



**SILVERSCREEN
PRIMARY
EDUCATION**

The History of Science Fiction Cinema

By Adam Pepper

**Session 5:
1970s – Part 1**
*Body-snatching, Russian
sci-fi and eating people!*



Welcome to Session 5 of this 'History of Science Fiction Cinema'!

Over ten weeks, we will journey through space and time to uncover the secrets behind some of the greatest science fiction stories, movies, directors and characters as we try to uncover what science fiction really is, and where it blurs with our reality today.

Session 5:

In this week's session, we head into the 70s, a prolific time for revolutionary, iconic and powerful science fiction film.

With a heavy focus on the political unrest across the globe, and in particular in America, these films start to lean on environmental issues, the unchecked reach of the rich and powerful, and the paranoia carried over from the 50s and 60s.

But it also marks a huge stepping stone in the world of special effects. Building on the work of Kubrick's '2001', these films use physical effects within the film-making environment to create some of cinema's greatest ever science fiction moments.

It is also the decade where the emergence of a number of new exciting directors will ultimately change the face of science fiction film for years to come; Spielberg, Lucas, Scott and Carpenter.

'Star Wars' lays heavy across the landscape of 70s sci-fi, so this session will omit that film from the discussion, leaving us more time to study its impact and legacy next week.

For now, though, we can immerse ourselves in a wide, varied and exciting range of 'the other films' that drove us to the cinemas 50 years ago!

Useful information for Session 5:

Douglas Trumbull

Douglas Hunt Trumbull (April 8, 1942 – February 7, 2022) was an American film director and visual effects supervisor, who pioneered innovative methods in special effects. He created scenes for *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, *Blade Runner* and *The Tree of Life*, and directed the movies *Silent Running* and *Brainstorm*.

Trumbull was born in Los Angeles. His father was an aerospace engineer who had briefly worked in Hollywood creating visual effects for the 1939 movie *The Wizard of Oz*; his mother, who died when Trumbull was 7, was an artist. As a child, he liked to construct mechanical and electrical devices such as crystal-set radios, and enjoyed watching alien invasion movies. He initially wanted to be an architect, leading him to take classes in illustration. He studied technical drawing at El Camino Junior College and joined the Screen Cartoonists Guild upon graduating. However, Hollywood initially rejected his portfolio of spaceships and planetary drawings. Though his abilities in creating photorealistic art led to a job at Graphic Films, which produced short films for NASA and the Air Force.

Douglas Trumbull's early work was at Graphic Films in Los Angeles. The small animation and graphic arts studio produced a film called *To the Moon and Beyond* about spaceflight for the 1964 New York World's Fair. Trumbull, the son of a mechanical engineer and an artist, worked at Graphic Films as an illustrator and airbrush artist. He painted a

rotating spiral galaxy, and using a fish eye lens, projected the film onto a custom-built dome. The effect was groundbreaking for its time and the film caught the attention of director Stanley Kubrick, who was beginning work on the project that would become *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Kubrick hired director Con Pederson from Graphic Films and the company was to work on visual effects for the film. When Kubrick decided to move all production to England, he cancelled the contract with Graphic Films. Trumbull wanted to keep working on the film as he had already done considerable pre-production work, so he cold-called Kubrick after obtaining the director's home phone number from Pederson. Kubrick hired Trumbull and flew him to London for the production of *2001*.

Andrei Arsenyevich Tarkovsky

Andrei Tarkovsky (4 April 1932 – 29 December 1986) was a Russian film director and screenwriter. Widely considered one of the greatest and most influential directors in cinema history, Tarkovsky's films explore spiritual and metaphysical themes, and are noted for their slow pacing and long takes, dreamlike visual imagery, and preoccupation with nature and memory.

Tarkovsky studied film at Moscow's VGIK under filmmaker Mikhail Romm, and subsequently directed his first five features in the Soviet Union: *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), *Andrei Rublev* (1966), *Solaris* (1972), *Mirror* (1975), and *Stalker* (1979). A number of his films from this period are ranked among the best films ever made. After years of creative conflict with state film authorities, Tarkovsky left the country in 1979 and made his final two films abroad; *Nostalghia* (1983) and *The Sacrifice* (1986) were produced in Italy and Sweden respectively. In 1986, he also published a book about cinema and art entitled *Sculpting in Time*. He died later that year of cancer, a condition possibly caused by the toxic locations used in the filming of *Stalker*.



Films to look out for:

Colossus: The Forbin Project (1970)

Solaris (1972)

Silent Running (1972)

Soylent Green (1973)

Dark Star (1974)

Rollerball (1975)

Logan's Run (1976)

Capricorn One (1978)

Invasion Of The Bodysnatchers (1978)

Star Trek: The Motion Picture (1979)

Forthcoming Sessions:

- **1970s Part 2 – Star Wars, its legacy, its competitors and its impact on cinema**
- **1980s Part 1 – Spielberg, Carpenter, magical sfx and replicants**
- **1980s Part 2 – Cameron, Sandworms and T-1000s!**
- **1990s – Dinosaurs, meteorites, 'Welcome To Earth!' Bullet Time & 'Get Your Ass To Mars!'**
- **2000s – Worlds of Wonder**