

# Biodigital Jazz, Man!

As a kid and later as a teenager, it was a sort of ritual for me to switch on the TV at 9pm every night and flip to the legendary ‘Star Movies’ channel. For a wide-eyed kid growing up in 2010s India, this humble cable-subscription service was my gateway to the world of cinema: a world unfettered by the chains of reality, and limited only by the boundless nature of human imagination.

On one such night in 2013, after a long day at school, my eyes were greeted by a splash of neon blue and dazzling orange ribbons of light as I tuned into Star Movies. A genre of music that I’d never heard before, floated into my ears as I found myself immersed in this vibrant, larger-than-life universe that unfolded on the screen in front of me. I still remember being quite confused with the unique name of the movie, and asking my Mom to read it out loud for me, hoping that it might somehow help me understand.

I was too young to grasp any of the plot or the underlying concepts, but it did leave a lasting impression on me. Little did I know that it would end up being one of the rare movies that have had a profound influence on my approach to life and helped cultivate my tastes for music, art, et cetera.



A Recognizer captures Sam Flynn as he enters **The Grid** for the first time.

I rediscovered **“Tron: Legacy”** as a 18-year-old in college, finally being able to understand the plot and the subtle philosophy underlying it. Since then, I’ve rewatched it several times (maybe 9-10, don’t judge me!), and I’ve discovered something new about it every single time: be it some small detail, dialogue, easter egg, or perhaps the spectacular experience of reentering **“The Grid”**. Disney produced this masterpiece way back in 2010, when CGI was not as advanced as it is now, but don’t get me wrong: this movie was way ahead of its time.



A Recognizer soars over **The Grid**.



CLU primes his disk for combat in an intense Lightcycle battle.

For the first-time viewer, the plot is quite fascinating: a rebellious son searching for his long-lost father ends up in a cold, digital landscape known as the **The Grid**, which is controlled and operated by a totalitarian, perfectionist program hell-bent on imposing order by eradicating any and all sources of human creativity and ingenuity. Coupled with this is a top-of-the-line soundtrack composed by the renowned French house music duo Daft Punk that seamlessly intertwines with the breathtaking visuals, giving the viewer an audio-visual experience like never before. This movie introduced me to the rich world of electronic music, and I've been hooked since then. Here's proof: my phone ringtone is set to "Son of Flynn", arguably one of the best songs in the entire soundtrack.



CLU's walk of swag in the Games Arena.



A program gets disintegrated in a Disc Battle.

However, the veteran viewer (with at least 2-3 rewatches) will notice that this is not simply a movie with outstanding auditory and visual effects. The film explores several themes: the strained yet unwaveringly strong father-son relationship overcoming a torrent of ever-increasing adversities; the unachievable task of implementing perfection and how someone (in this case, the program CLU) can base their entire existence on this futile effort; the Orwellian concept of an individual/organisation exerting total and absolute control over a system (in this case, CLU's dominance over all programs in **The Grid**), crushing any and all seeds of revolution that might threaten the existence of the system; the controversial idea that a **Creator** or **God** (in this case, the creator of **The Grid**, Kevin Flynn) can be *imperfect* and flawed, contradictory to popular opinion; and much more. Heavy inspiration is drawn from Buddhist philosophy: Sam's father Kevin Flynn, a pioneer in the software industry, discovers that the only way to contend with his forced entrapment in **The Grid** is to make peace with it, a trademark of Zen philosophy. However, when his son arrives, he alters his approach, embracing the ensuing chaos, treating it as "good news", a direct quote from the Tibetan Buddhist master Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche.



Kevin Flynn meditates on the current situation while viewing **The Grid** from his refuge in the Outlands.

In addition to this, the film also depicts the continual evolution of human beings with age, in contrast to the static nature of synthetic/artificial intelligence. Kevin Flynn creates CLU in his own image to help him build and maintain “the perfect system” as a young tech hotshot. However, with time, Kevin gains maturity and knowledge, realising that it is impossible to achieve perfection in any aspect of life. CLU, being a program, cannot and does not understand anything apart from his core function of implementing extreme levels of perfection in **The Grid**. This results in CLU revolting against his Creator, their differences growing increasingly bitter with time. Kevin and CLU are two sides of the same coin, each dealing with his own internal conflicts.

The dialogue is on a whole different level, embodying a profound sense of knowledge and poignancy. Here’s one of my favourite dialogues from the movie:

**Clu:** I did everything... everything you ever asked!

**Kevin Flynn:** I know you did.

**Clu:** I executed the plan!

**Kevin Flynn:** As you saw it...

**Clu:** You- You promised that we would change the world, together. You broke your promise...

**Kevin Flynn:** I know. I understand that now.

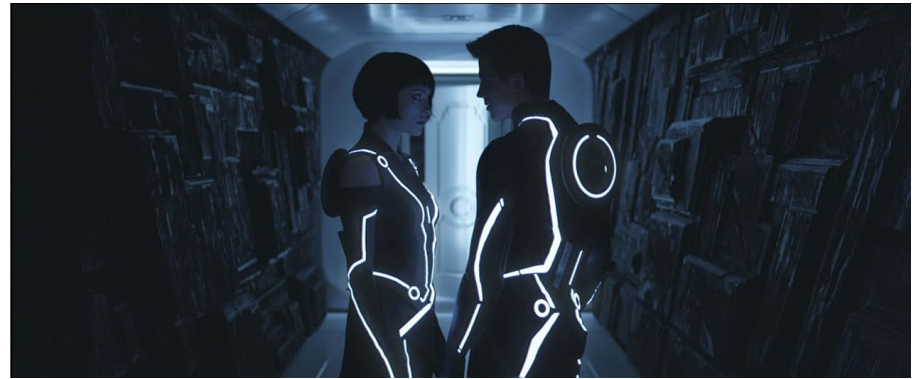
**Clu:** I took this system to its maximum potential. I created the perfect system!

**Kevin Flynn:** The thing about perfection is that it's unknowable. It's impossible, but it's also right in front of us all the time. You wouldn't know that because I didn't when I created you. I'm sorry, Clu. I'm sorry...



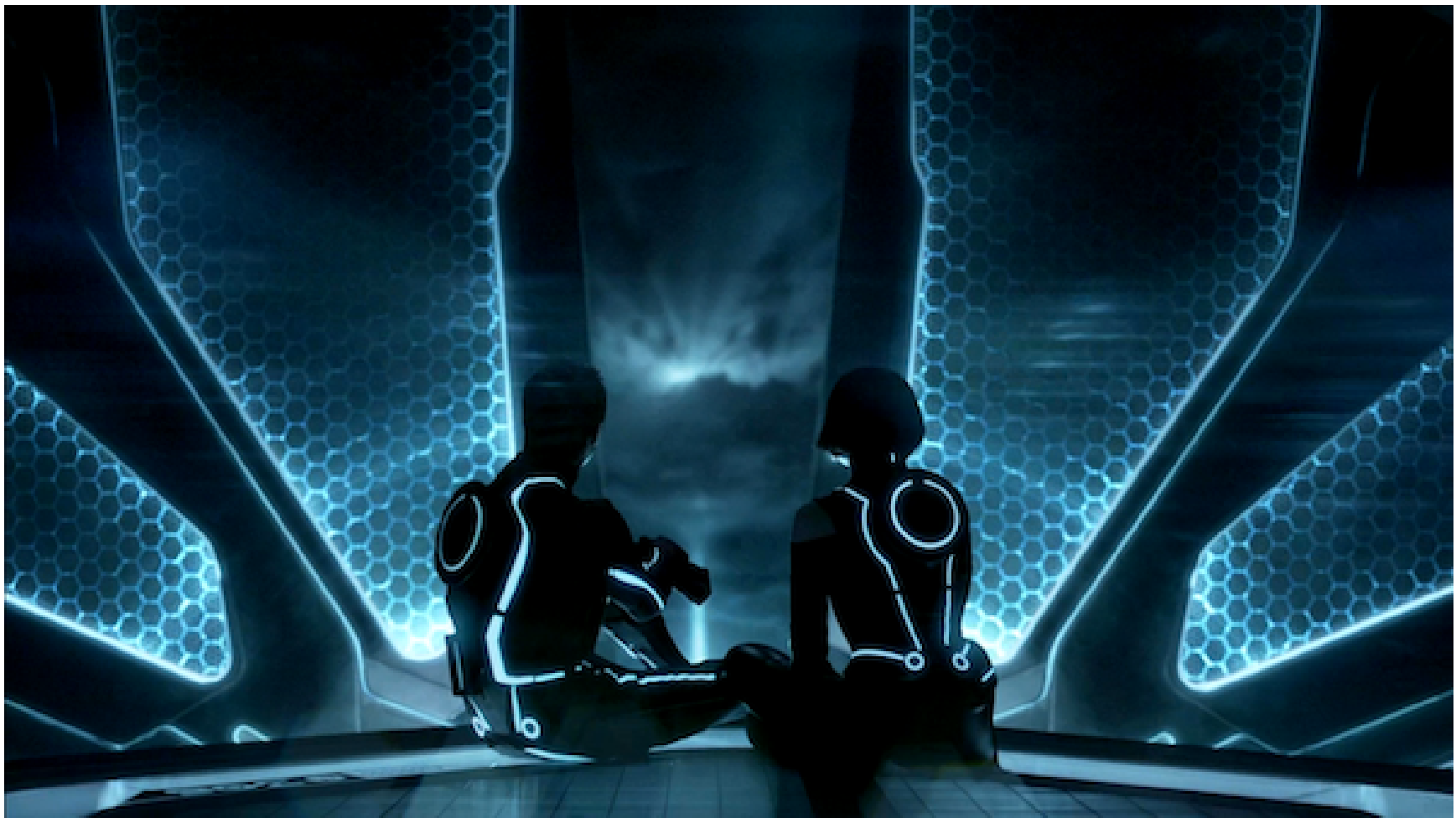


A curious Quorra sizes up Sam Flynn on first meeting him.



Sam tries to convince Quorra to disobey his father's idea of adopting a peaceful stance.

And last but not least, the movie would've been incomplete without actress Olivia Wilde's portrayal of Quorra: a wise, enigmatic, yet naive program who displays intense loyalty towards Kevin Flynn. She is well acquainted with the superior intellectual and creative abilities possessed by the **Users** (programs use this term to refer to humans), but it is with Sam's arrival that she witnesses the true extent of human capability. She is a curious individual, a quick learner, and bonds with Sam over her deep desire to witness *a real sunrise*.



Sam and Quorra chill on a Solar Sailer as it approaches The Portal. Probably one of the best scenes in the movie.

Despite the film being quite successful at the box office (grossing \$400 million against a budget of \$170 million), Disney practically drove the franchise into the ground, quoting it as a "box office failure". Therefore, it is very improbable that a film of the same standard will possibly be made in the near future. In spite of all the negativity it has endured, the film continues to be a cult classic.

In summary, '**Tron: Legacy**' is a one-of-a-kind movie that will blow your mind, should you be brave enough to step into **The Grid**. Do give it a watch, and who knows, it might end up becoming one of your favourites!