Blade Runner 2049: An Analysis of the Color Aesthetics of Cyberpunk Movies

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Abstract

Blade Runner 2049 is a sci-fi suspense movie released in 2017. This film takes the sci-fi world as the story background, and mainly tells the story of "replicants" in the future technology world. Due to its cyberpunk film style, the prominent sci-fi-style colors in this film have high aesthetic value. In the context of cyberpunk films, its style is obviously different from the normal film of realism, with aesthetic value. This article will analyze and discuss the film color of *Blade Runner 2049* from three aspects: the color characteristics of cyberpunk, the visual "imagination" of cyberpunk color, and the use of large color blocks in a unified style.

Keywords: cyberpunk film, color aesthetics, imagery

1. Introduction

As a manifestation of aesthetic value, color is also one of the elements that make up the film. It can enhance the atmosphere of the film's scene, and can also play a role in the final visual effect and thematic connotation of the film. Color is an element that can convey emotions and resonate. In addition to objectively restoring realistic colors, color's subjective function of rendering emotions is also commonly used in film audio-visual language to convey the director's intentions through the subconscious. In the future technology world dominated by computer or information technology, the cyberpunk movies whose storylines mainly revolve around the contradictions between hackers, artificial intelligence and upper-class enterprises will undoubtedly make full use of its aesthetic value in the color of the film.

2. The Color Characteristics of Cyberpunk

The visual characteristics of cyberpunk first appeared in "Blade Runner" in 1982. The high-rise cities, intertwined neon billboards and the apocalyptic desert frontier displayed in this film set the tone of cyberpunk sci-fi. The future technology world and desolate doomsday scenes have always influenced subsequent sci-fi movies, showing a classic cyberpunk style.

The cinematic colors presented in the concept setting of cyberpunk-style films have an aesthetic sense. First of all, in terms of color brightness, cyberpunk-style movies focus on constructing a mysterious, gorgeous, dark, technological and futuristic visual image, which is impressive. Cyberpunk movies have a large contrast in color and brightness, and the low-brightness decadence, darkness, and high-concentration gorgeousness and future technology have unified the construction of this future world. Low brightness is shown in the outdoor scenes of the movie *Blade Runner 2049* where there is almost no direct sunlight. The whole world is in a dim atmosphere, either cloudy or rainy. The light is mainly artificial light sources, and the indoor environment is usually only There are a few light sources, in a dimly lit environment with low lighting. The color tone of the city is mainly black, accompanied by dark blue, brown and gray. In color psychology, such colors have negative emotions of sadness and indifference, and also express the visual perception of mysterious technology.

Of course, there are also bright colors in *Blade Runner 2049*, mainly white and yellow. White is a simple, pure

and delicate color, and it is also a symbol of ruthlessness and centralization. The scenes of prominent figures of the human class and outstanding scientific and technological power, large-scale high-brightness monochrome rendering, contrasting with minimalism and noisy market, are mostly used in the bad environment of the upper-class centralists.

In addition to hue brightness, high purity is also one of the characteristics of cyberpunk movie colors. The three primary colors of red, yellow, and blue are the colors with the highest purity. In the cyberpunk film and television style, the high-purity color light source is bad around the city, mainly neon signs. The mixed appearance of high-purity colors in large areas and small areas not only reflects the sense of technology in the city, but also shows that the gap between the rich and the poor is mixed in this big environment, showing the fast-paced technology and technology of the times. Germinal contradictions and irritation dangers.

3. Visual "Imagination" of Cyberpunk Colors

The colors of cyberpunk films show the representation of "imagery". The film uses the effect of color on the environment and characters to bring the audience into the "reality" in the film, and more intuitively feel the inner spirit of living individuals. Cyberpunk movies love exaggerated mashups of colors, especially reflected in the clever use of neon lights in the film. The main feature of neon lights is bright and dynamic. It is not a single-tone performance, but diffuses around in the form of color light waves. Although the lights reflect a sense of technology, the chaotic alternation of high-rise buildings and neon lights is more real life in a society with advanced technology. In the world of cyberpunk, due to the monopoly of big financial groups, the gap between the rich and the poor is huge, creating a world in which a small number of elites rule and a large number of people at the bottom live in emptiness. People at the bottom of the society live here in the dark, with a huge scale, mixed population and chaos, and this situation actually forms a sharp contrast with the high-tech society. The neon elements in *Blade Runner 2049* are borrowed from the Kowloon Walled City in Hong Kong, with dilapidated rusty and moldy streets and buildings, staggered wireless TV antennas and drying racks, dry and damp alleys, and billboards arranged at an alarming density. The extremely dilapidated walled city is in sharp contrast to the surroundings of Hong Kong (Tan Jing, 2020). The streets are filled with the variegated light of neon signs, which is hazy and mysterious.

Neon signs are mainly blue, purple, red, yellow and green, which are used alternately with each other.

The blue light card symbolizes gloom and gloom; the purple light card symbolizes desire and corruption; the yellow light card symbolizes luxury and lasciviousness; the green light card symbolizes hope and hopelessness. The film places these bright and dazzling neon signs in a background environment with blue-black and black as the main tone, highlighting the noise of the environment, the differences of classes, and the complexity of people's hearts. The bizarre, rotten and noisy environment also contrasts with the minimalist environment of the Chinese Lace Company, showing its class differences.

In addition to setting a large number of exaggerated and illusory neon elements, the film also sets realistic colors for the environment where the characters are located: the characters' clothing and environment are mainly gray, black and brown. The main character K in the film is dressed in low-saturation and low-brightness colors from beginning to end, mainly gray, black, and brown, including the room where he lives. The boundary is grayer as the main color. People have long been accustomed to the gray world, and the audience has long been accustomed to the gray tone of the story, so when the protagonist K holds a small yellow flower in his hand, the impact he receives in his heart is conveyed to the audience through the contrast between the yellow color of the few plants and the gray world. Through the strong contrast of uneven color, the audience can empathize with the protagonist to a greater extent, so as to achieve the color teaser effect that the director wants.

4. Large Color Block of "Defamiliarization" of Unified Style

In *Blade Runner 2049*, in addition to the mixing and mixing of colors, there are also large-scale renderings of scenes in the form of minimalism using monochrome. A large area of uniform color is also a color presentation method often used in the film. In the film, the director mostly uses blue, purple, yellow and orange, the oppressive, dark and damp visual atmosphere of the cyber world is presented through a large area of solid colors, which is also the obvious difference between the cyber style and other sci-fi works. The "defamiliarization" color that it presents beyond ordinary people's life scenarios also creates a sci-fi feeling for the atmosphere of the film.

The first is a large area of blue emitted by billboards and artificial intelligence. Blue is one of the three primary colors. It has the shortest wavelength among the three primary colors and is a cool color. Compared with warm colors such as red and yellow, blue is not dazzling. Often reminiscent of calm, icy things, such as the sky and the sea, usually represent melancholy feelings and eternity of time. Because the background of the cyberpunk world is set under technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence, it does not represent absolute darkness and despair. In the movie *Blade Runner 2049*, Blade Runner K found that the 3D projection virtual people in the

city were all exactly the same as his artificial intelligence girlfriend. At this time, the virtual artificial intelligence girlfriend's hair on the huge projection above was blue and black. A mix of silver (silver adds a sense of metal technology), blue and purple are psychedelic around the protagonist K, which is full of technology and also exudes a touch of coldness and loneliness. In fact, this girl is a substitute for loneliness everywhere in the world. When the male protagonist sits in the car and shuttles through the city, the blue color covers the whole picture, and the blue with high saturation and low brightness reflected on the car window contrasts this cold and technological city and the male protagonist's coldness Lonely heart.

Purple is used extensively in the film. Purple is a mix of blue and red, it's a wonderful color, combining cool blues and warm reds produces purple that is beautiful, mysterious and dreamy, not harsh or cold. Purple implies a mysterious universe, an unknown reality, and a sense of technology beyond reality, which is favored by concept designers. Ultraviolet light has a very strong penetrating ability. In the hazy world of *Blade Runner 2049*, this surreal purple makes the audience's eyes bright, and the whole body skin of the virtual girlfriend projected in the air exudes purple light. This seemingly beautiful and dreamy person is just a virtual intelligence that can be copied by thousands, ethereal and powerless.

In addition, warm colors such as yellow and orange also appear many times in the film. Warm colors often give people a warm and enthusiastic feeling, which symbolizes the flame of the sun. In *Blade Runner 2049*, the protagonist K was on his way to find Decker. When he passed a barren desert, the orange-red desert that appeared at this time was very impressive. The yellow tone throughout is reminiscent of Danish artist Olafur Eliasson's 2003 exhibition "The Weather Project" at the Tate Gallery in London. This immersive artistic color exhibit is very similar to the set design of *Blade Runner 2049*, with a "sun" rising from the mist occupying the Turbine Hall of the museum. By turning the ceiling of the Turbine Hall into a mirror, the refraction of light makes the whole hall become a giant orange sun, like a fairyland and apocalypse. People will naturally lie down during the exhibition and feel the interaction with the space. The main color of a sandstorm is orange, so when this orange-yellow appears, it also means the end of the world. The world is covered by sand and dust, which runs counter to the green of nature. Orange-yellow gives people a visual experience of decay and destruction. There is also a large amount of orange and yellow in Wallace Company, which is in line with the background of the story: green, let alone trees, when the ecological environment is neglected by human beings, and Wallace Company uses a large number of orange-yellow wood products for construction, The walls and tables are made to reflect their upper class and create a virtual sense of warmth and happiness. The orange and simple gray and white are used in the empty interior, which is in contrast with the outdoor world and is out of tune.

Blade Runner 2049 has a unique style in the application of color. The film also tries to awaken people's true emotions through the unique emotional power of color. The use of cyberpunk-style exaggerated colors also aims to appeal to people to develop technology while grasping the natural and real environment and natural and real colors.

References

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