

Blade Runner 2049 (2017)

Rated R. Running time: 2 hours 44 min.

Our content ratings (1-10): Violence 5; Language 2; Sex 2/Nudity 3.

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;*

*what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals
that you care for them?*

Psalms 8:3-4

Director Denis Villeneuve certainly faced a big challenge when he agreed to make a sequel to the 1982 film that has an almost cult following. It helps that the original scriptwriter Hampton Fancher was on hand to join Michael Green in producing a script that rises close to the level of the original—and also, of course, that Harrison Ford was available to assume again the role of Rick Deckard. We will not see Deckard until late in the film, but he will prove crucial for the climax, which becomes a mixture of the triumphant and the tragic.

The original film was set in a dystopia 37 years in the future (2019, which seemed in 1982 a long way off) when a scientist had been able to create androids called Replicants, that are difficult to detect from humans. They have been used as slaves on off-world colonies because, being human-created, they are not considered to have a soul. Because of their dangerous tendency toward violence, Replicants have been banned from Earth, but some have made it through, passing themselves off as humans. A special cop called a Blade Runner is devoted to running them down and retiring (killing) them. Rick Deckard had been a Blade Runner, a very successful one until he had fallen in love with a Replicant named Rachel and with her had

dropped out of sight.

Thirty years later Earth has suffered from ecosystem collapse and wars so that it has become a ruined planet whose inhabitants seek to escape their harsh situation through hedonistic pleasures. Los Angeles' towering buildings are on the brink of ruin, and sunlight never penetrates its smog. A new corporate tycoon (the old one went bankrupt) has developed an even more advanced model Replicant, the Nexus-9, with such "improvements" as a built-in termination date and artificial memory implants. A Replicant named Agent K (Ryan Gosling) is sent out to retire a newly discovered older model replicant named Sapper Morton (Dave Bautista) who has been hiding out in the desert. Before K fights and kills him, Morton speaks of a "miracle" that would make it impossible for anyone to kill a Replicant. After the fight, K discovers a chest buried beneath the lone dead tree outside the house. It contains a female human skeleton and lock of hair. Lab technicians discover that the woman had given birth, but then a serial number etched onto a bone reveals that the woman had been a Replicant, even though this was supposedly impossible.

K will set forth to solve this mystery, and then on learning facts that his superiors fear will bring chaos to society, the searcher will become the sought after. In the abandoned ruins of Las Vegas K will at last meet up with Deckard and discover the miracle about which Morton had told him. It is a long and complicated tale, but one that raises the question posed almost 2500 years ago by the Psalmist.

Gosling and Ford are supported by a fine cast that includes Robin Wright as K's department superior, Lieutenant Joshi; Sylvia Hoeks as a Replicant woman named Luv, first a helper for K and then a deadly foe; Ana de Armas as Joi, K's holographic lover; Jared Leto as Niander Wallace, the blind and ruthless head of the company named after him that manufactures the Replicants; Mackenzie Davis as Mariette, one of three Replicants who try to seduce K; Sean Young as

Rachel, repeating her role from the original film; Edward James Olmos, also from the original as Gaff, a cop who had befriended Deckard; Carla Juri as Dr. Ana Stelline, a scientist who designs and implants memories—and who will prove to be a surprise later on; and Hiam Abbass as Freysa, leader of the Replicant freedom movement who was present when Rachel gave birth. If you are like me, you might have trouble remembering all the names, so seeing this with a friend is highly recommended.

This film, with its new characters and old ones based on characters from Philip K Dick's novel [Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?](#), will provide an opportunity to discuss where science is taking us. This is a good one to add to such films as *A.I.*; *Bicentennial Man*; *the Star War series*; and a host of others—even the so-called children's film, *The Iron Giant*.

This review with a set of discussion questions will be in the November issue of Visual Parables.