

Search Movies or Showtimes by ZIP Code

Go

More in Movies »

[In Theaters](#) | [Coming Soon](#) | [Critics' Picks](#) | [On DVD](#) | [Tickets & Showtimes](#) | [Trailers](#) | [ArtsBeat](#)



Overview
Tickets & Showtimes
New York Times Review
Cast, Credits & Awards
Trailers & Clips

MOVIE REVIEW

Minority Report (2002)

FILM REVIEW; Halting Crime In Advance Has Its Perils

By ELVIS MITCHELL

Published: June 21, 2002

TWITTER

LINKEDIN

E-MAIL

PRINT

SHARE

Sydow). He's the director of the Pre-Crime law enforcement unit that causes so much trouble in Steven Spielberg's atmospheric new thriller, "Minority Report," a muscular and dense exercise of skill and verve. He's also the boss and mentor of the Pre-Crime chief, John Anderton (Tom Cruise).

Although a few things remain the same in 2054 -- people still touchingly wear glasses even though eye-replacement surgery is available -- much has changed. Pre-Crime exists to stop crimes before they are committed; Pre-Cogs, a trio of beings who float in a nutrient-rich fluid, can predict when a crime will be committed and know the identity of the perpetrator.

Thanks to the efforts of Anderton's team and the Pre-Cogs, there hasn't been a murder in Washington in six years. And all is right with the world. Anderton stands at a blank video screen and, using hologram-projectors built into his gloves, moves streams of evidence around gracefully; he's a combination of Michael Tilson Thomas and Tommy, the Who's blind pinball wizard. Anderton is blind, too -- to the morality of Pre-Crime. He buys the motto "That which keeps us safe also keeps us free," until he becomes a fugitive himself. Accused of a crime predicted for the future, he is soon on the run.

Eyes and seeing are central to the heap of metaphors in "Minority Report": Anderton has to have his eyes plucked out of his head -- in a sequence that brings to mind the clamps holding Alex's eyes wide open in "A Clockwork Orange" -- to gain deeper insight.

"Minority Report" is a little like Barry Levinson's "Homicide" series, too. When a crime of passion comes into view, it's called a redball -- as the big murders were on "Homicide" -- but here it's literally that. A small reddish billiard ball is issued with the would-be criminal's name carved into it and it rolls down a tube into view of the team. It's another instance of treating the plot as a game. Brown balls are for premeditated crimes, and when Anderton's own name comes down the shoot, he dashes off for his life.

Mr. Cruise does as much sprinting in this picture as he has in his entire career so far. He begins the movie pumping his legs so we can see Pre-Crime in action; it's almost as if he's trying to outrun the age of 40 (coming July 3) that he's been telling interviewers everywhere he's just fine with. "Everybody runs," Anderton says, when pursued by his former colleagues in a chase scene that seems longer than most movies. Falling back on reflex, Mr. Spielberg cuts the sequence together as if it were a series of perfect basketball plays.

Tickets & Showtimes

Enter your ZIP code or city to view tickets and showtimes in your area.

City, State or ZIP

Submit

[More Theaters Near You »](#)

Get 15% off on a weekend rental.

Best Rate. Guaranteed.*

Book Now >>

This episode has two chases. After Anderton eludes the Pre-Crime squad, the determined F.B.I. agent Ed Witwer (Colin Farrell) picks up the chase. When they met earlier, Anderton and Witwer immediately set off sparks. Witwer doesn't agree that a crime can be prosecuted before it happens, saying, "It's not the future if you stop it." In his slim, pinstriped double-breasted suits, he's a force of complicated conscience that brings to mind Sam Spade in "The Maltese Falcon." (Anderton's own slim, dark, monochromatic outfits -- his look could be called Black to the Future -- suggest that the designer Helmut Lang will also still be around in 2054.)

Equally determined to prove that he can avoid his fate, Anderton finds Dr. Hineman (Lois Smith), the scientist who developed the Pre-Cogs -- accidentally. "I was trying to cure them," she says of the mentally afflicted who turned out to have precognitive powers and were conscripted into the program. She tells Anderton of a glitch in the system; the Pre-Cogs collectively are never wrong, but they do "disagree." These disagreements are "minority reports." And Anderton can use this glitch to prove his innocence. But it must be downloaded from the mind of the Pre-Cog Agatha (Samantha Morton).

"Minority Report" may be the most adult film Mr. Spielberg has made in some time. It's about the bloody blurring of passion and violence: a compassionate noir. After the ripe, damp colors of "A.I.," Mr. Spielberg and his cinematographer, Janusz Kaminski, give "Minority Report" a cold, silvered tone. The picture looks as if it were shot on chrome, caught on the fleeing bumper of a late 70's car. And it's constantly in motion; Mr. Spielberg focuses on Mr. Cruise's own ambition as if it were a gleaming hood ornament and turns that appetite for success in on itself. As Anderton, Mr. Cruise successfully shows how unfulfilled determination becomes the all-American burden. It may be one of his best performances yet.

Anderton is even desperate to dream: he drugs himself to revisit past moments and sees them in holographic home movies. (The color red is clearly visible only in the past.)

The movie is really just a restless genre picture, which happens to be the area in which Mr. Spielberg works best. As a filmmaker, he has the capacious memory of a savant who uses everything he knows; you can't watch "A.I." without feeling as if you're watching a "Hallmark Hall of Fame" version of "Astro Boy." By its end, "Minority Report" plays like a "Columbo" episode, a very good one. Keep in mind that Mr. Spielberg directed the first two-hour-long episode of that series.

Philip K. Dick, whose considerably bleaker short story was turned into the screenplay by Scott Frank and Jon Cohen, and Mr. Spielberg match up in an interesting way. Dick was a sci-fi poet of paranoia; his material was often about oppression as commerce and governmental intrusion into psychological space as the ultimate invasion. Mr. Spielberg has an affinity for the worst that could possibly happen.

Even his comic moments are about being surprised by horror, and he takes that paranoid streak and hijacks it into entertainment.

Many of the suspenseful beats are also sick jokes. One of the sickest occurs when the blinded Anderton is hiding out from spidery minirobots that perform retinal scans. These are like dreams come true for Dick.

The movie is filled with fictional commercials and the onslaught is presented as intrusive; each has been geared to speak directly to the individual consumer about, paradoxically, escape. The movie turns product placement into omnipresent white noise fodder. (A laugh-producing sequence set in a Gap store recalls the last time the director gave such big play to a product: Pan Am in "Hook.")

The performances are perfectly fine; no one is asked to do something new. And if poor Ms. Morton is asked to play a feral, near-mute victim one more time, she may be pushed beyond the range of her immense talents to find a different wrinkle. Tim Blake Nelson pockets the movie in a polished character turn as a prison guard. He and Mr. von Sydow are the subjects of lighting setups that recall "Blade Runner," the movie made 20 years

ago from Dick's "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep."

The movie is really a kind of tour de force, but with Mr. Spielberg putting an optimistic spin on Dick's gray motifs. The film is magnificently creepy, a calculated bad dream that stays with you like the best of Roger Corman. It should be said, though, that Mr. Corman would have made the film about 40 minutes shorter and trimmed the several climaxes. Though he can still deliver an amazing scare, Mr. Spielberg's interest now leans more toward exposition rather than the anticipatory. He is explaining the fun away.

The movie deftly lifts from everywhere. Jason Antoon, the bartender/ tempter from the original cast of the musical "Contact," for example, plays a futuristic pornographer with similar show-bizzy zeal and those same independently moving eyebrows.

George Lucas's barely-seen sci-fi nightmare "THX-1138" is another borrowing point. Ms. Morton and several other cast members sport the androgynous buzz cuts and shaved heads of Mr. Lucas's dystopian feature debut. Mr. Spielberg has been borrowing from it for years.

With "Minority Report" he toys with the idea that there's more -- and less -- to Tom Cruise than meets the eye, and he says we shouldn't trust our eyes, anyway. But doesn't he always?

"Minority Report" is rated PG-13 (Parents strongly cautioned) for strong language, haunting displays of violence and sensuality, and maiming.

MINORITY REPORT

Directed by Steven Spielberg; written by Scott Frank and Jon Cohen, based on the short story by Philip K. Dick; director of photography, Janusz Kaminski; edited by Michael Kahn; music by John Williams; production designer, Alex McDowell; produced by Gerald R. Molen, Bonnie Curtis, Walter F. Parkes and Jan de Bont; released by 20th Century Fox and DreamWorks Pictures. Running time: 140 minutes. This film is rated PG-13.

WITH: Tom Cruise (John Anderton), Colin Farrell (Danny Witwer), Samantha Morton (Agatha), Max von Sydow (Lamar Burgess), Kathryn Morris (Lara Clarke), Tim Blake Nelson (Gideon), Peter Stormare (Dr. Eddie) Jason Antoon (Rufus Riley at Cyber Parlor) and Lois Smith (Iris Hineman).