

Blade Runner

Blade runner is an enigmatic movie, which brims with symbolism and hidden messages. This amazing movie was directed by Ridley Scott, which deserves an even higher status than that of any other average sci-fi movie. The film is dream-like, futuristic, artistic yet powerful and conveys many hidden messages through the narrative story. Purely on the surface it has visual richness, which is incredibly atmospheric and thereafter is further enhanced by the mysterious, futuristic and starry music by Vangelis. The captivating sounds orchestrated by him draw you into the vision of the future, which is a sprawling technologically advanced metropolis. All these factors collaborate and culminate to the breathtaking climax, which is the killing of the first replicant Zhora

The film revolves around the main character Deckard. He fulfills the role of an ex-Blade runner. A Blade runner is a specialised detective who hunts down and executes or rather 'retires' replicants. Deckard is portrayed as a typical Dick Tracy detective, with his large trench coat and the thirst for liquor and when he needs to hide himself he sinks his head into a newspaper. He is a very mysterious and peculiar character and up until now, we have been unable to ascertain whether he is really a replicant or a normal human being, however this is revealed in the climax of the movie.

The scene begins with him entering a bar and we know this as he says "Bartender where is Taffy Lewis". We also get the sense and impression that it's not only a bar, but also a very high-class brothel due to the clients within it. There is a mish mash of Asian, British, Chinese & Hispanic people that attend the bar. Looking at the females who predominantly occupy the bar and their attire suggest once again that it is a very elite brothel. They all seem to be dressed in formal cut suits from the 1940's era, and also seem to be wearing large broad hats with veils covering their eyes. Most of the women have cigarettes held in their well-manicured hands, which are attached to long expensive cigarette holder filters. All this suggests that the people are very affluent and opulent clients or members of this brothel.

The women as I mentioned before wear large hats with veils that conceal their eyes. This is linked to the beginning of the film and that the human eye is the doorway to the soul. These women don't wish to reveal their eyes as they wish not to expose the fear in their eyes, and they wish to blend in with the crowd and so conceal their eyes from sight especially as they are replicants. There are very few real women in this city as the only real ones was the old lady, which read the snake scale and the other, which sold the alcohol to Deckard. The rest of the other women are replicants and thus they covered their eyes and kept them out of sight so Deckard wouldn't catch them. The women are also probably prostitutes or potential members and they wish not to reveal their true identity as they might have done something that was immoral or repulsive to their being in the past, in order to ascertain a job and to fit into the community.

The women are also smoking and therefore large plumes of smoke is being released suggesting that they are ignorant of pollution and have a 'Don't care attitude' as it was

pollution that transformed the sky to a ominous dark gray colour and a misty fog that looms over the city everyday.

There is also a very prominent theme of eastern/Asian music of a lady humming or some sort of classical Indian/Asian music playing in the background. Together with this music is the constant hustle and bustle of people talking. There are also candles set upon the tables this also indicates that it's very dark & gloomy in the bar implying once again that it is a high-class opulent brothel rather than an average bar.

Deckard thereafter spoke to the bar owner Taffy in connection with his exotic Dancer Zhora in order to gather more information on his target replicant. Due to Deckard being "dry" he then began to have one drink offered to him by Taffy. However, the glass from which he drank was strange yet fascinating. It had a clear glass handle and the glass was blasted white. It also had a very strange shape. As the bottom or the handle was straight up and the glass was like a bowl placed right on top of the handle, as if it was a martini glass and not a beer mug. This once again re-iterates that the place is a high-class brothel and that women normally drink from martini glasses.

The camera then cuts to him sitting at the bar staring down at a photo of Rachael from her 'childhood', this however is not true as replicants didn't have a childhood it was just other peoples memories which was implanted into the replicants minds to make them more human and they had photos to emphasize these memories and make them believe that they are human. Strangely enough Deckard is also in the same boat as Rachael, as he has tons of photos plastered all over his apartment walls and so this implies that Deckard is also a replicant and that he requires having lots of photos to reinforce the memories implanted in his brain or data banks and tries to find comfort in the fact that he is human and not a replicant by looking at his collection of photo's, later on further facts are revealed to us that he's a replicant.

He then decided to call Rachael and invite her down to the bar for a couple of drinks. However his offer was declined as Rachael says " Sorry Mr. Deckard, that's not my kind of place". Well, firstly there's a formality as she refers to him as Mr. Deckard and therefore she doesn't seem to have a very close relationship with him, as she hasn't known him long enough. Secondly Rachel would stand out as she has never experienced being in a bar let alone a brothel and especially if there are voluptuous naked women dancing on stage. This links to the fact that she's a replicant and doesn't have a memory of being in a bar as it wasn't programmed in her data banks, therefore she wouldn't know how to react to the situation.

The music then fades from the beeping noise of the reminder on the phone booth into a melodic slow rave music suggesting that he is disappointed by her turning him down. He then goes back to the bar counter to have a couple more drinks. Whilst he did this Zhora then performed on stage. However we are unable to see her act as the camera angle is projected at shoulder height of Deckard and therefore we are unable to see over his shoulder as he looks behind for a couple of seconds. Deckard also doesn't turn around fully suggesting that he is not interested in the show and that it was not very entertaining

and he was bored of seeing naked prostitutes dancing all over the place. As if it was an everyday affair for him and that it had become second nature to him or he was becoming tired of his job of chasing down replicants.

The camera then cuts to him waiting in the back corridor for Zhora to walk by. He hides himself from the actresses passing by, by ducking behind a newspaper until Zhora comes of stage. As soon as she is within sight he immediately changes stance and voice and assumes another persona. He acts like the stereotypical, high-pitched voice, annoying investigator from an association or bureau. He does this in order to change his identity and make it seem as if he's an investigator from the bureau of moral abuses rather than a blade runner. When they enter the dressing room Deckard closes the door behind and the camera shot is aimed directly at him (body shot) and he changes his face. He pulls a grin suggesting that he is happy that he will be able to retire her with ease. He then begins to ask her questions on her job. The first one being "Have you done, or felt forced into doing, anything she found repulsive to her person in order to obtain this job". It's very interesting to take note of her face of disbelief when Deckard posed the question to her, her facial reaction suggested that the answer was a resounding yes. Zhora then placed the snake, which she had around her neck down on its stand and went into her shower.

The fact that she went to shower shows that it's still a daily ritual to clean yourself until now and that hasn't changed. When she blow-dries her hair the music however changes to an eerie starry type of music. The camera then cuts to Deckard looking down at one of the scales from the snake or sequences, which she had on her body.

When Zhora comes out of the shower she puts on her underwear and Deckard seems to enjoy Zhora's submissiveness and playfulness, in her asking him to dry her off and in the process is caught off guard by her aggression and violence. Zhora hits him in the neck, which sends Deckard flying towards the wall and we view this from a side camera- shot. Zhora then stands over him and pulls on his tie in order to strangle him and whilst she does this she hisses at him like a snake. The camera angle is also from below looking up at Zhora's face and this shot emphasizes the aggression released by Zhora and the camera angle also helps put you in Deckard's position and makes you feel the pain and agony that he is going through and gets you involved in the action of the movie. There is also Asian music, which is eerie and is playing in the background and this emphasizes the metaphor that Zhora is like a snake malicious and evil and thus attacks her victim when you are most vulnerable like that of a snake.

Zhora then grabs her coat, which is clear/ transparent and thin. The camera then cuts and you see Zhora running out of the bar and into the street, two seconds later Deckard runs out and chases her down. As he runs through the streets there's a constant hustle and bustle of people talking and cars as well as street noises. The camera then follows Deckard as if you are Deckard and are looking for Zhora as it spins round and round and up and down. As Deckard walks through the street you see a whole host of different people and cultures. You can also hear besides the normal chaos of an average street, a person playing an Indian or Asian type of flute. Deckard first runs into a group of poor and impoverished Chinese men and knocks over their carts he then runs onto the road and

you see him blocking a taxi from driving as he continually looks all over to find Zhora and just to the left are more Chinese people who are wearing fancy muffs and have their faces painted white. You can also hear the faint mumble of Chinese and other people talking which is most likely what you would hear in a very crowded street. The camera then moves haphazardly and cuts to a front headshot of poor Chinese people walking by creating the effect that you are Deckard looking for her. Deckard turns around and you once again see a different culture as Hare- Krishna's walk by chanting together. All this cacophony of noises displays that a whole variety of people live in the city of Los Angeles and that not only Americans live in Los Angeles and times have changed as well as its inhabitants.

Deckard then climbs onto a tram as you hear a large horn blaring in the background like that of a ship as it comes to a halt. Following that is the monotonous and annoying sound of a robot indicating that it's safe to cross the road. The fact that it's a robot implies that technology has improved over the years from the normal boring old robots which repeat the same thing over and over to very advanced and intellectual robots i.e. replicants. Whilst this continues Deckard is searching for Zhora until he finds her in a stairwell. The camera angle then changes to a headshot as you are looking up at Deckard from Zhora's perspective and he is pointing the gun at you. This camera shot makes you feel vulnerable, scared and defenseless which is exactly what Zhora is going through. She subsequently runs into the crowd.

Zhora then runs out onto the street and into the distance with Deckard following behind like a predator chasing after its prey. At this time he raises his gun and fires but misses. The camera angle then shifts from Deckard, to a side shot of Zhora running down the street like a scared and vulnerable buck running through the grass at full speed. The camera then shifts for a second time back to Deckard as he stands in the same spot and he fires again, however this time he succeeds and hit her in the back. The camera once again shifts to a frontal shot of Zhora running towards you and this shot emphasizes the fact that she is running for safety and is coming towards you for help. As the bullet exits out her body it leaves a large gaping wound visible and the blood splatters all over her and her coat. She then runs crashing into a shop glass window and he fires again. She lifts her hands up in pain and her mouth is wide open which shows that she was crying out in pain as he continued to slaughter her in cold blood from behind. Zhora then crashes through another set of glass windows and as she comes out she becomes semi-transparent and her coat then becomes like wings. This signifies that she is like an angel or unicorn and is a representation of her species, the replicants. If we continue to kill them we will wipe out their species and they will cease to exist just like the unicorn, which was also a species, which was wiped out. The fact that her coat was transparent signifies that she was similar to a unicorn pure, untainted and clean and when she was shot it was splattered and covered in blood, it was destroyed and shattered. This also links to the shattering of the glass and the unicorn, which is seen in Deckard's dream and the origami. The shattering of the glass also denotes that he is destroying a wonderful irreplaceable species and the fact that it's glass this signifies that they were in very few numbers and were fragile and if you killed one the rest will fall and will come crumbling down. The second metaphor with the unicorn was in Deckard's dream. – signify

At the last set of glass windows Zhora crashes through them and goes through some snow and lands face down covered in blood and sprawled out on the street. Deckard then walked towards her as she lay dead and looked down upon her. His facial expression changed from that of a killer as he displayed regret in killing her. The voice then returns and he says that the report will be a routine retirement of a replicant which didn't make him feel any better about shooting a woman in the back. In this last line it clearly shows that he regrets killing her and also helping in wiping out the species. The scene ends with him looking down at her as he reflects on what he has just done.

All these factors that I have discussed above all are inter-linked and woven into a net which forms the climax of the movie, the final question that remains is did this scene fulfill its role as a climax? Yes!

The scene began with him entering an opulent and high-class brothel in which he would find Zhora. The detail that the director paid attention to in order to make it seem like an affluent brothel was phenomenal. Thereafter Deckard met Zhora and followed her to her dressing room where he asked her a few questions. She thereafter attacked him and ran out onto the street trying to escape from him. When she was shot did the scene fulfill its task as it displayed the main purpose of the movie and that being the metaphor of the unicorn. At the beginning of the movie Gaff made an origami chicken which symbolized Deckard's reluctance to carry on being a blade runner and that he was afraid and was a chicken. The second origami was a man with an erection and this symbolized Deckard's love and affection for Rachael. The final origami was a unicorn, which was linked to Zhora's death and from Deckard's dream. The interpretation was that Deckard was dreaming he would be able to run away with Rachael, the last of the replicant species. The unicorn also symbolised that Rachael was that one final replicant among other humans and will always be different like a unicorn from horses and that she was the only one left of her species like a beautiful pearl surrounded by the dark misty waters of the ocean. That was the primary objective of the movie in that it was putting across the point of killing another species which we felt was going to become superior than humans and our reaction was to terminate it. This clearly showed that man is self-centered and greedy and only wishes to rule the earth and that any other life form which tries to be more superior will just be terminated.

The second point of the unicorn metaphor was that it was from Deckard's dream and Gaff knew about his dream before Deckard told him, therefore he made the origami unicorn. Thus Deckard was a replicant with implanted memories and photo's in his apartment to reinforce those memories. This is linked to the main message of the movie and that is, human experience involves the mind and body and soul simultaneously, and if humans don't experience a situation they cannot obtain a memory of its feel or a reaction due to its result. Thus the replicants were designed with a mind and body but with no soul because they were not born and allowed to develop emotion and therefore were unable to react to new situations. Memories might supercede experience as the root of human existence if not for the example of the replicants. Each replicant has synthetic memories, which were implanted during their creation. If memories were the basis for humanity then

replicants are not any more human than that of a human being, but rather equal to humans. Instead, replicants are designed in the interest of slavery to show no emotion. Their memories are data instead of past experiences. Experience creates memory of reactions to situations. When a person subconsciously relates past and present experience the present emotion is determined by past reaction. Ridley Scott depicts this allowance through the identification tests given to determine the status of possible replicants. The interviewer gives the subject e.g. Leon hypothetical situations and asks for the first reaction which comes to the subject's mind. Replicants are identified because they cannot react with emotion. A replicant will answer with logic or not at all due to its inability to relate through the essence of humanity, experience. With only memories and no comparable experiences, the replicant does not know the exact response. We as humans can determine an answer by relating the hypothetical to a memory of a past experience and our emotional reaction. Genetic engineering poses a threat to this natural ability. If genetic engineering develops to the extreme, parents may be able to design their children. As this process advances humanity could become more and more alike, endangering the diversity of human experience, memory, and reaction.

Thus the three main messages is that, firstly we must stop wiping out other species, secondly what is humanity and what makes you human and lastly what will happen when man advances technologically. Together with the other hidden messages and agendas that I have stated above makes this movie an excellent sci-fi film, which stands tall amongst the rest of the average sci-fi movies.

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