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| **A: Context** | |
| **1.’ New Hollywood’** | a) Collapse of studio system and rise of new writers and directors who were the first generation of ‘film students’ – Much more writer-led and director-led.  b) ‘Looser’ approach to style, narrative, genre, etc. and more naturalistic acting style (Method).  c) The rise of the ‘blockbuster’ (large-budget productions aimed mass markets / merchandising). |
| **2. Ridley Scott in Hollywood** | a) British filmmaker – came from an art and advertising background. Hand sketches all of his storyboards for his films in detail (known as ‘Ridleygrams’).  b) Known as an ‘actors’ director’ – closely collaborates with actors and welcomes their input / relaxed approach to improvisation.  c) As a Hollywood ‘insider’, his signature has actually helped redefine the mainstream by influencing the Hollywood style. |
| **3. Blade Runner and New Hollywood** | a) Arrived during the age of the blockbuster, in the shadow of more ‘mainstream’ sci-fi such as Star Wars (consider how it sets itself quite apart from these expectations.)  b) Originally released in 1982, the film was a box-office failure. Despite this initial negative response, it became a cult movie.  c) Its status as a significant sci-fi film was further enhanced by the re-release of The Director’s Cut in 1991 which omitted the voice-over and, more significantly, featured a substantial change to the original ‘happy’ ending. |
| **4. Other Social / Historical Context** | a) As Dystopian fiction, the film is set in the future but reflects concerns about 1980s America: industrialism, over-population and pollution are reflected in the setting.  b) Concerns about a resurgence in identity politics and racism are reflected in the film’s treatment of ‘human’ and ‘other’ in the Replicants, and the fact that the Replicants could be seen as allegorical for African Americans in the narrative.  c) The beginning of the technological revolution in the 1980s is reflected in the Replicants, tapping into fears about technology threatening what it is to be human.  d) The rise of big business, corporations and globalism is reflected in the Tyrell Corporation and its association with power and religion, and in the huge wealth divide in the film. |

**Knowledge Organiser Film Studies Component 1 – Varieties of Film and Filmmaking Section A –** **Hollywood 1930-1990 – *Blade Runner***

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| **B: Characters** | |
| **5. Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford)** | a) The film's titular Blade Runner, and a typical Noir protagonist; a weak male with few heroic traits and a departure from Ford’s more light-hearted roles up to this point.  b) When the film opens, Deckard is disillusioned and retired from hunting Replicants, but is dragged back in to apprehend the Nexus 6 Replicants.  c) He falls in love with Rachael (although his treatment of her is questionable at times) leading to the final revelation that Deckard may be a Replicant himself. |
| **6. Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer)** | a) Leader of the Nexus 6 Replicants, Roy’s goal is to find Tyrell, his creator, to get reprogrammed for a longer life. Kills Tyrell when he finds out that this won't be possible.  b) He eventually saves Deckard's life before expiring in the film's final battle scene. Roy starts out a typical Hollywood antagonist in terms of both aesthetic and narrative function, but gradually evolves from a Satanic figure into a Christ-like figure and displays more humanity and nobility than any other character.  c) Hauer rewrote his character's final “tears in rain” monologue himself just prior to filming. |
| **7. Rachael (Sean Young)** | a) A beautiful young replicant who works in Tyrell's office, she does not know she is a replicant until Deckard tells her.  b) Starts out as a cool executive, in complete control, but gradually we see Deckard penetrate her smooth facade. At the end, she and Deckard run away together.  c) Coded like a typical Noir Femme Fatale, but ironically becomes a weaker, more girlish and naïve character as she becomes ‘self aware’ and falls in love with Deckard. |
| **8. Dr. Tyrell (Joe Turkel)** | a) The founder of the Tyrell Corp, Tyrell is responsible for creating all the Nexus 6 Replicants as well as Rachael. b) Tyrell is presented as supremely powerful, embodying capitalism and also being symbolic of the creator God. Ironically, he dies at the hands of one of his creations, Roy. |
| **9. Pris (Daryl Hannah)** | a) One of the Nexus 6 Replicants, a “standard pleasure model” designed for soldiers.  b) Pris is in a romantic relationship with Roy (who presumably saved her from a life of prostitution) and they seem to be display genuine love and affection for each other. |
| **10. Zhora**  **(Joanna Cassidy)** | a) One of the Nexus 6 Replicants, she performs as "Miss Salome", dancing with a snake at a club called The Snake Pit.  b) Deckard figures out her real identity and she is the first Replicant he takes down, in an iconic death slow-motion death scene that is filled with pathos and beauty. |
| **11. Leon (Brion James)** | a) A male Nexus 6 Replicant who specializes in combat. In the opening scene, during his Voigt-Kampff Test, he shoots the Blade Runner who is originally investigating the case. b) Eventually killed by Rachael when she is trying to protect Deckard. |
| **12. J.F. Sebastian (William Sanderson)** | a) A genetically abnormal genetic designer, he is sweet and genuine and takes Pris in off the street.  b) Spends his free time producing astonishingly realistic toys as mechanical companions to offset his own loneliness.  c) Sebastian suffers from a disease which causes him to age prematurely, which ironically links him to the Replicants who also suffer from "accelerated decrepitude." |
| **13. Gaff (Edward James Olmos)** | a) Gaff doesn't really say or do that much in the film, but the things he does say and do are hugely significant.  b) Like Deckard, he is a Blade Runner; he is sent to retrieve Deckard at the start and seems to keep an eye on him throughout the film.  c) At the end of the film, he lets Rachael, a Replicant, live and also gives Deckard the most definitive clue that he might be a Replicant himself by leaving a silver origami unicorn behind in Deckard's apartment as a clue that he knows Deckard's dreams. |

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| **C: Key Elements of Film Form** | |
| **14. Cinematography** | a) Significant wide shots / establishing shots bathed in detail, giving a sense of the oppressive nature of the setting and the insignificance of the characters.  b) Depth of field, often with background and foreground both in focus (which is also a feature of film noir), highlighting intense detail and giving a sense of ‘off camera space’. Also often highlighting physical and emotional distance between characters.  c) Shots framed with shafts of light penetrating or pulsating through the frame, creating the idea of dystopian oppression. |
| **15. Mise-en-scene** | a) Distinctive ‘retro-futuristic’ style, evoking early sci-fi such as Fritz Lang’s Metropolis.  b) Heavy use of the Film Noir aesthetic, including high contrast in light and shadow, neon signs, smoke and constant rain (also implied to be an effect of environmental cataclysm).  c) Scott’s use of backlight, particularly projecting shafts of light through smoke or atmosphere creates a distinctive mood to the film. |
| **16. Sound** | a) Soundtrack by Vangelis, which fuses futuristic synthesisers with traditional composition (matching the retro-futuristic visual style).  b) Opening sequence, with its contrasting sounds (high pitched, tranquil melody alongside intermittent bass booms) evokes the contrasting themes of nature vs. technology.  c) The ‘love theme’ used in the Rachael & Deckard scenes uses a haunting and melancholic saxophone which is highly evocative of classic Film Noir. |

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| **D: Meaning and Response** | |
| **17. Aesthetic** | a) Scott’s characteristic anti-minimalist style bathes each shot in intense visual detail.  b) The retro-futuristic fusing of sci-fi with Noir aesthetic creates a dystopian setting.  c) Origami unicorn motif which is the cause of debate: for some, it is proof that Deckard is a Replicant, although the ambiguity is arguably more important than a firm answer. |
| **18. Representation** | a) As with Vertigo, the film’s representation of gender warrants a gender theory / feminist study.  b) Masculinity is associated with traits such as power, control and sadism, whereas the female characters are constructed as male fantasy, sexual gratification or objectified for visual pleasure.  c) Consider how all three female characters are Replicants and all in some way sexually subjugated.  d) Deckard has similarities with self-destructive Noir detectives of the ‘40s, lacking emotion, empathy or openness. Rachael fulfils the ice maiden femme fatale role of classic Noir. The sex scene between her Deckard is uncomfortably ambiguous in terms of consent.  e) It is left to the male non-human characters (such as Roy) to voice desire, fragility, philosophy and any sense of humanity. Consider also Roy’s more ambiguous representation in terms of sexuality.  f) Representation of race is also apparent in the lack of any black characters but the Replicants’ ‘surrogate black’ status ties them to the theme of slavery and oppression. |

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| **E: Specialist Study Area – Auteur** | |
| **19. Scott as Auteur** | a) Scott is known as an auteur filmmaker based on his strict adherence to his personal artistic vision as well as desire to control all aspects of production.  b) Almost the opposite of Hitchcock, Scott is known as a director who will listen to the opinions of his actors and use their input in his movies. As a result, actors like working for him and he has had the opportunity to work with a large number of big name and experienced actors. He favours extensive use of the two-camera ‘V’ set-up, thus enabling his actors to play more fluidly off one another.  c) He is also consistent in his choice of composers (Jerry Goldsmith, Vangelis and Hans Zimmer), so clearly the sound of his films is as important to him as the visuals.  d) It is unsurprising given his background that Scott is known as an aesthetic auteur whose signature style has been described as anti-minimalist – bathing his shots in intense visual detail. This glossy look, derived from advertising, became one of the defining features of Hollywood production in the last quarter of the 20th century.  e) So exacting and skilful is the look of his films, that he has been accused of favouring style over content, and creating movies that are all glossy visuals and no substance.  f) Scott’s films are known for their sprawling wide establishing shots which mean that the worlds he creates are much bigger than the characters he places in them.  g) Scott’s films are recognizable by their play of light and shadow to enhance the tone; his lighting is very atmospheric, generally favouring darkness in both interior and exterior settings. h) He is also known for his extensive use of fog, steam or smoke, and his most famous technique is projecting bright lights through steam or fog to create a particular visual atmosphere that has an ‘industrial’ style.  i) Thematically, the issue of what it means to be human is often explored, and his main characters often show mental strength to overcome physical weakness. Escape and freedom is a recurring theme, with his protagonists and narratives often expressing a yearning for escape.  j) His films often have a strong female lead, who proves herself to be better than the men around her, although Blade Runner is unconventional for Scott in that the representation of women is (deliberately) narrow. However, the dominant representations of the male figure in the film are still negative, drawing on conventional ideas of power, control and sadism. |

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| **F: Key Scenes** | |
| **20. Opening Scene** | a) Classic sci-fi trope of scrolling text, although unconventional as it resembles the text of a pulp novel, the first indication of Scott’s fusing of style and genre.  b) Establishing shot of the vast sprawling metropolis shot from above in bird’s eye view, bathed in intense visual detail – one of Scott’s characteristic sweeping wide shots which mean that the worlds he creates are much bigger than the characters he places in them.  c) Extreme close-up of an eye, a recurring motif in the film. It remains unclear whose eye this is, but it reflects the shot of the cityscape the viewer has just been looking at...  d) Slow tracking shot as we approach Tyrell Corporation building, a massive, monolithic structure shaped like a pyramid. The sequencing of shots indicates the next shot takes place inside, but the interior juxtaposes completely with that of the outside; a smoky, Film Noir aesthetic with low key lighting and ceiling fans. |
| **21. Unicorn Sequence** | a) Deckard gets drunk and looks at family pictures while sitting by the piano in his apartment. The link between photographs and memories, and the fact that both can be faked to give a Replicant a fake history, has already been explored in the narrative.  b) It is significant that a close-up of Deckard with his eyes open, staring into space, precedes the unicorn shot, hinting that it is not a dream, but something else – a memory? But since unicorns aren’t real (sorry guys), it can’t be a real memory.  c) The actual unicorn sequence is almost subliminal, seeming not to fit visually with the rest of the film and having no clear literal explanation. It is still very much in line with Scott’s stunning anti-minimalist visual style however.  d) Deckard shakes himself free of the vision / memory, and then proceeds to go and analyse the photograph. Again, the link between photographs, memories, illusion and reality.  e) The significance of the unicorn will of course return in the final scene, when Gaff leaves an origami unicorn in Deckard’s apartment, implying… what? That he knows Deckard’s dreams/memories, indicating that they were perhaps implanted, just like Rachael’s? |
| **22. Rachael & Deckard ‘love scene’** | a) This scene depicts a significant development in the relationship between the male and female protagonists and explores uncomfortable ideas about romantic relationships and gender roles.  b) We see Rachael coming to terms with the fact she is a Replicant, framed with an intermittent searchlight which illuminates her in a brief ‘fade to white’ effect every few seconds. This also communicates ideas about Rachael’s true nature – the transient, fleeting nature of the fade to white suggests her own limited life span as a Replicant.  c) We see Deckard coldly manipulating Rachael in this scene, leading to a less sympathetic, more morally-questionable portrayal of the traditional male ‘hero’ role.  d) Rachael’s question to Deckard as to whether he has ever taken the Voigt-Kampff Test himself is significant to the key theme of questioning one’s own humanity.  e) Rachael literally visually transforms in this scene from ice maiden femme fatale to more of a contemporary heroine when she lets her hair down.  f) Deckard’s ‘seduction’ of Rachael is aggressive and incredibly uncomfortable, leading some to argue that this is, in fact, a rape scene. He orders her to say “Kiss me,” essentially commanding her to give consent, in the same way a human may use a computer by giving it commands. |
| **23. ‘Meet Your Maker’ scene** | a) This scene is rich in religious symbolism; both visually and in the dialogue. Tyrell is depicted as God, Roy as Milton’s Lucifer from Paradise Lost.  b) The audience experiences the beginning of a shift in our relationship with Roy here. We see him deliver a confession to Tyrell (more religious symbolism), and show remorse for his actions, before killing Tyrell in frustration (the recurring eye motif).  c) The archetypal Ridley Scott theme of exploring what it means to be human also plays a big part in our relationship with Roy in this scene. This transformation will be completed later on in the ‘tears in rain’ scene. |
| **24. ‘Tears in Rain’ scene** | a) The symbolic transformation of Roy from Lucifer (in the previous scene) to Christ; the nail through his hand, stripped of his shirt and covered in blood, he is even shot in a number of Christ-like poses in this scene.  b) Roy’s inner conflict as he watches Deckard hang onto the beam, about to fall to his death, evokes the tortoise story from the Leon’s Voigt-Kampff Test in the opening scene.  c) Roy’s famous ‘tears in rain’ monologue was re-written / part ad-libbed by Rutger Hauer, which is relevant to Ridley Scott’s renowned status as an ‘actor’s director’.  d) The dove that Roy picks up, and releases at the moment of his death, symbolises the human soul. Its flying up in the air as Roy dies, perhaps symbolically indicating that Roy has developed a soul after all (or had one all along) and it is now departing for the heavens.  e) Gaff’s lines to Deckard (“You’ve done a man’s work sir,” and “Too bad she won’t live… but then again who does?”) are thought-provoking, particularly when considering the final shot of the origami unicorn, and the potential implications of this. |