

Everyone knows it: Blade Runner (1982) is more than a film, it is a passion. A high-tech Kowloon dragging us to the edge of what we are as a civilization, surrounded by a renewed noir aesthetic. Cyberpunk was a shared task right from the start, fellas: Ridley Scott came in, so Philip K. Dick passed and then William Gibson watched the damn movie, amazed. That would be a new audiovisual odyssey in a nutshell, partially based on actual dystopian scenarios.

Scott's masterpiece is beyond sci-fi, it constituted another way of facing the hard-boiled genre. I am aware that a bunch of forums and chatrooms went mad discussing what would be the meaning of the unicorns or whether Deckard was or was not a replicant, but all of this is nerdy crap that prevents us for the one fact: when the neo-noir collapsed into the science fiction, a Modern Prometheus was given birth. Have you ever seen a classic movie called The Asphalt Jungle (1950)? If you have, you should be aware of it: we are trying hard to escape from ourselves by fleeing into the woods yet we remain still and silent, like being immersed in a nightmare. A Petrified Forest (1936) which symbolizes what we are running from, otherwise predicted long ago by Dickens.

There is a visible line drawn between Strange Days (1995), Children of Men (2006), Dredd (2012), Alien (1979), Existenz (1999), Gattaca (1997), Videodrome (1983), New Rose Hotel (1999), Brazil (1985), Almost Human (2013-2014) or Renaissance (2006) and the rest. Noir sci-fi recreates dirty, savage, discouraging and alienated urban jungles that make our fancies fly. They are quite far away from teen-Expressionist productions such as The Hunger Games (2012-15) or Divergent (2014). On the contrary, our films picture a painful yet essential truth about our modern societies, perhaps a warning.

Noir sci-fi is surrounded by faded neon lights. It seems to be a particular way of expressing anxiety, melancholy. So you can imagine that the first time I came across Jensen's apartment my soul got excited to tears, exactly like Poe described the contemplation of beauty. Deux Ex: Human Revolution (2011) provided such a wonderful visual experience by sending us back to the roots, so it did the soundtrack by Michael McCann. Hengsha city is quite a digital memento, with all that yellowish and warm glitter embracing us between the shootings. We are all aware of it: Noir sci-fi depicts an alienated vision of the world, drowning in overpopulation, faceless organized crime and unreachable relief... That is our shared glimpse into the future, a reflection of a whole collective preoccupation of being invaded by self-sufficient machines and Easterners alike.

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