



"SLEEP DEALER" A film by **Alex Rivera**

WINNER - Sundance 2008
 Alfred P. Sloan Award
 Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award

WINNER - Berlin International Film Festival
 Amnesty International Prize

NOMINEE – Gotham Awards
 Best First Feature

NOMINEE – Spirit Awards
 Best First Feature

alex@alexrivera.com

212.253.6273

<http://sleepdealer.com>

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Mexico. The near future. Memo Cruz has always dreamed of leaving his tiny village and heading north. But when he is ultimately forced to leave, Memo finds a future so bizarre – border walls, shantytowns, hi-tech factories, remote control drones and aqua-terrorists – that it looks a lot like today.

Winner of two awards at the Sundance Film Festival, and nominee for both the Gotham Awards and Spirit Awards.

PRESS REACTIONS

THE NEW YORK TIMES

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/26/movies/26new.html?scp=3&sq=sleep%20dealer%20rivera&st=cse>

Exuberantly entertaining -- a dystopian fable of globalization disguised as a science-fiction adventure.... Mr. Rivera — a brilliant young director — takes his audience into a future of “aqua-terrorism” and cyberlabor that I wish I could dismiss as implausible.

-A.O. Scott

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-sleep17-2009apr17.1.4399030.story>

Adventurous, ambitious and ingeniously futuristic, “Sleep Dealer” is a welcome surprise. It combines visually arresting science fiction done on a budget with a strong sense of social commentary in a way that few films attempt, let alone achieve.

-Kenneth Turan

WIRED MAGAZINE

http://www.wired.com/entertainment/hollywood/news/2008/01/sleep_dealer

...impressive, eye-opening...a timely message, deftly delivered... like *Blade Runner* and other big-brained sci-fi flicks, it's about ideas, not selling merchandise.

Sleep Dealer serves up a radical vision of a troubling tomorrow...

-Jason Silverman

INDIEWIRE

http://www.indiewire.com/article/park_city_08_review_a_dazzling_journey_alex_riveras_sleep_dealer/

A dazzling journey! True originality and artistic verve!

Unique and yet engaging; the nervy combination of social politics with future shock storytelling... "Sleep Dealer" is a film with something to say about humanity and its relationship with technology. This sense of humanity, more than its numerous mind-blowing fantasy images is what ultimately sets "Sleep Dealer" apart.

-Steve Ramos

PAPER MAGAZINE

<http://www.papermag.com/?section=article&parid=3161>

Brilliant and bizarre-ass! A stellar moment in independent filmmaking!

-Rebecca Carroll

THE GUARDIAN OF LONDON

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/jan/29/sundancefilmfestival.festivals>

... Rivera revives the promise of an American independent cinema that can intervene in our world, imagine the worst, hope for the best - and entertain like mad along the way.

-B. Ruby Rich

WIRED MAGAZINE

http://www.wired.com/entertainment/hollywood/multimedia/2009/03/pl_screen

Ground breaking...a wholly original fantasy. Listen up, Spielberg & Co.: You might learn something.

-Jason Silverman

THE NEW YORK TIMES

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/15/movies/15denn.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=sleep%20dealer%20rivera&st=cse

"Sleep Dealer" taps into the cultural and economic fears that have come with a globalized planet... For all its newfangled trappings "Sleep Dealer" reasserts a narrative as old as this country...

-Dennis Lim

FULL SYNOPSIS

The near future. Like tomorrow. The world is divided by closed borders, but connected by a digital network that ties together people around the world.

Memo Cruz lives in the small, dusty Mexican village of Santa Ana del Rio. Santa Ana is the kind of place that seems frozen in time -- except for the hi-tech, militarized dam that was built by a corporation, and now controls Santa Ana's water supply.

Memo dreams of leaving his small pueblo and finding work in the hi-tech factories in the big cities in the north.

To escape, at night, in his room alone, Memo uses a homemade radio intercept to eavesdrop on conversations of people who, unlike him, have been able to leave -- and who've made it to the big cities, where almost anything is possible.

One night, while using his homemade radio, Memo stumbles across something he's never heard before -- the communications of the security forces that patrol the area around his village, hunting 'Aqua-Terrorists.'

Memo is then forced to realize his dream of leaving Santa Ana in the worst possible way when his homemade radio - and his house - are destroyed in a reckless remote-control drone attack.

Driven by feelings of guilt, and a need to earn money, Memo goes north to find work, and help his family start again. He heads to the massive border city of Tijuana.

On the way, Memo meets a young woman, sharp and beautiful, named Luz. Luz is an aspiring journalist who dreams of writing a story that might one day change the world. She asks Memo a few questions.

As Memo arrives to Tijuana, "City of the Future," we follow Luz. In her apartment, Luz connects her body to the net, via implanted nodes in her body. As she describes her day, the computer records her memories and the sound of her voice. She puts these recorded memories up for sale on the net -- a blog, straight from the brain.

The next day, to Luz's surprise, someone, somewhere, has bought her memory -- and has paid in advance for more.

Luz now needs to learn more about Memo, to sell more memories to her anonymous client. But Memo is cautious about revealing the real reasons he's come to Tijuana. All he cares about is getting work -- and to do it he needs to connect to the network too -- he needs nodes.

Luz finds Memo, and helps him get his nodes so he can plug his body into the system, and get work.

Memo has finally made it to the hi-tech factories he'd only dreamed of. But it's

not what he expected. The factories are bizarre and dangerous. Workers connect their nervous systems to the net and control robots that labor on the other side of the border, in the first world – a world none of the workers will ever really see. The workers toil until they collapse – earning the factories the name ‘Sleep Dealers.’

As Memo works, Luz works too – selling his story to her mysterious reader.

When the identity of Luz's reader is revealed, a chain of events is set in motion that will connect three strangers, and change their lives — maybe even change the world — forever.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I made *Sleep Dealer* first and foremost because I love science fiction. I grew up watching *Star Wars*, *Brazil* and *Blade Runner*. However, at a certain point, I realized that despite the genre's wild stories and countless special effects, there were some things that were unimaginable – and that maybe there was an opportunity to do something radically new with sci-fi.

In any science fiction film, you always have at least two ‘stars’ -- the main character of the film, and the futuristic world itself. With *Sleep Dealer* I'm trying to do something we've never seen before with both.

The main character in *Sleep Dealer* is Memo Cruz, a young man from a tiny village in the dusty desert of southern Mexico. Like the majority of people on planet earth today, he lives in the ‘third world.’ Memo lives in Latin American poverty, but dreams of something better – and in that sense, he has a lot in common with my dad, who immigrated to the United States almost fifty years ago from Perú.

Sci-fi films almost always tell “outsider” stories, critical stories, yet so often the heroes are not really outsiders – they're police (*Blade Runner*, *Minority Report*, etc.) With *Sleep Dealer*, I wanted to put a real outsider – a migrant worker - at the center of the story.

While I knew I couldn't make the biggest sci-fi ever, I did want to make the ‘truest’ sci-fi ever. The story of *Sleep Dealer* is set in a fantasy future that seriously imagines where our world might go.

Two giant trends inspired my thinking about the future. On one hand I've been fascinated by the dream of a ‘Global Village,’ inspired by the internet. Thanks to technology the world is truly more connected now than ever.

On the other hand, as the son of an immigrant (some of my cousins came to the U.S. as undocumented immigrants) I've been horrified to see the world

becoming more and more divided. Borders are violent and increasingly closed. The attacks on immigrants around the world only seem to intensify.

The 'Global Village,' seen from the other side of a giant border wall, looks pretty strange.

The concept of a world connected by technology, but divided by borders, is the central concept of *Sleep Dealer*. This ironic reality pushed me to imagine a future in which borders are sealed, and immigrants no longer come to America. Instead, in the world of *Sleep Dealer*, immigrants stay in their home countries, connect their bodies to 'the net,' and send their pure labor to robots in America. This is what used to be called the "American Dream," five minutes into the future.

Other present-day realities inspired my futuristic fantasy: violent reality shows like COPS, private military contractors like Blackwater, remote control drones like the Predator Drone, the trend of outsourcing jobs over the web, the impending global water crisis, and the ubiquity of video sharing sites YouTube to name a few. This is a science-fiction with many anchors in today's reality.

Sleep Dealer is my first film. It's not anything like a *Star Wars* or a *Blade Runner*. In many ways it's a humble film. But it's also an honest attempt to use science-fiction film to say something new, and something true, about our world today. I hope you enjoy it.