

# A Case Study on Film Authorship: Exploring the Theoretical and Practical Sides in Film Production

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## Abstract

*Film authorship has been a topic of debate in film theory since the Cahiers du Cinema critics first birthed auteur theory. Andrew Sarris used this theory to categorize directors based on their level of artistic authorship, solidifying the idea that a director is the sole author of a film. In The Schreiber Theory, David Kipen argues that a writer is responsible for creating the world of the movie and should be considered the author of a film. However, collaborative theories, such as those proposed by Paul Sellors, provide a more practical framework for studying film authorship. Rarely are any film authorship theories compared with specific examples. To compare theory to practice, this research took a two-fold approach. First, theory is explored through primary and secondary sources to give a background and understanding of the main arguments in authorship. Second, this research documents the production of two feature films (Blade Runner & The Man Who Killed Don Quixote) as case studies through analysis of in-depth documentaries. By examining these productions, this study observes theory in practice rather than studying the finished products.*

## I. The Problem of Authorship

“Authorship does matter,” says Janet Staiger, because it addresses the issue of acknowledging credit behind a motion picture (Gerstner and Staiger 27). When addressing the responsible parties for a film, it is important to know why such analysis is needed. Whether it be an issue of credit when it comes to major awards or discovering the reason why a production failed, it can be paramount to know who is responsible for the creation of a film. Film authorship theories fall into one of three categories: auteur, writer, or collaborative. Classic auteur theory has commanded much of film scholar debate since the 1960s. Although outcries against auteur theory have been published since 1963 (Gerstner and Staiger 9), writer and collaborative theories have not been given the same serious thought (Kipen 17). While critics and scholars can debate for eternity on topics of authorship, the real issue is what filmmakers actually practice during production (Tomasulo 114). An examination of film authorship should cover the evolution of authorship theory from the 1960s to the present.

Feature films are never made by a single person. From the writer to the director to the studio executives, many ideas and hours of hard work go into collaborating on a film production. It is important to know that one theory of authorship will not answer the question for all films. However, opening the discussion and studying films and filmmakers will make the reality of theory more visible (Tomasulo 114). In addition, instruct-

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ing future filmmakers in the processes of established craftsman and artists in the industry can “confirm the value of theoretical inquiry” through the practice of theoretical concepts (Tomasulo 116). Studying the work of filmmakers is one way to improve the production value of a film. In this sense, the study and application of film theory will also inform and improve a production.

Due to the nature of the filmmaking process, film often aligns with a more collaborative form of authorship than other artistic media. While some films are recognized for their directing or writing style, their true authorship lies in the intentionality of the collective that produced the final product. The art department’s contribution is arguably no less important than the camera department’s in bringing the story to the big screen. Even the director’s and producer’s power on set may be debatable considering the impact of actor input, assistant director’s duties, and technicians’ crafting. Therefore, the following paper will examine major authorship theories, building towards a collaborative theory of authorship.

## II. Auteur Theory

At its heart, auteur theory promotes the director as the author of a motion picture (Gerstner and Staiger 8). Behind every movie lies a director with a vision. The director gives the motion picture “any distinctive quality it may have” (Grant 31). Many motion pictures are extensively guided by a director from script to completion and are considered the work of that director. Concept artist Syd Mead said, “The director is God in film” (Dangerous Days). For instance, Alfred Hitchcock’s films are recognizable not only for their story and stylistic elements but also for his standardized production method (Carringer 374). Hitchcock is “universally acknowledged as the world’s foremost technician” and his form “does not merely embellish content, but actually creates it” (Truffaut 17). It is this combination of high technical skill and artistry that makes an auteur. Hitchcock was known for creating detailed storyboards for each of his shots and both experimenting with and implementing filmmaking and storytelling conventions.

When French New Wave critic Francois Truffaut published the auteur theory in the *Cahiers du Cinema* in 1954, it took the world of film criticism by storm (Grant 55). The origins of auteurism can be traced to the article Truffaut wrote, titled “A Certain Tendency in French Cinema” (Caughie 23). In this article, Truffaut explains where he believes American filmmakers have succeeded and where the French have not. The French critics for the *Cahiers* were concerned with not only elevating film itself as an art but also naming American filmmakers as artists. At the time, auteurism was a uniquely American trait from the French critics’ perspective. The French critics became particularly interested in American filmmakers because of their focus on visual narrative and strong heroes (Hess 52). Two strong film genres coming from the U.S. at the time were film noir and westerns, both of which display independent and masculine heroes. It was the way American directors rose above and beyond the genres that fascinated their European counterparts (Hillier 32). What fascinated the French critics was when an American director took a genre movie with a basic story and created compelling characters with an interesting story that amounted to more artistically than its parts would lead a viewer to believe. The critics often discuss this in reference to noirs and westerns where the protagonist became more than the independent macho personality so cliché in both genres.

According to Truffaut, an auteur transforms the film into something personal, “an expression of his own personality” (Caughie 23). Jacques Rivette made a similar argument, saying that an auteur, rather than being at the mercy of a good or bad script, can take the material and turn it into his work (Hillier 38). The original French version of auteur theory was the idea of making a film distinct to the director by infusing ideas of his own into the characters and story beyond what the script required. Jean-Luc Godard, in his article “Sufficient Evidence,” shows that despite the “conventional scenario” of a film, an auteur will probe stereotypes and archetypes to turn them into “living beings” (Hillier 48). This is why the French critics were so obsessed with filmmakers like Alfred Hitchcock because of his tendency to add personal expression throughout his filmography (Truffaut 314). In fact, idolizing of Hitchcock led Truffaut to conduct an extensive, in-depth interview with the filmmaker and allowed him to publish it as Hitchcock. Truffaut holds that a filmmaker, like any artist, fundamentally tries to show his audience how to understand themselves through artistic expression (Truffaut 20). Rather than a theory of authorship, Truffaut’s auteur theory argued that a director is an artist rather than a technician (Hess 50). His interviews with Hitchcock revealed the director to be a deeply emotional man who “feels with particular intensity the sensations he communicates to his audience” (Truffaut 15). This would make Hitchcock more than a craftsman or technician and elevate him as an artist. Alexandre Astruc wrote

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a later article addressing the “camera-stylo” as he termed it, which compares the director’s camera to an author’s pen (Caughie 24). This comparison led to the idea that a director is the sole authorship force behind a film. In addition, the interpretation of Truffaut’s and Rivette’s articles spawned the idea that only auteurs or cineastes (one who has a passionate interest in cinema) were capable of making a film truly their own. Other directors were unable to disguise the fact that authorship lay elsewhere. For example, directors are heavily influenced by the writer of the script or the studio that financed the project (Caughie 24). The French critics would not consider these directors auteurs.

In conjunction with the destabilization of the studio system and a greater emphasis on directors rather than studios, auteur theory came to command major attention in film theory for the better part of the last several decades as well as dominate critical and public notions of film authorship (Grant 111). Due to improved international relations after World War II, the French were introduced to a whole body of American cinema at one time, and they quickly embraced the American individualism portrayed in films by Howard Hawks, Orson Welles, and John Ford (Hess 51). American film critic Andrew Sarris whole-heartedly adopted auteur theory and wrote extensively on the topic, interpreting it for the American world of film theory and pushing auteurism to the narrow, director-focused theory for which it became known (Caughie 9). Charles Eckert argues that works by Sarris and Peter Wollen would have been a “mere eddy” in auteur criticism if other critics and theorists had not clung so whole-heartedly to their assertions (Grant 103). The Cahiers had to devote a lot of time and space “dissociating from the excesses committed in its name” (Caughie 23)

Critics in film theory seek to give credit to the creator of the emotional and psychological impact of a film (Macgowan 308). Auteur theory gives critics a way to associate film authorship to a single entity. The moments, scenes, and sequences that impact the audience are the work of the director because he is responsible for working with the talent, cinematographer, and editor to tell a story that he sees in his head. Allowing the director to see his own version of a scene could let him create a more artistically personal film, which the French critics relished. The auteur critics also emphasized performers’ performances over acting ability, noting the director’s likeness to a psychological therapist who was able to tease out the performances like confessions in group therapy (Hess 52). He is the conductor that approves the artistry of all the separate pieces involved in the production (Grant 191).

Because of the popularity of auteur theory and proof that directors are able to make money through control and personal expression, studios began to give their directors more control over their films after the 1950s (Grant 186). Because of this industry-wide shift, auteur theory began to evolve with the industry. Instead of an auteur’s status being defined by “overcoming barriers to personal expression,” a director’s auteurism became defined by the nature of that expression: the director’s auteur thumbprint (Grant 187).

One should consider the director in discourse concerning his work in order to find the truth behind critics’ assumptions of his decisions and actions (Grant 30). The traditional “low tech” method for auteur analysis involves examining a director’s work “until patterns begin to emerge” (Kipen 51). The Hollywood auteur filmmaker “existed once discovered by the rigorous critic” (Gerstner and Staiger 9). Auteur analysis relies heavily on the subjective observations of the critic through extensive viewing of the filmmaker’s work. Sarris held that auteur theory served two purposes: to classify films and to give them value as works of art (Caughie 27). Observing whether or not a film was created by an auteur could determine whether the film fit into high or low art categories, in Sarris’s opinion.

However, even from its beginning, the auteur theory faced opposition. More recently, theorists have delved into the cultural context in which the French New Wave critics birthed the auteur theory in order to explain the original idea as well as revise it for contemporary critique (Naremore 14). Specifically, after World War II, Europe was flooded with American films, so the French were exposed to a cornucopia of American filmmaking. The French critics’ fascination with American films has been attributed to their lack of exposure during the years of the war.

Even the critics themselves tried to separate themselves from the more radical adherents to the theory. André Bazin, a critic with the Cahiers du Cinema, wrote, “The evolution of Western art towards personalization should definitely be considered a step forward, but only so long as...[it] doesn’t claim to define culture” (Caughie 26). Bazin hoped to correct for the outbreak in director-centrism that sprung out of the Cahiers love for American directors. Rather than pushing to extremes in the way Andrew Sarris did, the Cahiers critics chose to instead attribute directorial genius to other factors including industry environment and historical contexts (Caughie 27). As mentioned previously, Sarris argued that auteur films gave them more value within society than other films. Bazin argues the theory should not be used in this way because it perverts the entire

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idea the creators had in mind. However, Sarris's notion became more popular in the public eye when used on popular and well-known directors, such as the ones analyzed previously.

Critic and theorist Pauline Kael wrote that Sarris's breakdown of the auteur theory in "Notes on Auteur Theory" (1962) relies on "incongruous premises and incorrect assumptions" (Grant 54). Kael considered Sarris to "lack rigor" and be "undisciplined" (Gerstner and Staiger 9). Some theorists hold Sarris in a similar position to the French New Wave critics with their star-struck criticism and Sarris's unwavering dedication to the Hollywood director. Many critics agree that auteur theory is fraught with logical problems (Kipen 63). For example, auteurism unnaturally elevates the director's place within production and judges films based on their director rather than as an individual artistic work (Gerstner and Staiger 39). Even the original writers of auteurism did not intend it as theory of cinema; this was an interpretation perpetrated by Sarris (Grant 76). In fact, Thomas Schatz claims auteurism "would not be worth bothering with if it hadn't...effectively [stalled] film history and criticism in a prolonged state of adolescent romanticism" (Braudy and Cohen 524). Graham Petrie says auteurism evades "all the sordid and tedious details of power conflicts and financial interests that are an integral part of any major movie project" (Grant 110). On a movie set, the director's word is art, but the producer's word is law. The producer keeps a film on budget and on time, if he's doing his job. The director works for the producer unless they are the same person. Therefore the producer curbs the director's vision—his authorship. It is "naïve and often arrogant" to assume the director is the only author that matters in the filmmaking process (Grant 112).

Eckert complains there is "so much oversimplification, obtuseness, and downright unfairness running through the whole debate" (Grant 103). Historically, critics have attempted to design formulas and methods with which to recognize auteurs separately from others. However, these methods "dumb down" the art into a matter of numbers and tally marks that destroy the purpose of analysis: to better appreciate the artistry present. Eckert holds that while coding as part of a "careful, logical system" can assist the critic in his research, there are too many variables to simply lay conclusions down as immutable law (Grant 105).

### III. Writer Theory

Holding generally the supremacy of the director in the construction of a film, auteur theory ignores the writers, the studios, and the collaboration that goes into completing a motion picture project. David Kipen considers his Schreiber—Yiddish for writer—theory to be worthy of the same consideration as auteur theory because it considers the party who creates rather than tells the story (17). In *The Schreiber Theory* (2006), Kipen lays out one of the most "radical rewrites" of authorship theory (19). Irving Thalberg said, "The writer is the most important person in Hollywood" (Kipen 13). Since Andrew Sarris's "Notes on Auteur Theory" (1962), anti-auteur critics have espoused screenwriters as the authors for their contribution to conception and drafting of the story (Kipen 29).

In the silent film era, a director's power over story was unquestionable due to a lack of any real screenplay (Macgowan 307). Early screenwriting obviously drew from theater, but it was also influenced by cartoons and slideshows (Azlant 228). In 1889, the Biograph studio separated writing as its own "branch of production" (Azlant 230). Around the turn of the century, filmmakers began to move beyond simple outlining to a more complex narrative structure (Azlant 231). For the first time, filmmakers began to see writing the story as an integral part of the filmmaking process. One of the first screenwriters, Roy McCardell, was paid a "princely sum" of \$150 per week: an average \$125 more than the average newspaper man (Azlant 233).

A narrative film must begin with a screenplay (Hatfield 2). Simply put, one cannot build a skyscraper without a blueprint. So who writes the story? As basic as it may sound, the individual or group who put the words to paper creates the story. A writer is the architect of the movie, while the director and his crew are the foreman and construction workers. Buildings are credited to their architect, not their builder. A critic cannot assume that the director's contribution is "automatically of major significance" (Grant 111). The original French auteur critics began to find more interest in a film's script than its direction once they began making films of their own (Grant 112). As they began writing and directing their own productions, the critics saw the importance a script had on the outcome of a film. Kipen even gives credence to director John Huston for his great understanding of novellas as premiere works from which to adapt films and names him a "schreiberist" filmmaker for his credit as a writer-director (Kipen 26).

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In response to Sarris's pantheon, critic Richard Corliss created his own list of great film writers. Corliss surveyed writers' works for "themes and idiosyncrasies" that made each writer unique (Kipen 27). These "schreiberist" writers include classic names like Ben Hecht, with a filmography including *Scarface* (1932), *His Girl Friday* (1939), *Monkey Business* (1952) and Academy Award-winning *Underworld* (1927). Hecht infused his "trademark cynicism and racy vitality" in all of his work (Kipen 27). Hecht worked repeatedly with director and producer Howard Hawks because of their similar view on character and cinematic language (Liukkonen). Hecht would go on to work uncredited with Hawks on other projects. Hecht recognized the writer's place in Hollywood movies when he said, "Writing a good movie brings a writer about as much fame as steering a bicycle. It gets him, however, more jobs" (Liukkonen). Hecht's opinion represents the position of a writer in director-focused Hollywood.

However, writer theory breaks apart on the issues of creative control. Once a script is sold, the writer loses control of the final outcome of their idea. Directors are free to rework, edit, and interpret a screenplay "nearer to their heart's desire" (Macgowan 307). Writers often have no control in the interpretation of their story (Sellors 266). In *Blade Runner*, once Ridley Scott was given the script, he was able to ask for rewrites and edits that fit his vision rather than the writer's (*Dangerous Days*). Scott and producer Michael Deeley brought on another screenwriter—David Peoples—to continue work on Hampton Fancher's original script. They wanted to simplify a concept that had become too "cerebral" (*Dangerous Days*). Fancher was adamantly against going "commercial" with *Blade Runner*, but he admits that the movie would not have happened unless he gave up control (*Dangerous Days*). Unless the writer is also director, he is at the mercy of the director to carry out the vision of the screenplay. As mentioned previously, Kubrick exerted heavy control over his screenplays, even to the point of discounting writing partners like Jim Thompson (Naremore 68). Another key example is *The Searchers* (1956), written by Frank Nugent and directed by John Ford. There are "sharp differences between what is in the screenplay and what we now see on screen" because Ford's directorial vision took control of the process from the outset (Eckstein 3). "Crucial scenes" were deleted from the script on set and new ones were added (Eckstein 4).

Corliss notes that screenwriters suffer from being credited for no work, not being credited for work, and multiple writers being credited for the same work (Kipen 28). This confuses the idea of writer authorship because it becomes harder to analyze writers as authors when there is no consistency to their credited contribution. While Kipen claims "collaboration doesn't preclude analysis," it makes it significantly more difficult to "give credit where credit is due" (Kipen 29).

## IV. Collaborative Theory

Paul Sellors claims that authorship—whether for novel, film, or fine art—is an issue of intention (264). He argues the causal party behind the communication of the media in question is the author. This concept is not exclusive to a single person, but rather, it can be applied broadly to the studio, the director, and the writer if they all play a part in producing the final product. The contributions of the cinematographer and the editor also cannot be ignored in bringing the moving image to the screen (Grant 111). Films are not created by a single consciousness (Grant 193). They come together as part of the collective effort by artists and technicians. Collective authorship comes from group intentionality moving towards a common goal (Sellors 268).

Sellors' concept of authorship comes from studies across media and disciplines that avoid the complications that film authorship presents (263). To Sellors, the author intentionally creates an utterance (Sellors 264). He defines utterance as an action of expression or communication. As applied to filmmaking, movies communicate a story. Therefore, the author(s) of a film is the party(s) who possesses the most intentionality behind the making of a film. Sellors then presents the issue of control: whether or not intentionality covers control. Sellors believes an intentional party will exert control in a production, and therefore, control does not need to be explicitly stated in defining authorship because it is implied (266). As to issues of lost control, Sellors concedes we are unable to add mechanisms to evaluate to what extent control was lost (266). A studio executive's power over a production is less tangible than an art director's. In instances like *Alien 3*, where Fincher lost control of the final outcome of his film, his authorship is diminished due to the studio exerting control and intentionality over him (Swallow 60). Because anecdotal evidence can indicate issues of control versus intentionality, it increases the difficulty in assigning authorship because of the varying and disparate inputs a film can have.

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Authorship comes from the “mutual interaction” between the world created and the creators (Gerstner and Staiger 12). While the writers, directors, and producers create the work, the cinematographers, editors, and animators create the world that we perceive as the work. It is through this interaction that we view a whole, and it is this whole that is authored by the talent and crew. Therefore, the perceived world of a film is a collaborative whole that is authored by multiple artists and craftsmen. Films have many components that come together in “some degree of coherency” (Sellors 268). This coherency is due to the audience’s perception of the whole rather than the parts. Rather than simply observing a camera angle, wardrobe choice, or an acting performance, the audience perceives the entire film as a single entity. This renders the director-centric theory of coherency hollow because the director’s contribution is only part of the whole we view (Sellors 268).

“The author is dead,” proclaims Michel Foucault (Caughie 282). Film is a primarily collaborative medium, so it would seem odd that theorists are constantly searching for the singular artist responsible for authorship (Gerstner and Staiger 5). Director-centric auteur theory could not even hold up Truffaut’s own films. The realization of Truffaut’s vision in *Four Hundred Blows* (1959) “necessitated...the use of an experienced screenwriter, a leading cinematographer, and a youthful surrogate [actor]” to bring Truffaut’s biographical story to screen (Carringer 374). In fact, critics now recognize motion pictures having plural authors rather than a singular artistic force (Carringer 374). One must suspend the idea of single authorship in order to properly analyze a production from a collaborative standpoint (Carringer 377). This suspension allows the critic to explore performers, production staff, and even the studio backing the project as co-artists for the motion picture. It also directly contradicts both auteur and Schreiber theories of film authorship. However, collaborative theory prevents a critic from falling into the dogmatic pitfalls and harsh criticism faced by Sarris for being too narrow and simple in his assignment of authorship.

Collaboration theory also accounts for the contribution each artist or craftsman makes to the film, including above-the-line (director, producer, leading actors) and below-the-line jobs (grips, gaffers, extras) (Gerstner and Staiger 41). While certainly a motion picture’s personality can be linked to its major creators—director, producer, leading actors—all those who contribute play a part in its nuances that may go unnoticed by simple pattern analysis (Grant 80). While a visionary director like Ridley Scott may draw up his own set designs and be integral in the creation of those sets, he will certainly not build the entire set by himself (*Dangerous Days*). The producer can be considered the most responsible party in the production of a film because his or her role demands gathering the cast and crew necessary to pull off the production (Movie Staff). Once the necessary craftsman are in place, the producer becomes in charge of logistics rather than storytelling; this role falls to the director and to whom he chooses to delegate certain tasks. However, the producer retains rights of the film; the crew does not (Movie Staff). The production designer delegates set, costume, and makeup design to the necessary departments in order to carry out the director’s and the producer’s vision (Movie Staff). The director of photography oversees the camera and lighting crews and makes what the director sees in his or her head work in the lens of the camera. Perhaps multiple writers collaborate on writing a film, like Hitchcock’s *Suspicion* (Worland 7).

Like a sports team, a film crew creates a collective intention when each individual joins the group with the same goal in mind (Sellors 268). This means that a film crew, including craftsmen and talent, can become an “author” for Sellors’s definition of authorship. Their intentionality renders them a “filmic author” capable of creating an artistic product. Sellors concedes that not all roles will be included in collective authorship, such as catering services. A member of collective authorship must be an “actual or potential member of a cooperative activity” (Sellors 269). Not only this, but authorship is dependent on contribution. To determine authorship in the collective, one must ascertain an individual’s contributions to the overall film and how it relates to the final product (Sellors 270). This relates back to the earlier concept of the interaction of the world created by the work and the work itself. While a single set-builder’s contribution may be physically small, the set piece’s impact on the film may be significant; therefore, the set-builder’s contribution is significant.

Of course, as we continue to break down the complexities of collaborative authorship, we begin to run into similar problems faced by Schreiber theory. It is easier to point to above-the-line cast and crew for authorship for their major contribution to a production rather than dig deep into the credits to explain collective authorship. While collective authorship is much more pleasing to a realist studying film, more specific authorship is needed to effectively discuss a film in literature such as film reviews. Auteur and Schreiber theory present much simpler ways of discussing authorship in the academic and public spheres because of their ease of understanding and lack of need for empirical research.

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## V. Confounding Variables

Schatz argues that films attributed to auteur directors are not “simply of individual human expression” but a product of studio executive and key crew influences (Braudy and Cohen 525). A film is a combination of talent, financial, and labor factors. Auteur critic Jean-Louis Comolli notes even “independent” films are subject to these influences (Braudy and Cohen 688). Therefore, films will always be subject to financial backers’ desires for stories to be told. If financiers don’t like a movie’s story, they will not fund it. This is inescapable. Sellors’s argument of intentionality then shifts to the position of choosing the financiers as the “authors” of a film, which few critics would recognize as an artistic force.

Just as unavoidable are the limitations of genre. Genres come from the action on which a film concentrates most of its attention (Braudy and Cohen 556). Early gangster films were defined as much by their genre as their writers and directors. The films followed given conventions and clichés in order to appeal to an audience and access a certain world in which the filmmakers wished to tell a story. Genre films have traditionally had very strong ties to the studios that produce them, making authorship very muddy (Braudy and Cohen 526). Pierre Kast, a contributor to the *Cahiers du Cinema*, says that “the distributors really control production and they display a complete lack of imagination” (Hillier 32). Studio authorship is evident in 1930’s gangster films predominantly produced by Warner Brothers (Grant 170). During this time, Warner Brothers produced a vast majority of the gangster films made, so their studio executives were able to control much of what went into the films to ensure they matched the studio’s brand. During the same time period, MGM was well known for big budget musical and dramatic productions. So, it is difficult to analyze authorship in this context because a major contributing factor is the studio’s niche. The mass production of films by studios can create a cookie-cutter effect, which blurs the lines of authorship between the studio and film crews.

Another limitation is the lack of data concerning filmmaker intention behind individual motion pictures. Noel Carroll wonders why critics would rather assume hypothetical theses rather than ask an author his actual intentions (Grant 173). Critics chose to limit themselves by not asking directors of their methods and concepts behind production. Truffaut and Schickel sought to remedy this by conducting interviews of Hitchcock and Scorsese, respectively. However, the depth of these analyses is rare, especially considering the number of directors in the industry. The Director’s Guild of America represents over 15,000 “members of the directorial team” (Director’s Guild of America). Comparatively, the amount of critical analysis of their directing methods are scarce to none.

## VI. Methods

This research will look at filmmakers Ridley Scott and Terry Gilliam through analysis of the feature length behind the scenes of documentaries *Dangerous Days* and *Lost in La Mancha*, respectively. It will analyze their methods using the above theories for a case study. Using these features, as compared to featurettes, allows a more comprehensive look at the film and the process. Summary of the production of these films also allows for a more in-depth and look at directors’ work, which is more in line with case study analysis.

Each case study will provide evidence for each director’s production methods. Interviews and scenes will be referenced to provide examples of auteur, Schreiber, or collaborative production methods. This evidence will then be compared to theory to provide practical support for said theory. Evidence will not be cited directly as it will draw from the documentary noted at the beginning of the section.

### ***Case Study: Blade Runner (as documented in Dangerous Days)***

#### **Preproduction**

The screenplay for *Blade Runner* was first penned by Hampton Fancher. Fancher was directed by a friend to the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick. He didn’t immediately like the novel, but saw its potential as a viable screenplay. Dick turned down Fancher’s first drafts because he felt the material was too “dumbed down” and did not reflect his original work. A mutual friend brought Fancher’s scripts to producer Michael Deeley, who chose the title *Blade Runner* for the film. After director Ridley Scott joined the project, he and Fancher began to disagree about the scope of the world set by the screenplay.

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Fancher also differed in opinion over the inclusion of an explicit sex scene in the film. Because of these disagreements, and Fancher's disagreements with Scott and Deeley, David Peoples joined the project as its second writer. Peoples notes that "Ridley was going to make it better, and I was doing his bidding." Deeley diffused Fancher's continued pleas to return to the elegance of his original script by saying, "This is what we need to do to make the movie."

Because of his background in art direction, Scott is known to micromanage his art department. Scott's first jobs in entertainment were as an art director for the BBC. This experience translates into his directing style, particularly on *Blade Runner*. Although Lawrence Paull was the production designer for the film, Scott micromanaged the art and design elements of the set. Scott would often go to the designers himself and approve their work without bothering with the proper hierarchy. Because of Scott's visual style, he felt this level of involvement was paramount to carrying out his vision. Scott would often deliver his own drawings and versions of set pieces to the art department to be made for the sets, rather than having a designer do this work. The one exception was the concept art rendered by Syd Mead. These renderings were done early in the design process and would come to majorly influence Scott's work, so Mead was brought onto the production in a more full-time capacity to design sets and props. When it came down to the production of set elements, Scott said, "You never get what you want." In Scott's eyes, the work of others didn't live up to his ideas. It was these desires of Scott's to bring his dreams to life that drove up costs for the film.

Early in the documentary, Scott said, "I'll get what I want. If you're with me, great. If not, too bad." This perspective on filmmaking is auteuristic and director-centric. As evidenced above, Scott takes a very strong and artistic vision for this production and doesn't allow much room for others to express themselves. Scott notes that the "landscape [set] is a character" in his films, and he wants it to receive the attention accordingly.

### **Production**

Actress Sean Young (playing the character of Rachel) says Scott was "very demanding" on set in both the acting and visual design. Special effects supervisor Douglas Trumbull said that if Scott wanted something, he got it. However, Deeley said Ridley's visual style came at a price, in both finances and morale. Scott's attention to visual elements meant his direction with the actors was lacking, especially with Harrison Ford. Young said Ford was never happy on set because he felt Scott was not giving him enough direction.

Scott's crew and producers agreed that he worked towards perfection, and in order to do that, he shot and printed a lot of takes. One of the film's financiers worried it was too many at the time. However, they came up against his vision, and Scott argued that they hired him for a reason. Scott said, "I don't like discussion. I know exactly what I want." He felt the director isn't meant to "stand there and consult with a dozen people." Dick Hart—lighting gaffer—called Scott an artistic director who liked things a certain way.

Due to Young's age and inexperience, Scott "talked her through" her performances. Scott said directing is a "delicate waltz" because you're dancing the line between realism and professionalism. In order to achieve this control in his scenes, Scott would place and block his actors specifically. While Ford's character in *Blade Runner* is recognized as his best, he did not agree with Scott's directing style. Scott even notes that the film "may be a team thing as well...[but] it's my movie."

### **Postproduction**

There were a lot of debates between Scott and the executives over what was allowed to remain and what had to be cut from the four-hour rough cut. The major shifts were from artistic and "cerebral," as Scott calls it, toward a more cinematic, more commercial experience. The editors complained "all the subtleties were taken out." Because initial rough cuts scared executive producers into making major changes to Scott's visions in the way of cutting scenes and adding a voiceover. Scott reportedly never agreed to the voiceover concept, even though this was an element of Fancher's original script. Ford never believed the voiceover would be used, and in the recording sessions commented the lines were "weird." In these sessions, Ford can be heard laughing after delivering certain lines, finding them ridiculous. Ford attempted to exert some control on the voiceover process by requesting changes. Scott and others felt the voiceover element was too on the nose compared to the film that *Blade Runner* was. However, Scott complied, thinking it would make his work more accessible to a movie-going public.

### **Breakdown**

Based on the evidence provided, we can see Ridley Scott as an auteur filmmaker based on his strict adherence to his personal artistic vision as well as desire to control production. There was little to no artistic collaboration. In fact, Scott only collaborated when the unions necessitated it. In the end, however, Scott

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came up against the confounding variables of the studio system mentioned previously. This did not, however, change his process or mindset. Rather, it was as if he disowned the early versions of *Blade Runner* until the “Final Cut” version came out.

### **Case Study: *Lost in La Manch* (the making of Terry Gilliam’s *Don Quixote*)**

#### **Preproduction**

The story of *Don Quixote* appeals to Terry Gilliam’s taste in film, as noted by his past films like *Brazil*, which features a character struggling against insurmountable odds without a firm grasp on reality. Early in preproduction, Gilliam made himself available to his crew for suggestions and questions to avoid “making a fool of [himself].” He relied on these other artists and craftsmen to turn his ideas into reality. Gilliam thought of himself as more of a resource rather than leader in production because he had been developing the project for so long. This is due in part to Gilliam’s role as writer-director, so he was a major creative force in the story phase of the film. However, moving into the design phase, Gilliam relied heavily on his art department to bring the story to life visually. Gilliam was not concerned with designing every element himself, but he did ask for changes when the designs conflicted with the story.

Facing budgetary and logistical constraints early on, Gilliam turned to his producer and assistant director to make things happen for the production. The assistant director was responsible for coordinating meetings between Gilliam and the busy actors, which led to collaborating sessions between Gilliam and these actors. The crew was in “sheer panic” approaching production because Gilliam was relying so hard on his crew to make things happen that weren’t happening, like finding a sound stage. When Gilliam finally brought in actor Johnny Depp, he allowed Depp to develop an opening scene to explain his character and give himself some back-story. This reinforced Gilliam’s original story by building on the characters he had designed. Commenting on the actors coming together and the sets and costumes finishing for production, Gilliam said, “It’s going to be beautiful.”

#### **Production**

When Gilliam arrived on set, his assistant director and art crew had already been working on setting the scene. However, it was Gilliam’s reliance on his crew that led to some initial problems. Scenes he believed to have been rehearsed with the extras had not been done because he allowed this duty to be taken by an assistant director. Gilliam believed in using his crew for the duties they were assigned rather than micro-managing over their shoulders. This collaborative effort made the process more cumbersome.

When the weather began to change unexpectedly, Gilliam consulted his local crew about how to proceed. They made suggestions based on their knowledge of the area and the weather. Instead of blundering ahead with his own ideas, he took their suggestions in stride to make the most of their production days. “There is a very clear plan,” he said, and he wanted to make the plan work with the help of his crew. Except for occasionally taking the camera under his own control, Gilliam defaulted to his experienced technicians to pull off the shots. He relied heavily on his assistant director to “hold this thing together” because of his [the assistant director’s] dedication to the project.

#### **Breakdown**

Because this film never made it to post production, we don’t know how Gilliam would have continued with his process. However, based on the evidence we can see that Gilliam is a more collaborative filmmaker, relying on the crew around him to create the world of the film. While Gilliam created the story, he was not a perfectionist about the visual elements. This left room for his cast and crew to bring their own ideas. This was a prime example of collaborative filmmaking both technically and artistically.

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