract, it said (the film) needed an R rating."

In a *Los Angeles Times* news article (published on the 20th of May 1987) on the film finally being passed in a cut version, MPAA ratings chairman Richard Heffner was quoted as saying: "We thought the X rating was fair due to the violent nature of the film... Obviously the filmmakers wanted the footage left in there, but what was submitted was an X as far as we were concerned." Ironically, the filmmakers argued that cutting back the heightened, cartoonish nature of the violence made it ultimately more horrific.

The version that was ultimately passed with an R differed from the initial X-rated cut as follows:

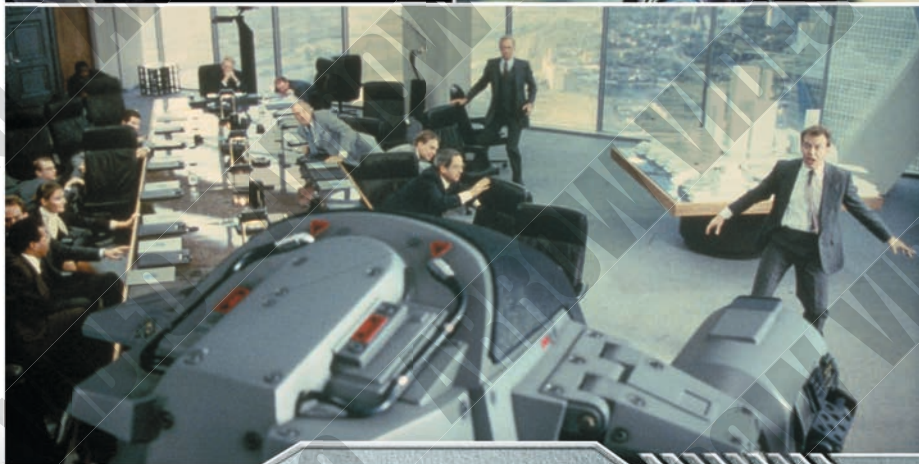
- Five shots (totalling around five seconds) were cut out completely from Kinney's death: an additional shot of Kinney being shot before he falls on the model of Delta City; two shots of Dr McNamara attempting in vain to rip the wires out of the control pad for ED-209; two shots of Kinney's body being further shot to pieces as he lies lifeless on the Delta City model.

The close-up of Bobby being shot in the leg and the initial close-up of Clarence bleeding to death from his neck wound were replaced with alternate angles where we see the action occur from further away.

Murphy's "crucifixion" was the most censored sequence in the film by far. Removed entirely: an additional shot of the gang cackling with laughter; two additional shots of Murphy's arm being shot off (the arm suddenly disappears in the R-rated cut); two additional shots of Murphy screaming as he's being shot; an eight-second sequence after the shooting stops, including a close-up of Murphy in pain, Clarence lighting a cigarette, Emil saying "Hey Clarence! He's still alive," and Murphy keeling over; a bravura special effects shot where, thanks to a hydraulic puppet designed by Rob Bottin, in one continuous shot the camera tracks around Murphy who is then shot in the head by Clarence; and finally, a seven-second long shot of Lewis crying over Murphy's body. In addition to these edits, alternate, less gory takes and angles were deployed to lessen the sight of Murphy's bleeding stump after his hand is shot off, and to cover for the cutting of the arm removal and headshot.

(Interestingly, the Murphy head-puppet footage made its first public outing way back in 1987, when a workprint version of the shot was included in the appropriately-named promotional featurette *Shooting RoboCop*, made by Awesome Productions and televised in Europe.)

When the R-rated version of *RoboCop* was distributed internationally, it fell afoul of censorship bodies in countries such as Australia, Sweden, Finland and Germany, and its violent scenes were often cut to such ludicrous effect that they became barely coherent. (These cuts have largely since been waived in the DVD era.) Surprisingly, despite their reputation for being especially scissor-happy in the 1980s in the wake of the 'video nasties' moral panic, the British Board



of Film Classification allowed the R-rated version to be released uncut with a compulsory '18' (no persons under 18 may be admitted) certificate in cinemas and on home video in the UK. In the original examiners' reports, recently published on the Board's website, they noted that "the overall tone, which (is) always slightly offbeat and tongue-in-cheek, serves to ameliorate the loving care and attention with which Verhoeven treats the violence... this is clearly a 'PG' film given an '18' treatment."

In 1990, Paul M. Sammon and executive producer Jon Davison set about searching for the 35mm elements needed to restore Verhoeven's original X-rated cut, a quest Sammon detailed in a *Video Watchdog* article published in 1995. According to Sammon's article, which detailed how the restoration of the X-rated footage was a lengthy five-year process exacerbated by the concurrent Chapter 11 bankruptcy of Orion Pictures, the original camera negatives of the altered sequences were deemed lost after a widespread search by the filmmakers and the studio.³ Finally, the minute of gorier material was ultimately restored via the discovery of a lower-generation positive film element, and released to the public in the form of a laserdisc distributed by the Criterion Collection in May 1995. This reassembled X-rated cut, rebranded as the Unrated "Director's Cut", has since overtaken the R-rated cut as the 'default' version available on subsequent home video formats, remastered again for DVD in 2001 and Blu-ray in 2007 and 2014. In October 2018, online outlets excitedly hyped that digital platforms were streaming "the rare, X-rated cut" of the film, though it was the same 4K restoration of the Unrated version released on Blu-ray in 2014.

ROBOCOP VS. NETWORK TELEVISION

The demise of the Production Code in the 1960s, and the flood of hitherto forbidden content that filled American cinemas as a result, roughly coincided with another trend in the same decade: major theatrical films finding a second

life on primetime television, starting with NBC's *Saturday Night at the Movies* slot in 1961. While the big screen enjoyed a revolution of scandalous sex and shocking violence, the small screen stayed as conservative and buttoned-down as before, meaning such cinematic excesses would have to be tempered for home viewing – and thus, the practice of editing films for television was born.

While the practice of altering films for syndicated television dates back at least to the early 1960s – Roger Corman's *The Wasp Woman* (1959) was enhanced with 20 minutes of new footage shot by Jack Hill in 1962 – it became commonplace in the 1970s, with *King Kong* (1976) and *The Deep* (1977) being two notable examples of theatrical flops that were re-shaped into primetime events, both extended by nearly an hour and broadcast over two nights.⁴⁵ As the 1980s rolled around, the “edited-for-television” cut had become an industrial inevitability. Edits for content came in all shapes and sizes: nudity, sex and violence were either removed or replaced by alternate takes shot especially for the TV version; previously deleted material was reinstated to compensate for removed material and to fill up a two-hour time slot (with commercials); and often most memorably, profanity was dubbed over with ‘minced oaths’, the more nonsensical and conspicuous the better. The television edit of Alex Cox's *Repo Man* (1984) openly mocked this practice with “motherfucker” being replaced with “melon farmer”, achieving a cult notoriety all of its own. By the time of *RoboCop*'s release, few Hollywood films were excluded from this treatment; even Sam Raimi's unrated splatter classic *Evil Dead II* (1987) was edited for TV (or, as the opening disclaimer memorably phrased it, “Severely Edited For Television”), though the resulting version still proved too strong for US networks and only ever aired south of the border on Mexican television.⁶

As such, it was not surprising when *RoboCop*, a huge hit that had already spawned a children's cartoon series produced by Marvel the following year, eventually aired in a compromised version. What was surprising was the extent to which the TV version arguably bolstered the film's growing fanbase, and the

fondness with which it is still often remembered despite the unrated director's cut being available at the click of a button today.

On February 11th 1990, *RoboCop* had its US network television premiere as the Sunday Night Movie on ABC. (An early teaser for *RoboCop 2* played during a commercial break, four months before the film's world premiere.) A disclaimer played before the film started: "Although edited for television, tonight's film contains scenes of violence that may be too intense for young viewers. Parental discretion is advised." The limits of US network TV violence would be pushed throughout the 1990s by series like *Twin Peaks* (1989-1991) and *The X-Files* (1993-2002), but at the start of the decade, standards meant that *RoboCop* had to be significantly revised for family friendly viewing.

The version aired on ABC made significant use of alternate takes either ingeniously lifted from cutting room outtakes or shot specifically for television audiences. Changes included (but were not limited to):

- The police station locker room scene was optically reframed to crop out all nudity, both male and female.
- Kinney's death utilised an alternate take where, instead of bloody squibs exploding on his body, actor Kevin Page just mimes being shot, without any squibs.
- The scene where Lewis happens upon Joe urinating in the warehouse was re-edited to remove all sight of the urine stream, with the accompanying sound effect also reduced in the mix.
- Murphy's death was inevitably re-edited the most. In addition to removing numerous shots of him being fired upon, the ABC version uses alternate angles keeping the removal of his hand (and subsequent stump) out of frame, and cropping and darkened re-grading were also

liberally deployed to tone down the amount of blood shown. The biggest change was that Basil Poledouris' music cue "The Dream" was laid over the scene to mitigate the stark, haunting impact of the unscored original.

- Alternate angles and cropping were used to hide the gorier shots as hospital staff attempt to revive Murphy.
- Alternate angles of a gun muzzle firing were used to hide the convenience store robber visibly mouthing "Fuck me!" as he fires (which is overdubbed as "Why me?!").
- All sight of the attempted rapist's bloody crotch was edited out.
- Bob Morton and his friend Walker discussing and ultimately being confronted by Dick Jones in the executive washroom was re-edited to remove all shots of Jones' feet as he sits in the stall listening (he is first shown standing outside the stall), using alternate angles to hide this as well as one where Walker's stain on his trousers is not visible.
- An alternate introductory shot of the nightclub scene which omits any topless female nudity. Leon subsequently kicking RoboCop in the crotch is cropped out.
- All shots of cocaine use in Bob's living room were removed (the scene starts with an alternate angle of one of the women to hide this), and alternate angles were used in place of the gunshots to Bob's leg.
- In addition to an alternate take of Clarence putting the money on Sal's desk where he snorts drugs off-screen instead of on, the subsequent drug factory shootout uses several alternate shots to lessen the impact of the violence.

- The two scenes of Clarence spitting blood – onto RoboCop’s visor and later on Sergeant Reed’s desk – use alternate takes where Kurtwood Smith spits saliva instead of blood.
- Several shots of RoboCop being fired upon by the SWAT team were removed.
- When Emil emerges from the van covered in toxic waste, the scene was re-edited so that his melting form is never seen from the front. When he subsequently accosts Leon, it was again re-edited so that you never see melting Emil from the front, followed by a different angle of Leon running away in horror.
- The most notorious alternate footage – instead of Emil turning into a goopy mess on Clarence’s windshield, Clarence instead drives around Emil, avoiding him completely!
- Clarence’s death uses alternate takes with no blood shooting out of his neck. RoboCop pulling the iron spike out of his shoulder is also shown from a different angle.
- Dick’s death uses alternate takes with bloodless squibs.

Much of the profanity-laden dialogue was dubbed over. A representative sample of the dialogue includes:

THEATRICAL CUT

TV VERSION

Your client's a scumbag, you're a scumbag, and scumbags see the judge on Monday morning!	Your client's a sleazebag, you're a sleazebag, and sleazebags see the judge on Monday morning!
Lewis! Come here when you've finished fucking around with your suspect!	Lewis! Come here when you've finished playing around with your suspect!

<p>You burnt the fucking money! ...It's as good as marked you asshole, you stupid, stupid asshole!</p>	<p>You burnt the freaking money! ...It's as good as marked you dunce, you stupid, stupid moron!</p>
<p>Shut the fuck up and do it, just do it!</p>	<p>Shut your face up and do it, just do it!</p>
<p>I used to call the old man funny names. "Iron butt". "Boner". Once I even called him... "asshole".</p>	<p>I used to call the old man funny names. "Iron butt". "Bumbler". Once I even called him... a lot worse.</p>
<p>- You just fucked with the wrong guy! - You're out of your fucking mind!</p>	<p>- You just finked on the wrong guy! - You're out of your freaking mind!</p>
<p>- Sorry, Sarge. I fucked up. - Forget it kid; this guy's a serious asshole.</p>	<p>- Sorry, Sarge. I messed up. - Forget it, kid; this guy's a serious airhead.</p>
<p>- I've got the muscle to shove this factory so far up your stupid wop ass that you'll shit snow for a year. - Frankie, blow this cocksucker's head off!</p>	<p>- I've got the muscle to shove this factory so far up your stupid fat nose that you'll blow snow for a year. - Frankie, blow this bloodsucker's head off!</p>
<p>Goddamn it! Listen to me! Listen to me, you fuck!</p>	<p>Leave me alone! Listen to me! Listen to me, you fool!</p>
<p>Your company built the fucking thing - now I've gotta deal with it? I don't have time for this bullshit!</p>	<p>Your company built the freaky thing - now I've gotta deal with it? I don't have time for you big shots!</p>
<p>Nobody popped my cherry!</p>	<p>Nobody pushed me around!</p>

- Give it up faggot! - Hey butthead, get your own!	- Give it up maggot! - Hey bozo, get your own!
Die, you bastard!	Die, you monster!



This version of the film instantly gained notoriety among existing fans, and no doubt helped the film gain younger fans too. Things, however, took a bizarre turn – after a handful of other airings in the early-90s, the ABC version was replaced by a *second* TV edit of the film. While this new version retained about half of the swearing dubs from the ABC airings, many others were replaced with even more inexplicable alternatives:

THEATRICAL CUT

TV VERSION

Your client's a scumbag, you're a scumbag, and scumbags see the judge on Monday morning!	Your client's a crumb-bag, you're a crumb-bag, and crumb-bags see the judge on Monday morning!
Lewis! Come here when you've finished fucking around with your suspect!	Lewis! Come here when you've finished fooling around with your suspect!

You burnt the fucking money! ...It's as good as marked you asshole, you stupid, stupid asshole!	You burnt the money! ...It's as good as marked you dipstick, you stupid, stupid doofus!
I used to call the old man funny names. "Iron butt". "Boner". Once I even called him... "asshole".	I used to call the old man funny names. "Iron butt". "Bonehead". Once I even called him... "airhead".
Your company built the fucking thing - now I've gotta deal with it?! I don't have time for this bullshit!	Your company built the freaky thing - now I've gotta deal with it?! I don't have time for this baloney!
Die, you bastard!	Die, you blaggard!

Similarly, while some alternate footage is retained, much is not (including, most lamentably, Clarence swerving to avoid Emil), with some of the original violence from the Theatrical Cut being reinstated in its place. Among some notable alternate material not seen in the ABC version:

- An alternate take of the police station locker room scene has the topless actress instead facing sideways with her bulletproof jacket covering her breasts. (More recent airings use the theatrical take, but with a black bra digitally imposed over the nudity.)
- While some of Murphy's death uses the alternate footage from the ABC version (most notably the different takes of his reaction to his hand being blown off), much of it otherwise plays out as per the Theatrical Cut.
- A different re-edit of the Bob/Walker conversation in the executive washroom, where Jones' feet in the stall are shown and Walker exits off-screen.

- When Clarence rings the doorbell at Bob's house, there is a cutaway to the door to hide shots of cocaine use.
- Clarence hits Emil with his car, but most of Emil's disintegration is cut, with an alternate shot of Clarence's reaction utilised instead.
- Other alternate takes for Clarence's death throes and RoboCop pulling the iron spike out of his shoulder.

The earliest known airing of the second version occurred in the UK, when the film received its 'terrestrial' TV premiere on ITV on March 19th 1994. Fans were shocked to see a censored version airing at 10pm (past the 9pm 'watershed' for explicit content), but when this version was later shown again in an 8pm slot, a write-in campaign eventually convinced ITV to use the theatrical version (albeit with minor cuts) for subsequent broadcasts. Years later, many fans would swear that ITV once broadcast the censored version in the middle of a Saturday afternoon, but it appears the 8pm showing was being conflated with a broadcast of *RoboCop: The Series*, which did air on Saturday afternoons.

It is this second version that has roughly served as the basis of every TV edit distributed since, including those licensed for syndication by MGM from the early-2000s to the present day. Other than further bespoke cuts to content by the TV stations airing it, some broadcast masters are missing much of the Mediabreaks (including the fake commercials) and the scene of Leon being arrested in the nightclub, while others omit the convenience store robbery scene. Regardless, airings of the edited for television version have become more and more scarce as more TV channels have upgraded to widescreen HD (a high def master of the TV cut does not exist), the few stations still airing 'old' films usually electing to air either the Director's or Theatrical cuts.

One could argue that *RoboCop* the film has undergone a similar arc to its eponymous protagonist: mutilated in its early stages, its surviving parts

reorganised into other forms, and finally restored to something approaching its original glory. Regardless of which version you choose, the film remains as stirring and cathartic as ever – just with differing degrees of viscera to suit your own individual level of squeamishness.

Special thanks to Kevin C. Hart for his invaluable assistance in researching this essay.

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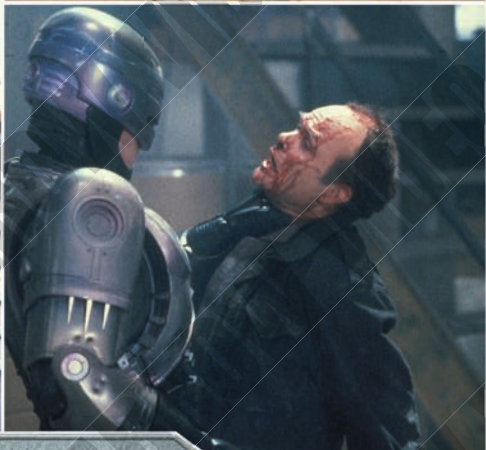
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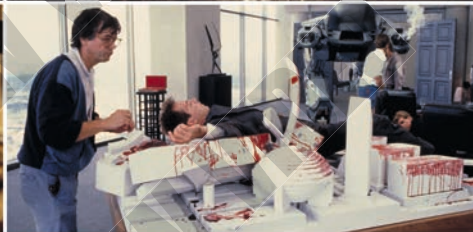
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ABOUT THE TRANSFER

RoboCop was restored by MGM in 2013 and is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with 5.1, 4.0 and stereo 2.0 audio.

The original camera negative was scanned in 4K and all grading and restoration was completed in 4K. The grade and final restoration was approved by director Paul Verhoeven, as well as executive producer Jon Davison and co-writer/co-producer Edward Neumeier. All audio tracks were remastered from the original mag sound elements.

As the original camera negative only corresponds to the original R-rated theatrical version of the film, at the time of MGM's restoration, additional print elements were sourced to make up the additional or alternate shots in the Unrated Director's Cut version. Since these inserts were scanned from lower-generation positive elements due to the negatives for these sequences being lost, there is an unavoidable subtle shift in picture quality throughout these scenes. We sincerely hope these shifts do not affect your enjoyment of the overall film.

The original 4.0 and stereo theatrical mixes were remastered for this Blu-ray from the original audio stems at Deluxe Audio, in addition to the "Final Theatrical Mix" Isolated Score audio option.

Lastly, additional film elements of the TV Cut version supplied by MGM were scanned at EFILM and graded in 2K at R3Store Studios and are included on the *RoboCop: Edited For Television* featurette on this release. The full TV Cut presented on Disc 2 was transferred from an original DigiBeta broadcast master tape.

The restored 4K master and all additional elements provided by
MGM/Scott Grossman.

Additional restoration and audio remastering work supervised by
James White and James Flower, Arrow Films

R3Store Studios: Gerry Gedge, Jo Griffin, Nathan Leaman-Hill, Rich Watson

EFilm: David Morales

Deluxe Audio: Jordan Perry

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **James Flower**
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
QC **Nora Mehenni, Alan Simmons**
Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**
Blu-ray Mastering **Fidelity In Motion**
Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**
Design **Oink Creative**

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