**Blade Runner (Director’s Cut 1992)**

|  |
| --- |
| IMDB Info:  ([1982](http://www.imdb.com/year/1982/?ref_=tt_ov_inf)) 1h 57min | [Sci-Fi](http://www.imdb.com/genre/Sci-Fi?ref_=tt_ov_inf), [Thriller](http://www.imdb.com/genre/Thriller?ref_=tt_ov_inf) | [25 June 1982 (USA)](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083658/releaseinfo?ref_=tt_ov_inf) **(Director’s Cut 1992)**  **A blade runner must pursue and try to terminate four replicants who stole a ship in space and have returned to Earth to find their creator.**  **Director:** Ridley Scott  **Writers:** Hampton Fancher, David Webb Peoples (screenplay)  **Starring:**  Harrison Ford ... Rick Deckard  Rutger Hauer ... Roy Batty  Sean Young ... Rachael |

This was one of the first major films to be reissued years later in a "director's edition" in which the director was allowed to restore edited footage or otherwise make changes more closely reflecting their original vision. The first director's version of this film was released in 1992 on the 10th anniversary of the film's original release.

**Context:**

Ridley Scott is a British director, best known for his 1979 science fiction film, ‘Alien’. The film is very loosely based on ‘Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep’ (1968) by American Sci Fi author, Phillip K. Dick. Dick’s novella concentrated on character relationships and a futuristic religion built around robot animals, while Scott’s film is more of a detective action thriller. The film and novella are quite different, with terms familiar from the film, like ‘replicant’ and ‘blade runner’ not featuring in the book at all.

**Plot Summary:**

In the futuristic year of 2019, Los Angeles has become a dark and depressing metropolis, filled with urban decay. Rick Deckard, an ex-cop, is a "Blade Runner". Blade runners are people assigned to assassinate "replicants". The replicants are androids that look like real human beings. When four replicants commit a bloody mutiny on the Off World colony, Deckard is called out of retirement to track down the androids. As he tracks the replicants, eliminating them one by one, he soon comes across another replicant, Rachel, who evokes human emotion, despite the fact that she's a replicant herself. As Deckard closes in on the leader of the replicant group, his true hatred toward artificial intelligence makes him question his own identity in this future world, including what is and is not human.

**Genre:**

Dystopian Science Fiction

A film world that imagines a future in which, although technology has improved vastly, the environment has been degraded or destroyed, and social problems have greatly increased. Negative aspects of our own time such as authoritarianism, interracial conflict, war, urbanisation and pollution are taken to an extreme point to form the backdrop to the story.

Visually, the film has the common ingredients of sci-fi. Inventive technology, imposing buildings and a familiar path of 'ecocide' (nature being turned on its head) are powerfully represented. So, too, is social dislocation. There is little evidence of family, culture and education in the film. Men, like Tyrell and J.F. Sebastian, who play the gods of biomechanics in the world of Blade Runner, reign supreme.

* Examples of Dystopian Science Fiction: ‘Metropolis’ (1927), ‘Soylent Green’ (1973), ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four’ (1984).

Film Noir

A film style associated with the 1940s where light and shadow are important in the visual presentation of the film. Often (but not always) shot in black and white. Associated with run down urban settings, crime, violence and corruption. The protagonist (hero) is often a morally ambiguous character (bad as well as good), usually a detective or other investigator. Usually includes an evil female character, known as a *femme fatale.*

* Examples of Film Noir: ‘Casablanca’ (1942), ‘The Third Man’ (1949) and ‘The Big Sleep’ (1946)

In dress Deckard resembles the detectives of the films of the forties and fifties - the cynical, world-weary, hard-nosed private investigator dressed in trench coat. He is the rugged loner pitted against a brutal, alienating world; a solitary, self-enclosed moral figure.

Although when we first meet Deckard, he asserts the orthodoxy, "Replicants are like any other machine. They're either a benefit or a hazard. If they're a benefit, it's not my problem.” But there is a growth towards an essential humanity in Deckard in the course of the film. He has already 'retired', having had his fill of killing. When we first meet Deckard he is in the usual context of a seedy, shadowy, yet vital Chinatown, a commonly depicted context in the film noir genre. He is detached and disillusioned, perhaps already having seen the impact of violence and bigotry.

In film noir the detective uncovers the corruption and ‘darkness’ within the city. Film noir is an urban genre, which represents a moral response to the abuses of power in civilisation. On a visual level film noir uses low-key lighting, which hides faces, rooms, urban landscapes and by extension, motivations and true character in shadow and darkness.

Detective fiction is primarily concerned with the nature of rationality and with the restoration of order from chaos. The detective stands outside the chaos and corruption, introspective and self-absorbed. This self-absorption often becomes a reflection on the nature of society itself. So Deckard is engaged in a reflection about the nature of good and evil and about social and moral responsibility.

Deckard has mixed feelings about the role of the Blade Runner, having recently retired from the police force. He recognises the immorality and bigotry of Bryant, who refers to the replicants as 'skin jobs'. The debate about the use of technology for unethical and material ends is given resonance by fusing detective fiction and the concerns of science fiction. Just who is the more responsible and ethical? The replicants who kill because they do not want to die or the social engineers who have created them? Through this hybrid genre the viewer is positioned to engage in the debate on where moral and social responsibility for technology lies. It is difficult for the viewer not to respond in personal terms to this question.

**Characters**

**Rick Deckard**

* Protagonist (main character), who reluctantly takes on the job of hunting down and killing a group of escaped ‘replicants’ (androids who cannot be distinguished from humans). A former ‘blade runner’ (a policeman who specialise in catching and killing escaped ‘replicants’), Deckard is forced into returning to his old job by his former boss, Bryant. It is suggested (though not confirmed) that Deckard may himself be a ‘replicant’, but not know it.

**Roy Batty**

* Antagonist (character who opposes the protagonist). Leader of the escaped replicants, whose aim is to find his creator (Tyrell) and force him to extend the ‘replicants’ life span beyond its current four year limit.

**Rachael**

* A replicant created by Tyrell to be unaware that she is not a human. She has been implanted with the childhood memories of Tyrell’s nieces. Rachael falls in love with Deckard, but has relatively little character development or role in the action.

**Dr Eldon Tyrell**

* Creator of the ‘replicants’. Tyrell is reminiscent of Victor Frankenstein, the fictional scientist from Mary Shelley’s 1818 novel, ‘Frankenstein’, who creates a living being without considering the consequences, or what life might be like for his creation.

**JF Sebastian**

* Genetic inventor who works for the Tyrell corporation. Helps Roy Batty gain access to Tyrell. Suffers from an illness that prematurely ages him (‘accelerated decrepitude’). Murdered along with Tyrell.

**Themes**

* Humanity

**Motifs**

* Eyes (beginning)
* Advertising
* Rain / water
* Hands (ending)
* Animals
* Empathy
* The transience of life / self preservation
* Moral responsibility
* Power (state power: police / commercial power: big business)
* Artificiality vs nature
* Hunter and hunted

**Key Sequences**

* (1) Deckard kills Zhora (turning point) 55.00 - 59.22
* (2) Roy Batty confronts and kills Tyrell (character development) 1:19:45 - 1.22.36
* (3) Roy Batty chases Deckard through the derelict apartment block (dramatic climax) 1.33.40 - 1.39.25
* (4) Roy Batty’s death scene (denouement) 1.40.40 - 1.43.57

**Film Elements**

When looking at a film you will need to look at its elements which, when combined, create

the film’s meaning.

Here is a list of film elements:

|  |
| --- |
| * **selection of the setting** -why Los Angeles? * **costume**s -Rachael's forties’ dress style, Deckard's trench coat and the impact of these choices on you * **lighting** -the perpetual gloom * **facial expressions/body language** -Roy’s curious facial expression after he has killed Tyrell * **subjective/objective shots** -most of the film is shot at middle distance and we rarely see the world from a particular character's point of view * **camera**  -the way we soar through the urban maze * **duration of shots** -the close-ups of both Deckard and Roy at vital moments which   reveal their inner feelings   * **editing**(sequence of images, cross-cutting) -the choice and sequence of images in the opening of the film establishes the film’s mood * **repetition**(repetition of images and dialogue -the interview with Leon is played over and over * **external sounds** -synthesised music of Vangelis and how this supports the film * **links between the scenes**(how one scene echoes or anticipates other scenes) -look at the ways in which you are taken from one scene to the next. There is a kind of 'staircase' effect in films. We are gradually taken to the top of the stairs, scene by scene |

**Interpretations of the text**

***A perspective on Blade Runner - Gary Simmons***

Blade Runner has been variously described as a cautionary tale, a biblical parable, an incoherent mishmash, a bleak prophecy, and Shakespeare on celluloid. Regardless of others' opinions Ridley Scott seems to understand our nightmares.

The science fiction genre projects present fears onto the future. The future can be seen as a metaphor for the misgivings of the present. For example, in Terminator 2, Judgement Day (James Cameron 1991), the cyborg asserts a kind of humanity. As cyborgs are given selected human characteristics to make them more efficient, they rise above their specifications. Both Terminator 2 and Blade Runner explore what happens when humans overreach themselves and interfere in the natural order. Replicants are merely seeking an affirmation of their own lives in the cases of both films.

It is the ambiguity of Blade Runner, which is its strength. It is the antithesis of Hollywood films in which the law of the father and patriarchy are affirmed and there is a cliched, sugarcoated ending. The 1982 version, which shows Deckard and Rachael escaping to another, better world, has those Hollywood qualities. The director's cut, which you are studying, is very different. Blade Runner also breaks down the normal oppositions which exist in film: hero/villain, good/evil, human/machine, angel /Satan, past/future (to have a past is to have a possibility of a future).

There are raging arguments over whether Blade Runner is a racist text or whether is it merely a case of Ridley Scott presenting the future world as he sees it. There are no black characters and the teeming Asian hordes in an East meets West hybridised decaying society (note the punks and Hare Krishnas) suggest that the post-modern world of Blade Runner is very different from that in 1981. Perhaps the film is a critique of the direction in which our culture is heading. This is registered in the chaotic depiction of a post-apocalyptic society in which people are de-sensitised to violence, live to pursue pleasure and lack a sense of social cohesion.. There are also arguments over whether Blade Runner is a misogynistic (anti-woman) film in that it reveals hostility to the female subject. The essential issue that the film raises, however, is that of moral responsibility and what it is to be human.

Humanity is ultimately affirmed in the film. The release of the white dove, Roy's words on the importance of life and Deckard's realisation of his identity (and the need to act and affirm his own humanity and moral responsibility) are key elements in this.

Humanity is expressed in Rachael. Showing Deckard the photo of her mother, her hand trembles. Her nascent and fragile sense of self is contained in this photograph. There is a tenderness and sadness in Rachael. She is 'more human than human', and is the catalyst for Deckard's re-emerging humanity, attested in his love for Rachael. Deckard has killed without compunction, but with each 'retirement' there is a growing repugnance with his own actions, as registered in the close-ups of his face.

Roy must be acknowledged as a ruthless killer. Roy also can be seen as Lucifer in that he is seeking to precipitate the fall of humans in this world. But he can also be seen as a Christ figure that saves mankind and releases the dove at the moment of his death as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The film suggests that Roy's memories and spirit were not lost, 'like tears in the rain', butwere given to Deckard to remember and pass on.

Roy is the sum of his own words on the rooftop of a decaying building in a decaying world. His speech is a lament on the loss of collective memory. Perhaps he saves Deckard because he knows that Deckard is also a replicant. Deckard learns what it is like to live in fear in the same way replicants do. Roy also saves another life as redemption for his own patricidal 'fall' (the murder of his maker, Tyrell).

The combat at the end of the film fuses Roy and Deckard. Roy emphasises the importance of life to Deckard before his own flame is extinguished. The film poses the following questions. Who am I? Why am I here? What does it mean to be human? Humanity is defined as showing compassion to fellow humans, respecting life and nature, and placing others before self. The replicants in the end are 'more human than human', to use Tyrell’s own words.

The final scene explores the nature of good and evil, and social and moral responsibility. Who is immoral? Is it the androids for wanting more life or the creators who exploit them? Deckard's journey of self-discovery and embryonic signs of moral revulsion, is an allegory of the growth towards moral responsibility.

***Genre***

Another of Blade Runner's strengths is that it is multigeneric. This is one of the things that prevent the film being pinned down to a fixed meaning. In this sense it is a quintessentially post-modern text. It straddles Film Noir and the detective genre that commonly has a detached, alienated, rugged loner at the moral centre. It is equally a film about Film Noir. Film Noir usually has a detective uncovering the corruption and 'darkness' within the city. Noir is an urban genre that represents a moral response to the abuses of power in 'civilisation'. Blade Runneris demonstrably science fiction, has romance, and elements of the Gothic/horror genre. It is also a special effects film, with stunning sets and dazzling camera work.

You feel as if you are flying through the urban maze at times.

***Theme***

Blade Runner is a critique of technology and post-industrial rampant capitalism in which consumption and production are idealised to our own detriment. Technology has replaced the natural; there is neon instead of sunlight. Genetic engineering is questioned because it ignores ethical questions, dehumanises everybody and is all about technocommercialism. Our creations tell us about the ugliness of ourselves, which, in Blade Runner, is the tragedy of misused technology,controlled by a technocratic elite.

The film argues against the neutrality of technology. Replicants are driven by the need to define their humanity. They are trapped in superhuman bodies with subhuman limitations. But who is less human? Is it Deckard, who assassinates because he is ordered to, or the androids that kill in their quest for longer life? The replicant's bodies have been invested with pre-determined information in order to maintain existing power relations. Tyrell, their maker, is notionally human, but he is intellectual only, clinical and matter-of-fact, devoid of empathy.

Allied to the abuses of technology are the ways in which corporate power is exercised. Blade Runner presents the pervasiveness of advertising; Coca-Cola, TDK, neon signs are everywhere. The media blitz in Blade Runner acts as mind control. Television is pervasive. The pervasive power of the Tyrell Corporation is also self-evident. The Tyrell Corporation is a social engineer. Yet there is the contradiction that the Corporation that creates the replicants must also kill them. And it does so without a shred of remorse. Replicants threaten to make humans superfluous and take their place. For the corporate leaders life is dispensable and the profit motive underlines all decisions. Concentrations of power are presented as sinister and abusive in this film.

Blade Runner invites you to define the nature of reality. Artificiality pervades the world of Blade Runner, embodied in the owl. the snake and people. Reality is problematic in Blade Runner. It can be created, manipulated, implanted, exploited. misused. Nothing is really what it seems in the world of the film. This is the point of the replicants' artificial memories. The replicants cling to their 'memories', created and implanted as cushions for their non-humanness.

The symbolism and imagery of Blade Runner all underline its concerns. There are the parallels between the baby spiders killing their mother and the replicants killing Tyrell, the eye as a mirror of our own image and a window into to soul, the connection of each of the characters with an animal, the tobacco haze that hangs over the film, a symbol of dissipation and self-indulgence and the acid rain which suffuses Los Angeles.

**Running Sheet and Key Dialogue**

Below is the running sheet and key dialogue for *Blade Runner*. Dialogue from the film script is in highlighted in Italics.

1. Mood-conveying music, background information and location are revealed. Los Angeles, 2019.
2. Exterior scene, cityscape. An eye gazing, reflecting the hell on earth. The Tyrell building looms in the shape of a giant microchip.
3. Interior of building. Holden conducts Voigt-Kampff empathy test on Leon. Leon is nervous, bordering on terror. Leon shoots Holden when Holden asks about Leon's mother.
4. Street scene in Chinatown, a gloomy underbelly. Deckard is pressured by Gaff and leaves with him to see Captain Bryant.
5. Interior scene: Bryant needs Deckard as a *Blade Runner* to ‘retire’ escaped replicants who have returned to Earth.
6. Bryant and Deckard watch video of Leon's test. Other replicants also shown, functions are described.

Bryant*: Nexus 6. Roy Batty. Incept date 2016. Combat model. Optimum self-sufficiency. Probably the leader.* *[ pause ] This is Zhora. She's trained for an Off-world kick-murder squad. Talk about beauty and the beast, she's both. [ pause ] The fourth skin job is Pris. A basic pleasure model. The standard item for military clubs in the outer colonies. They were designed to copy human beings in every way except their emotions. The designers reckoned that after a few years they might develop their own emotional responses. You know, hate, love, fear, anger, envy. So they built in a fail-safe device*

1. Interior of spinner: Deckard is taken to Tyrell building.
2. Tyrell's office. Deckard uses Voigt-Kampff test on Rachael. Has to ask many questions before he discovers that she is a replicant.

Deckard*: Replicants are like any other machine. They're either a benefit or a hazard. If they're a benefit, it's* *not my problem.*

Rachael: *May I ask you a personal question?*

Deckard: *Sure.*

Rachael: *Have you ever retired a human by mistake?*

Deckard: *No.*

Tyrell: *Commerce, is our goal here at Tyrell. More human than human is our motto. Rachael is an experiment,* *nothing more. We began to recognise in them strange obsessions. After all they are emotionally inexperienced with only a few years in which to store up the experiences which you and I take for granted. If we give them the past we create a cushion or pillow for their emotions and consequently we can control them better.*

Deckard: *Memories. You're talking about memories.*

1. Exterior: Deckard and Gaff go to Leon's room at the Hotel Yukon.
2. Deckard finds an artificial snake scale in bath, and photos, which Leon holds dear, in a drawer.
3. Exterior: Chew's Eye World in Chinatown. Leon meets with Roy, discusses lost photos.
4. In laboratory, Roy and Leon talk with and intimidate Dr. Chew. Chew mentions J.F. Sebastian who is re-sponsible for genetic engineering.
5. Exterior: Deckard drives home.
6. Deckard's apartment: Rachael confronts him, leaving in distress when Deckard brutally tells her that she has memory implants. Deckard scrutinises Leon's photos.
7. Street scene: Pris takes shelter under pile of garbage, waiting for J.F. Sebastian.
8. Interior of Bradbury building: Sebastian's apartment - his ‘friends’ greet him. Various androids and robots.
9. Deckard's apartment: He dreams of a unicorn. When awake, he enhances one of Leon's photographs us-ing the esper machine and identifies a snakeskin.
10. Interior of night-club/change room: Deckard finds and questions Zhora, a snake dancer, who escapes into the busy street.
11. Deckard chases Zhora through streets, she is shot dead, as she crashes through plates of glass.
12. Bryant congratulates Deckard, instructing him to go after Rachael.
13. Deckard sees Rachael in the street. Leon menacingly confronts Deckard and is about to kill him but Rachael shoots Leon in the back of the head.

Leon: *Painful to live in fear, isn't it?*

*[ Leon tosses Deckard down on his back. ]*

Leon: *Nothing is worse than having an itch you can never scratch.*

Deckard: *Oh, I agree*.

*[ Leon picks Deckard up by the collar, and slaps him across the face. ]*

Leon: *Wake up! Time to die.*

23. Inside Deckard's apartment, he and Rachel drink. He cleans his wounds. Deckard makes advances to Rachael. Rachael reluctantly kisses Deckard.

Deckard: *Shakes? Me too. I get 'em bad. [ clears throat ] It's part of the business.*

Rachael: *[ Crying... ] I'm not in the business. [ Pause ] I am the business.*

24. Roy Batty, inside Sebastian's apartment, tells Pris of Leon's death. Sebastian fearfully agrees to help Roy meet Tyrell.

Roy: *We're not computers Sebastian, we're physical.*

Pris: *I think, Sebastian, therefore I am.*

1. Inside the lift to Tyrell's building, Roy, who is more intelligent than his maker, suggests a chess move to induce Tyrell to meet Sebastian.
2. Roy meets Tyrell. Knowing that he will not have his life extended, Roy kills him, by gouging out his eyes. Roy*: I want more life, fucker*.

Tyrell: *But, uh, all of this is academic. You were made as well as we could make you.*

Roy: *But not to last.*

Tyrell: *The light that burns twice as bright burns half as long. And you have burned so very very brightly,* *Roy. Look at you. You're the prodigal son. You're quite a prize!*

1. Exterior of the Bradbury building: Deckard on his way to see Sebastian.
2. Interior: an ‘empty’ room. Pris, camouflaged in a wedding veil, attacks Deckard, but is shot in the back and dies violently.
3. Hallway of same apartment. Roy returns, sees Pris' body, laments her death with a tender kiss and realises he is dying too.
4. Roy chases Deckard through building, onto rooftop. A game of cat and mouse ensues. He plays with Deckard but finally saves him as Deckard clings precariously a girder over a dizzying drop.

Roy: *Quite an experience to live in fear, isn't it? That's what it is to be a slave.*

*[ Deckard falls, Roy catches him. ]*

Roy: *I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near Tannhauser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time like tears in rain.*

*Time to die.*

Roy dies, releasing a white dove.

31. Gaff appears on rooftop, congratulates Deckard, leaves with an ambiguous statement about Rachael.

Gaff: *You've done a man's job, sir. I guess you're through, huh?*

Deckard: *Finished.*

Gaff: *It's too bad she won't live. But then again, who does?*

32. Interior Deckard's apartment: Rachael is asleep - she and Deckard flee. Deckard finds the unicorn left by Gaff.

**Recent Exam Questions on Film and TV Drama**

|  |
| --- |
| Answers to questions on Film and Television Drama should refer to the text and to such relevant features as use of camera, key sequence, characterisation, mise-en scène, editing, setting, music/sound, special effects, plot, dialogue . . . |

**2014**

7. Choose the opening or closing scene or sequence from a film or television drama.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain why you find it an effective opening or closing scene or sequence.

8. Choose a film or television drama which has a character who either supports or threatens the main character.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how this character plays an important role in the film/television drama as a whole.

**2015**

7. Choose a scene or sequence from a film or television drama which creates a particular feeling or emotion.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the director leads you to feel this way.

8. Choose a film or television drama which has a character who is admirable and/or unpleasant.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the character is presented in the film/television drama as a whole.

**2016**

7. Choose a scene or sequence from a film or TV drama which shocks or surprises you in some way.

By referring to appropriate techniques, show how in this scene or sequence the element of surprise is made effective.

8. Choose a film or TV drama in which there is a character about whom you have mixed feelings.

Show why this character is important to the film or TV drama as a whole and by referring to appropriate techniques, explain how these mixed feelings are created.

2017

7. Choose a scene or sequence from a flim which has a powerful impact on the audience

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the director creates this impact.

8. Choose a film which explores an important issue.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the director presents this issue in the film as a whole.