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FLM151: Section B — Fall 2016

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Film Analysis #1

Structure

1. Based on the *Three Act Paradigm* as defined in class, is *Blade Runner* a high concept three-act film? Justify your answer with some research.

In the not so far off future, *Blade Runner* explores what it means to be human in a dystopian environment. Deckard, a retired law enforcement-type character, is brought out of retirement against his will to help track down and eliminate replicants who have illegally left their jobs and come to Earth. Throughout the film, Deckard struggles with the concept of what it means to be human in a world where replicants are second-class citizens. Based on the *Three Act Paradigm* as defined in class, *Blade Runner* is a low concept film wrapped in the dressings of a high concept film.

At face value the film noir and murder-mystery aspect makes *Blade Runner* appear to be a very action heavy film, when it is quite the opposite. Much of the film delves into “dramatic, narrative levels and film noir conventions, such as the femme fatale, protagonist-narration, dark and shadowy cinematography, and the questionable outlook of the hero”, even going as far as to questioning the main character’s own humanity (Fieser). Most action films are quick to go from action scene to the next, but *Blade Runner* takes the time to really slow things down and make the viewer question what is really happening. In fact, the bulk of the action does not appear until the third act of the film. This decision deliberately makes the movie less action line dominant and puts an emphasis on the emotive lines in the film.

The first act of *Blade Runner* gives the film feel like a high concept film, stating that the world is in danger because there are replicants on the loose. The first act explains that the replicants are “more human than human” and in a way, like super soldiers (Blade Runner). Replicants are made to appear to a lot like “mind controlled assassins”, which might conjure up references to “Nazi scientists...who worked on such mind control projects” to the viewer (Dyer). This setup automatically gives the film a feeling that the events of *Blade Runner* affect the world at large, giving *Blade Runner* a high concept feel right from the start. However, as the film progresses it becomes increasingly clear that *Blade Runner* is a story of “what it means to be human, what it means to die” for both Deckard and Roy Batty (Dyer). This focus on the idea is usually meant for high concept films, but with this idea purposely directed to the individuals it feels very low concept in execution.

Act three in *Blade Runner* feels the most like a traditional high concept film, but it does a great job of wrapping up the changes explored in the characters Deckard and Roy Batty like a great low concept film would do. During the climax of the film, “Roy gave himself for humanity” and Deckard is forever changed in learning that “Roy loved life more than anyone” (An Analysis of *Blade Runner*). The third act is action packed like a good high concept film, but in the end it

is the characters who experience a personal change. The third act establishes *Blade Runner* as a movie that is truly low concept, but with trappings of a good high concept film, as well.

2. What's the *Hook/Inciting Incident*? The *Catalytic Event*? Where's the *Tipping Point*, the *Crisis*, and the *Climax*? Note each of the five events with a description and a time-stamp.

- Inciting Event (00:04:40 – 00:07:18) Leo shoots a Blade Runner in an interrogation room while taking the Voight-Kampff Test.
- Catalytic Event (00:11:30 – 00:13:03) Bryant orders Deckard to go out and retire four replicants. When Deckard refuses to do the job Bryant insists that Deckard has “no choice, pal” and proceeds to explain the details of the job.
- Tipping Point (01:04:04 – 01:09:41) Rachel confronts Deckard at his apartment about how much time she has left to live and Rachel Realizes that she loves Deckard.
- Crisis (01:23:53 – 01:39:48) Deckard hears that J.F. Sebastian has been killed so he goes to Sebastian's apartment to investigate. Deckard fights Pris and Roy Batty.
- Climax (01:39:49 – 01:43:11) Deckard is saved by Roy Batty and listens to Roy explain his thoughts before he expires.

Works Cited

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