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## No One Can Hear You Scream in Space: Evaluating Ridley Scott's "Prometheus"

After eternally transforming the science fiction scene with his groundbreaking film *Alien*, Ridley Scott returns to his home turf years later with an implied prequel, *Prometheus*. Though the potential of the new film sent devoted *Alien* fans into a frenzy of anticipation, it quickly became evident that *Prometheus* would be nothing like its predecessor. Lacking the fast-paced action sequences that would make it the epic crowd-pleaser that many viewers expected it to be, *Prometheus* also fails to meet its intended tone of a profound contemplation of the origins of humanity. All in all, the film is unable to meet the demands of both its action-seeking audience as well as its meaning-seeking viewers. Instead, what results is an uncertain, try-too-hard film with a murky atmosphere and slow pace, redeemed only by the sudden, unexpected entrances of violent aliens.

*Prometheus* follows the story of a small, ragtag bunch of space explorers, led reluctantly by the ideals of two strongly spiritual scientists – protagonist Dr. Shaw (Noomi Rapace) and her partner, Charlie (Logan Marshall-Green). Believing that they have pinpointed the exact location in the galaxy where God (or, the “engineers” of civilization) exists, the couple is awestruck at the notion that they may finally find the answer to the meaning of life.

Unfortunately for the audience, however, they are wrong. *Prometheus* indicates as its premise the danger in overstepping the boundaries of humankind, but also cites this as a rationale for sneakily circumventing the important, profound, and fascinating questions it poses – for which the entire film was based on in the first place. Presumably, the overambitious film bit off more than it could chew in asking these loaded questions, resulting in an inability to make the remaining parts fit together logically. With gaping plot holes and bewildering scenes, *Prometheus* creates an unconvincing world and is ultimately just a two-hour-long, glorious show of having nothing to say.

Perhaps it is also because of this directional uncertainty that *Prometheus* becomes so utterly unrealistic. The film sets plot twists that don't make logical sense, and then makes no effort to explain away the apparent changes in its universe. An example of this is when Shaw, though previously revealed to be infertile, becomes pregnant with an alien child, which grows in her stomach at an alarming rate. Terrified, she performs C-section upon herself with only a couple of shots of adrenaline to keep her from going insane from the pain, using a futuristic surgery machine to take care of the job. The machine lasers open her stomach and then grabs the baby from her uterus like a claw machine. After ripping out a few apparently unimportant looking body

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parts spilling out of her wound, Shaw programs the contraption to staple her stomach shut before immediately getting back to prancing around the spaceship as if nothing ever happened.

The film does, however, succeed in adequately glossing over these glaring faults by efficaciously utilizing its greatest asset: its stellar acting. Prometheus distracts the audience from incomprehensible plot turns through its exploitation of a phenomenal cast. Noomi Rapace, who played Dr. Shaw, completes a particular feat in tackling several especially challenging scenes. A cast propelled by intense talent, Prometheus is watchable mainly for these performances. Rapace keeps the audience on the edge of their seats in horrified anticipation, while Michael Fassbender injects anxious fear into the minds of onlookers. In portraying the character of David – an emotionless, perfect, manmade robot – Fassbender is forced to forgo an emotional approach to his role, creating instead an emotionally detached character that unexpectedly ends up showcasing Fassbender at his best. With a performance defined by quiet intimidation and subtle wit, the actor produces the most fascinatingly disturbing characters in the science fiction world. Neither of “good” nor “bad” nature, David is complex beyond words despite being synthetically programmed, his calm face belying the complicated motives behind it.

David is a strange, layered personality that is endlessly difficult to understand, making him incessantly analyzable – a trait that seems almost paradoxical considering that he is a machine. Though his existence is intended to show robotic perfection, it is evident that he is one of the most humanly imperfect characters in the cast. Forever questioning and curious, David is arrogant, impulsive, vengeful, and selfish, apathetic to anyone who isn't important to him. For example, David constantly acts on his own without consulting any of his companions, which more than once results in the rest of the team coming face to face with unexpected, dangerous situations that David alone is unperturbed and unsurprised by. It is even plausible that David himself, who is supposedly part of the humans' team, is indirectly responsible for the explorers' calamitous fate.

David's ability to constantly question and move forward toward his goals is one of the main foci of the film. To me, Prometheus represents the importance of continuous questioning in order to arrive at an answer. That is the whole concept behind the movie: it is, after all, Dr. Shaw and Charlie's ambitious desire to find the purpose of life on earth that leads to the ensuing space expedition. Meredith Vickers (played by Charlize Theron), the representative of the corporation financing the expedition, represents a failure to do this. She doesn't really care about the mission; she is more interested in money and in proving her negligent father wrong, attempting to show him that she is finally better than him (which in the end, she wasn't). That is, ultimately, the cause of her death: she didn't care about the alien planet and believed herself to be infinitely superior to both the foolish humans and the conceited robot on her spaceship, as well as the mysterious alien species, and died for her foolishness.

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Even more impressive than the interesting character concepts and exceptional acting, however, are the astounding aesthetics. Despite its downfalls, Prometheus was able to get away with being virtually pointless by being visually fantastic. The confident art direction by H.R. Giger showcased one of the best-looking movies of recent years, exploiting glorious texture and 3D techniques. Although that certainly doesn't mean Prometheus is a great movie, it does provide the audience with a distinct reason to watch it: a gratifyingly exquisite experience that seduces the watcher with beauty alone. Boasting a calm, atmospheric tone that builds both terrifying suspense as well as the beauty of its universe, Prometheus is a true picture to behold.

Attractive or not, in the end, Prometheus is weak as a movie. Its concept is bold and attention-grabbing – to find the answer to the meaning of life – but then as a movie, it is too afraid to actually establish any answer because of the weightiness of its question. Although it can't really be blamed for being uneasy about such a question, especially in a world where millions of reviewers are ready to mercilessly shut you straight down – come on, Prometheus. Please? Where's your opinion? You can't make a movie with no opinion.

Admittedly, however, it ultimately doesn't matter what it all means – the film is meant to spur discussion, and in a pop-culture world where so much of the actual thought takes place in forums on the Internet, being vague actually ends up helping the film. After all, it is undeniable that Prometheus has been one of the most discussed movies of the year.

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