



Exploring Logan's 23rd-Century World

The Complex society depicted in MGM's new *Logan's Run* is often visually breathtaking. But the situations sometimes are only partially represented. One is left hungry for more data and more meaning. Sometimes the information is there—but is glossed over so parenthetically that it fails to register. We here present a detailed excursion through Logan's world—stressing the delicious vocabulary developed for the novel and the film, and with material added from the novel to make the MGM world of the future more fully intelligible.

By BILL IRVIN

It's a world of full employment, stable population, plenty of ecologically balanced (vegetarian) food for all, freedom from political upheaval, freedom from family entanglements, with sex the national pastime ... and it's only for the young.

In the 23rd-Century world of *Logan's Run*, life is terminated automatically at age thirty—to make way for new citizens. There is no religion and hence no morbid superstition regarding death. But Logan (Michael York) does not want to die. He, and others like him, run—in an attempt to escape the inevitable.

How did such a world come into being? The movie offers no clue; but the novel—by William F. Nolan and George C. Johnson—explains that toward the beginning of the 21st Cen-

tury, there was a "Little War"—which wasn't a war at all. Its roots were in a period of student unrest combined with a population explosion and resultant famine.

The students who rose to power imposed their own solution: zero population growth accomplished by the thirty-year limit upon age.

Computer technology had reached such a highly-advanced state that all the functioning of the society could be placed in the hands of *The Thinker*—a vast computer complex that substituted for constitution, congress, and courts of law.

Logan lives in a world of absolute pleasure—and enslavement to a machine. (Incredibly, this is never spelled out in the movie; one can easily imagine human rulers off-screen somewhere acting as present-day programmers of the computer system.)

Living in massive hermetically sealed, pollution-free domes, the citizens' only awareness of time and date come from: the *lifeclock* in the arcade (the social center of town), and the *timeflower*—which is implanted in the palm of each new-born baby, and which is worn throughout life.

The *timeflower* is a radiant crystal that changes color to denote the allowable stages of life: white from infancy to age 8, yellow from 8 to 15, green from 15 to 22, and red from 22 to ten days before one's thirtieth birthday. For the last ten days, the *timeflower* blinks until *lastday* when it turns symbolically black.

Babies are conceived by *seed-mothers*, but the embryo is then incubated and raised in *nurseries*. The babies are handled by robots called *autogovernesses* and are given a sense of humanity in *loverooms*.

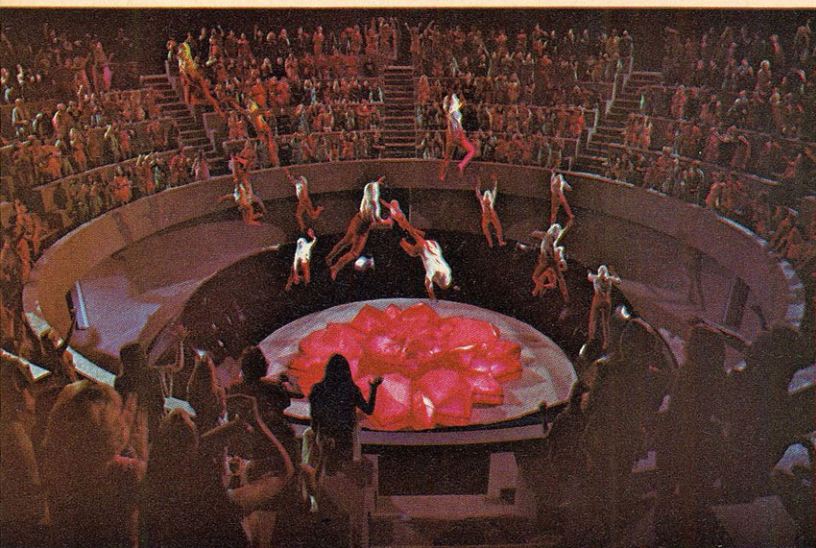
In line with the pleasure-orientation of this youthfully designed culture, there are *drug shops*, *love shops* (for anonymous promiscuous sex), and a plastic surgery center called the *New You Shop*.

In the *New You* emporium, laser surgery is performed on an *aesculaptor* equipped with a *cryoprojector servicer*.

Michael York (Logan) travels with Jenny Agutter (Jessica) via *maze car* through a confusing network of transparent tubes. All one needs to do is to tell *The Thinker*, the central computer, one's destination.

Right: For *Logan's Run's* "futuristic" interior settings, the cast and crew went to an actual location. These scenes were filmed inside a new shopping mall in Dallas, Texas.





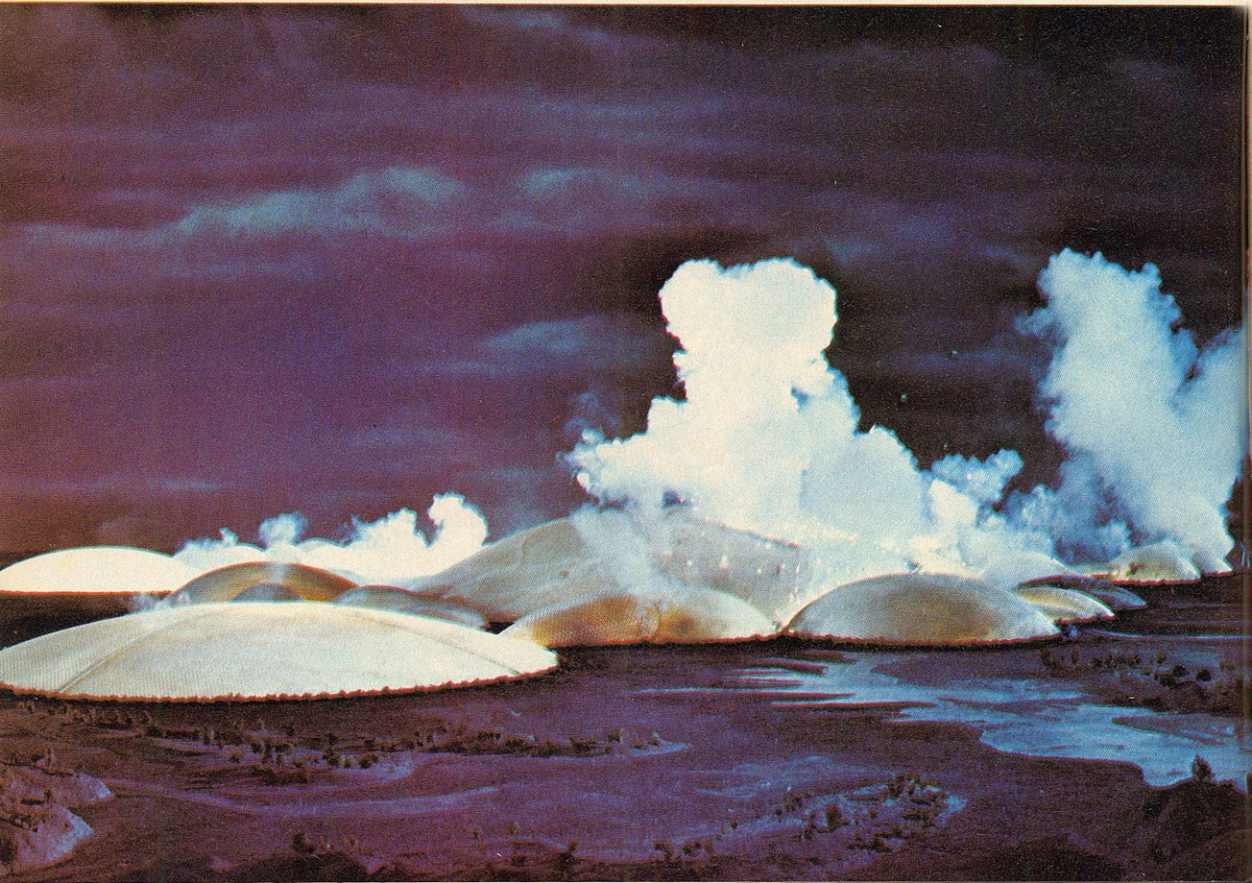
Above: In one of the most sensational scenes in the film, 30-year-old *Lastday* celebrants are cheered on by the spectators as they are spun upward toward *renewal* at *Carrousel*.

Below: As the "perfect" society of Logan's world begins to crumble, so does the physical world. The hermetically sealed domes over the city explode—leaving the people to find maturity and a natural death.

Power for the city is produced by a *hydro-galvanic system* which harnesses the energy of ocean waves. The system is maintained automatically, via the age-old method programmed into *The Thinker*.

The established order seems perfect, immutable, and inescapable. But there are those who do not succumb to the planned order. Criminals and misfits are not uncommon. And at each *lastday* ceremony in the *Carrousel* arena, *runners* can be anticipated. *Runners* reject the state's right to take their lives and attempt to escape to the imagined safety of *Sanctuary*. (In the book only, *Sanctuary* exists as an "underground" society situated at an abandoned space station near Mars.) The *runners* believe that the promise of *life renewal*—years added to their allowable life span—at *Carrousel* is but a cruel hoax; death is inevitable.

In a display of pageantry and almost mystical liturgy, citizens of *lastday* dress all in white, including face masks that make the participants anonymous to the watching crowds, and enter an elaborate enclosure that spins the participants upward toward a *rainbow ring* and "life renewal." It's a stunning effect



in the film! And appropriately chilling as the crowd cheers the participants on with gleeful enthusiasm.

There are other notable spectacles in this MGM city of the future. *Maze cars* move through transparent tubes under air pressure and transport citizens at high speeds throughout the vast modern domed city. Directions are given to the *maze cars* by voice command, and *The Thinker* handles movement and switching.

The Thinker also operates the numerous *scanners* that can examine any object or person to determine its history and identity.

The most photographically revolutionary scene is that in which Logan, under interrogation, has his mind fragmented into six separate parts and images. Through the use of actual holograms, we see Logan performing seven different speeches at the same time, with each facsimile acting independently.

The movie offers no explanation for the *Ice Room*—a weird and frightening surrealistic setting in which our heroes find themselves. In the novel, it is an ironic penal institution called *Hell*—situated in the Arctic Circle and made more grotesque by the existence of the half-man, half-machine:

Box. It is Box' function to carve beautiful statues in the ice for all there to "enjoy"—to make the starving freezing prisoners suffer their loss of civilization even more. The *runners* arrived there by making a wrong turn in their escape route.

The key to the movie's climax was also left out: the fact that a single well-placed blast of a ray gun could bring the walls tumbling down—if that shot were to destroy *The Thinker*.

The most regrettable omission from the movie is the book's theme.

The film merely said that it is inhuman to destroy people against their will, and perhaps without their knowledge, at the age of thirty. The novel, on the other hand, stressed the loss to society of *maturity*—the intellectuals and professionals over the terminal age, who might have prevented the world from coming apart at the seams!

The movie is certainly worthwhile. The adventure story of an escape and a chase is suspenseful and there are thought-provoking events along the way. But with only a smattering of greater detail and clarity, it might have been a much more important film. ★



Above: Peter Ustinov is the Old Man living in the ruins of Washington D.C. He is the first old person either of them has ever seen. They return with him to the domed city and cause its ultimate downfall.

Below: The city of the future in the film is protected from the weather by domes overhead. There's no pollution, no starvation, no political upheaval. Sex is free. Living longer than 30 years is the only crime.

