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ON DVD

Making a break in a loveless world

■ A long time ago, in a decade far, far away, George Lucas made his directorial debut with "THX 1138."

THX 1138 — the George Lucas Director's Cut

Warner Home Video, \$27 for two-disc collector's edition; \$20 for single disc with limited special features

Stars: Robert Duvall, Donald Pleasence



[Off their meds](#)
(Warner Bros.)

A long time ago, in a decade far, far away, George Lucas made his directorial debut with this clever, visually impressive 1971 sci-fi drama that was based on his award-winning University of Southern California student film.

Lucas says that he designed the film as a metaphor for the way the world was living when he made the film between 1969 and 1970. Consumerism, Lucas felt, was dominating the culture and people were losing sight of emotions and feelings.

The world in which "THX" is set is antiseptic and loveless. It's the 25th century, and the citizens of this underground universe have been stripped of their identity and turned into drones who are controlled by a government-enforced drug program. Robots with metallic faces police their world while sporting batons.

Duvall, in his first starring role, is impressive as THX 1138, a man toiling in a factory creating robots who finds his life forever changed when he and his roommate LUH 3417 (Maggie McOmie) stop taking drugs and fall in love. Because sex and emotion are forbidden in this world, the two are separated. THX is tortured, put on trial and sentenced to prison. But, determined to flee to find LUH, he transforms himself from a mindless, drugged-out zombie to a man desperate to be reunited with his love and leave his oppressive world behind.

Pleasance plays a manipulative man who illegally tries to get THX as his new roommate and is imprisoned for his actions.

Though far from flawless, "THX" has gotten richer over the decades.

Trivia: Originally released in 1971 with a GP rating [the equivalent today of a PG], "THX" now has an R rating because of the sex scenes.

Extras: The classy, compressive two-disc set is one of the best released this year. The first disc includes savvy commentary from Lucas and his frequent collaborator, sound editor Walter Murch, who also co-wrote the screenplay for "THX." There's also an isolated sound-effects track, as well as "master sessions" with Murch in which the Oscar winner talks about his innovative sound design.

Disc two features a terrific new documentary, "A Legacy of Filmmakers: The Early Years"



of American Zoetrope," narrated by Richard Dreyfuss, that explores the genesis of Francis Ford Coppola's visionary independent company; another exceptional new documentary, "Artifact from the Future: The Making of THX 1138"; Lucas' original student film "Electronic Labyrinth THX 1138 4EB"; and "Bad," a funny production featurette from 1971 chronicling the cast getting their heads shaved for their roles.

-- Susan King

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