

TAXI DRIVER REVIEW

By

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New York City and its picturesque citizens seem to be a recurring theme in the filmography of various directors throughout cinematic history. However, few have managed to reflect the violence and madness that loom between its streets, as well as the more visceral and mundane reality of its “actors,” as Scorsese does in his 1976 film, *Taxi Driver*. Through the life of a Vietnam War veteran (Travis Bickle), the director showcases one of the many faces of “the Big Apple” that will ultimately further disturb a mentally unstable young man and lead him into a world of fanaticism that will turn him into a psychopath in search of a radical cure for society’s ills.

As mentioned before, the life of Travis Bickle, a former Marine from the Vietnam War with antisocial personality traits, serves as the model used by the director to present a different angle on a rampant New York in the seventies. The film begins with Travis’s attempts to adapt to society by finding a job to cope with his insomnia and anxiety stemming from his lack of direction. It is thanks to this job that the story unfolds, showcasing different locations in the city, its varied characters, vices, prostitution, lust, among others, that ultimately distort this character and lead him to become a violent man. In the midst of his life as a taxi driver, he meets two women of opposing natures: Betsy and Iris. The first becomes his untouchable nymph, whom he cannot reach after frightening her with his strange worldview, and later reveals herself as the starting point of Travis's anger and fanaticism against society. The second is a young prostitute who has fallen into a dark world of drugs and sexual slavery, essentially a character similar to Travis: lost without a clear direction in a terrifying city. Eventually, he focuses on a unique physical regimen, which, combined with a variety of weaponry, culminates in a “social cleansing” that the media and Iris’s parents later portray as the image of a hero.

This film uses a linear narrative with some hints of apparent flashbacks that are not very clear throughout the film beyond the changes in the character's haircut. It also employs the technique of “voice-over,” allowing the narration of Travis's daily experiences through his journal, an intimate object filled with ideas, plans, and above all, hatred against a putrid society. This is reflected in his most notable line: “I wish a rain would fall on this city and wash away all this scum.” The genre is not easy to define, as it has elements of thriller and film noir, grounded in various events revolving around criminal activities with strong expressive content.

Taxi Driver is undoubtedly a masterpiece of cinema, not only for the brilliant performance of a young Robert De Niro but also for the singular portrayal of the madness and fanaticism that envelop a human being affected by war and his inability to naturally adapt to a society guided by appearances and individual interests. The classic scene of the soliloquy in front of the mirror, with a defiant attitude and a challenging: “You talking to me? You talking to me?” is just one example of the impact of this emotional, visceral work that hits an audience seeking lust and cold reality head-on. In my opinion, this is a masterful film that provides a vision of the antihero amid a city where the dichotomy of good and evil is so poorly defined that even madness and fanaticism present themselves as natural elements of being.

REFERENCE

Scorsese, M. (Dirección). (1976). Taxi Driver [Movie]. Estados Unidos.