

Classification High Concept, Film, Fiction Mainstream (studio)

Genre Action, Adventure, Science Fiction, Mystery, Body Swap, Conspiracy, Cloning, Cop/FBI/CIA, Futuristic, Hitmen, Political

No. of Pages 99 **Rating** R **Budget** High

Similar Films Minority Report, Blade Runner, Final Cut, Strange Days, The Sixth Day, 1984, Surrogates, The Matrix, Johnny Mnemonic

Locations (10) No one place has a majority over the others, but some reoccurring sites are in homes, offices, churches, apartment buildings, government buildings, torture rooms, a "Mausoleum," and other places in a futuristic city.

Time Period 2045, Several days

Protagonist M White 35 Good Looking

Competitions Semifinalist in Page - 10-15-2009

Competitions Grand Prize in Script PIMP - 01-01-2010

DJ Logline In a futuristic world where consciousness is stored on computer chips and bodies are bought and sold on the black-market, a murdered cop is reborn in a stranger's body in order to bring down a body-snatching cult that has taken over the government.

R1 Logline One man must stop the world from being ruled by a self-righteous cult and bring an end to a "body trade" system that plagues the futures world.

R2 Logline A special agent fights to uncover a government conspiracy in a futuristic world of cloning, body swapping, and religious fanaticism.

R3 Logline Technology now allows life after death with the help of a computer chip, however the government feels life after death should only apply to the good and moral.

R4 Logline In a futuristic city, a special agent uncovers a black-market conspiracy revolving involving the memory chips in every person's brain.

Overall Grade	3.3	 	3	4	3	3
Reader Initials			R1	R2	R3	R4
Premise	3.8	 	4	4	4	3
Originality	3.5	 	4	3	4	3
Dialogue	3.3	 	3	3	4	3
Structure	4.0	 	4	4	5	3
Character	3.3	 	3	3	4	3
Logic	4.0	 	3	4	5	4
Conflict	3.3	 	3	3	4	3
Formatting	4.0	 	3	4	5	4
Pacing	3.8	 	3	4	4	4
Writing Ability	4.3	 	3	4	5	5

Synopsis

In the future, scientists are able to download the human mind onto a device no larger than a finger. This backup brain, called a Memex, digitally records every thought, experience, and dream consciousness itself and is often referred to as the soul of a person.

A Memex can be removed at death and placed in a digital world as a holograph or it can be transferred to a different living body. This has led to innocent people being kidnapped and sold on the black-market for their flesh. Special Agent THANE MERRICK (35), investigates these illegal rebirths.

One night his boss, Director CHRISTOF ZEKI (70's), calls Merrick to investigate the murder of Chief Justice LAURA DAMATO (65). Merrick follows a few clues but cannot find the killer as he has been "reborn" into several different people's flesh. When Damato is reborn in her clone body, Merrick suspects the new Chief Justice is not who she claims to be. However Merrick's supervisor, Deputy Director VANNEVAR KOCH (44), will not let him pursue his hunch.

Merrick secretly continues his investigation, but as soon as he gets close to the truth, Merrick is murdered. He wakes up with his Memex in a stranger's body. Merrick discovers he has been saved by a mysterious man wearing a mirrored mask known only as DOPPELGANGER.

Merrick turns to Witness VICTORIA HART (26) for help. She witnesses the digital life of his killer while he tracks more clues to a black-market body auction. Merrick discovers Laura Damato wasn't reborn in her clone body someone else is pretending to be the Chief Justice in order to alter an important vote at the C-12 Court. He also discovers Vannevar Koch is behind the conspiracy and ordered his murder.

Merrick goes to Christof Zeki, whom he discovers is Doppelganger. Zeki reveals the depth of the conspiracy: hundreds of illegal rebirths congressmen and congresswomen, judges and justices, officers and agents, all secretly replaced. Why? A powerful fundamentalist terrorist group is trying to take over and change the rules governing rebirth. They want to condemn criminals and sinners to death and use their bodies to resurrect "good" people who are dead and waiting for

bodies.

Zeki admits he was involved in the conspiracy but has since decided to work against it by collecting Memexes of the disembodied and resurrecting them. Merrick learns Koch kidnapped Hart. Merrick sneaks into the Basilica of the Oversee, rescues Victoria. Meanwhile, Zeki is murdered. Hart tells Merrick her Memex contains a virus that if released into the Mausoleum, where all Memexes of the dead are stored, would make the Memex turn cold, making them impossible to be reborn. Then the conspirators would have no reason to disembody sinners.

After fighting and killing Koch, Merrick puts Hart's Memex in and releases the virus. All Memexes go cold. At the end, Merrick takes the mirrored mask of Doppelganger and vows to take revenge on every conspirator.

Reader 1 Comments

OVERALL (3)

“Second Born” is a fast-paced, futuristic, action genre that asks questions of moral justice and hypocrisy as well as questioning the soul of a person. It is an original story of good vs. evil and the frailty of human life and loss set in a world of greed and political corruption. The three-act scene structure is followed while developing characters that are smart and fast in their responses to the world they live in. It is an easy read with only some difficulty from the vast amount of action and chase scenes that are described in detail throughout as well as the people changing bodies by switching memexes, or digital “souls.”

PREMISE (4)

When the Chief Justice Laura Damato (65) is killed, her memex which stores a persons memories, personality, and allegedly even their soul, is placed in her clone. But her reborn self is too different to really be her. Special Agent Thane Merrick (35) is called in to investigate. His partner, Agent Io (30s) soon has her own body stolen from her and betrays Thane. Aided by his wifes digital self, a co-worker, and the inventor of memexes, Thane must battle the system and trust no one in a search to destroy the people behind the assassination of the chief justice. What he discovers is a cult that wants to kill anyone who commits a sin on their list of serious sins and use their body to rebirth good people. Director Christof Zeki (Late 70s) tells Thane a way to infect a virus in the system that would prevent people from being reborn into another body. In the end, Thane must sacrifice a good friend and the hope of his wife ever being in the flesh again in order to save the world from the self-righteous cult.

The premise is intriguing and asks many moral questions. Taking place in a world that is ruled by a greed for immortality, one man must battle the system. It is an exciting read that asks how far humankind will go to punish evil, obtain eternal life, and become like God all while using fight scenes, chase scenes and twists.

ORIGINALITY (4)

“Second Born” is a truly original piece of futuristic fiction. It asks questions such as, “What is the soul of a person?” “Does anyone really deserve to exist?” and “Can a person be immortal?” All of these are addressed in a world that is unique to “Second Born” alone.

STRUCTURE (4)

It is a well-structured story from beginning to end. The conflict is established early on. From the first scene, it is easy to tell what the problems with the world of memexes being implanted in another persons body to “switch souls” are. The questions “Second Born” asks are easy to find, but harder to answer. They are addressed throughout with ample time to reflect in between. Most scenes move the plot forward, however, the many action and chase scenes at times distract from the story itself and do not have a specific reason for being in the script. At the same time as these action scenes, a less interesting speech or investigation is often happening in an intercut fashion. This sometimes saves the scene legitimacy and could attribute to pacing, but often it simply feels as if it is trying to hold interest instead of moving the plot forward. The climax and resolution are swift and interesting, bringing a great amount of relief to the tension.

PACING (3)

The pacing is always fast. This is due to the several intercut scenes, but mostly due to the amount of fight and chase scenes. While the action is exciting, it is also a bit contrived at times. Since the world is an imagined world, it takes some time to absorb everything and much of “Second Born” does not give sufficient time to consider what just happened. This can be both a positive and a negative thing as a dull moment never occurs in the script, but can make the amount of action overwhelming. The “torture chair” and “The Sorrow” pain-poison are overused as a way of getting information and brings the tension to a screeching halt after about the third time it is used.

CONFLICT (3)

Sufficient conflict is established in “Second Born,” but is sometimes overshadowed by the amount of action scenes.

Thane must fight off a cult bent on murdering and replacing people through using their memories, or digital memories and souls, to put the right people in power, and to murder the bad and replace them with “good” people. The conflict is established at the beginning and expounds throughout. Thane must battle internally with allowing his wife to be “reborn” in someone else’s body and externally with allowing people to be murdered and a vote of the people’s representatives to be altered. He is never really faced with many personal struggles however, and is often just battling for the cause of good. He is never faced with the decision to allow the bad to happen. This takes away from the relatable character and the personal touch on internal conflict.

CHARACTERS (3)

The characters are likable and have their own desires, motives, and voices, but at times they are confusing for several reasons. Victoria’s gift of “high-sight” is never fully explained thus making Christof and her tender relationship hard to understand. The explanation given between them is only in one sentence when Victoria explains Christof gave her rebirth because he needed her to be a witness since she had “high-sight.” He later admits that planted the virus in her to protect her. This is confusing because he did not plant it in his wife or anyone else and their relationship does not seem to be that close until the end. Also, it is hard to keep track of who is really in each character’s body since they change bodies so often. Despite this, the characters all have unique and well developed arcs when they are alive.

DIALOGUE (3)

The dialogue works well to push the story forward, but is also blunt in asking moral questions. This can feel insulting as the questions could be raised in a way that does not sound so bluntly like it is a simple moral tale disguised in a futuristic action shell. The rest of the dialogue is witty and serves to expound upon character and action.

WRITING ABILITY (3)

“Second Born” is practically flawless in formatting. It is well-written and engaging with no spelling or grammar issues presenting to distract. The hardest part to reading “Second Born” is keeping track of the characters and reading the profuse amount of fight and chase scenes. All the action scenes are well-written, but they are lengthy explanations and since they occur so often it is difficult to stay focused on what is happening in the action. Also, there are multiple torture scenes that are all written similarly with the same pattern of ask for information, inject “The Sorrow,” ask again for information, then resolution of the scene.

Reader 2 Comments

OVERALL (3)

A fantastic and enveloping thriller with well crafted action and impressive imagery. With an engaging premise and strong sense of structure, this surrealistic sci-fi story adds a fresh angle to a familiar theme. Though dialogue and character suffer at times, the intense pacing and effective use of suspense overshadows the majority of the story’s flaws.

PREMISE (4)

Special Agent Thane Merrick (35) is called in to investigate the murder of Chief Justice Lara Damato (65). Though he normally only investigates illegal rebirths by which a person’s soul can be swapped from body to body by removing and replacing brain implanted computer chips, his boss and mentor, Christof (70’s) needs him on the case. When Damato’s soul is placed in her own clone, Thane notices her abrupt change in behaviour and suspects foul play. After further investigation using witness Victoria Hart (26) Thane slowly uncovers a plot to rid the world of all “sinners” and use their bodies for the pre-selected “saints”. Following many twists and turns down the rabbit hole, Thane fights, blasts, and kills his way through to a mausoleum holding millions of souls waiting to inhabit their new bodies. Using a virus implanted in Victoria’s own soul chip, Thane destroys the bank of souls and sets out to exact justice on each of the government conspirators.

Though the premise requires a second look to fully grasp, the theme has been touched on before and remains accessible to a mass market. The idea places it firmly in the sci-fi genre but possesses enough broad storytelling to retain a larger appeal.

STRUCTURE (4)

A traditional three act structure is used throughout. All major characters and plot lines are effectively introduced in the first act as well as a clear inciting incident. The second act succeeds in raising the stakes and creating a sense of suspense while furthering character goals. Act three provides a satisfying climax though there is a noticeable lack of elevated conflict. The main character deals with much of the same obstacles he faced in act two with no sense of added suspense. Thane evades and kills nameless thugs in act two, and does much of the same in act three with no seemingly heightened challenge.

CHARACTER (3)

The main characters are well established and possess a clear physical goal. Thane and Victoria are both empathetic and take direct action that effectively move the story forward. However, there is no palpable emotional need for these characters. Thane pursues the conspirators in the name of justice but has little emotional investment. At the story's end, aside from his new found want for revenge, Thane's character does not grow or change in any clear way. Victoria follows Thane to the end where she discovers she has to commit suicide in order to achieve their goal and yet has only a marginal, tacked on internal struggle with the idea. Peripheral characters such as Christof, Damato, Io, and Koch are mostly one dimensional but serve the story effectively.

DIALOGUE (3)

Each character has their own unique voice and is easily identifiable. While there is moderate use of subtext, a noticeable amount is on the nose and expositional. Thane, who is blindly investigating a secret conspiracy, has bursts of overt and explanatory dialogue that flows much differently than most other moments. Other instances flow like that of prose rather than normal speech.

CONFLICT (3)

Considerable conflict is present in both the first and second act. As Thane and Victoria delve deeper into the conspiracy, effectively timed twists and reveals occur at appropriate moments. However, though the obstacles continue into the third act, they do not escalate. Many guards and henchmen are avoided or killed by Thane and Io in act two, and act three is more of the same. When an obstacle arises that threatens to raise the stakes, Thane's ghost wife, Ava, appears and provides a convenient solution. Though this is noticeable, it is not distracting.

PACING (4)

Major events, character appearances, and reveals are all well timed and engaging. The story's momentum is effectively maintained using an infectious sense of urgency, action, and suspense. Despite a muddled latter section, the pacing itself remains constant, providing a strong and uninterrupted sense of tension.

ORIGINALITY (3)

This futuristic theme of souls living on in a computer, as well as cloning and body swapping, is a well tread area, but the formula is well executed while still adding enough fresh elements to remain fresh and interesting. The story borrows heavily from such films as *Minority Report*, *Blade Runner*, *The Sixth Day* etc, but still manages to retain a sense of originality.

WRITING ABILITY (4)

Proper formatting is used throughout. There is a firm grasp of both direction and visual storytelling which flows naturally. Parentheticals are kept to a minimum and there are almost no noticeable typos (28.8), or camera angles. A clear tone is established and remains consistent, never changing style or precedent.

Reader 3 Comments

OVERALL (4)

"Second Born" is a fast paced science fiction thriller with a hard hitting question about religion and government. It is well thought out with well rounded characters and a tense story that whips along quickly. The ending is left open, not knowing whether the protagonist will carry out his threats of murder toward other antagonists, but this can only lead to a sequel. Suspense fills this well written piece with chilling dialogue, adding tension throughout.

PREMISE (4)

In the year 2045, technology has made it possible to harness the minds of human beings by having their memories and thoughts stored in a microchip, called a Memex, placed within in the skull. Once a person dies, the chip is removed and placed in a giant database where friends or relatives can interact with the "ghosts" of those deceased. Host bodies can be purchased via an auction, but they are expensive. Thane Merrick (35) is contacted by his friend and boss, Christof Zeki (70's), to investigate the murder of Chief Justice Laura Damato (65). Once the Chief Justice's Memex is re-inserted into a clone body, Merrick observes that Damato is acting differently, causing him to believe it is not her Memex. Investigating further with witness Victoria Hart (26), Merrick is murdered and is transferred to another body. Returning to his investigation, Merrick discovers a conspiracy in the government, having sinners' bodies snatched and inserting Memexes of innocent people, those who deserve life. Merrick sneaks into the Memex database and unleashes a computer virus rendering the Memexes nontransferable and making the government's plan useless. Merrick then vows to find those playing god and kill them.

The premise is original and thought provoking in an age where medical advancements are constantly occurring. While it is possible to talk to the deceased, the dangers of tampering with people's lives is the controversial subject within the plot. The premise is enjoyable and in a cinematic world where there are robots that can transform, cyborgs, and clones of

humans, this idea fits in nicely with an important message concerning how far life should be taken.

ORIGINALITY (4)

Although reminiscent of a few science fiction films, this story manages to hold its own. The ability to literally hold someone's life in one's hands and make the decision whether to continue it or destroy it comes off as unsettling. The idea of harnessing life and the debate of separation between church and state is touched upon. (67, 69, 70, etc).

STRUCTURE (4)

The standard three act structure is present. First act contains the problem as the villainous Memex is inserted into the Chief Justice. Second act follows Merrick on his dangerous investigation. Act three culminates within the walls where Memexes are stored. Each scene flows naturally from one to the next, evolving the universal problem of the government conspiracy. The subplots are the romances involving Merrick. While he does live with the ghost of his dead wife, he does feel something for Victoria (17, 95).

PACING (4)

The tense pace begins within the first scene involving a Memex transfer with a prisoner. During that first moment of tension, the story moves along, raising the conflict and stakes through to the end. The characters' involvement helps push the story forward to the climax.

CONFLICT (4)

The conflict is seen right away with the administering of a Memex into a dead murderer's body. Once Merrick's investigation begins, there is an internal and external conflict dealing with his views on the government's stand on the Memex and wanting his wife to have a new body. The conflict involves all the characters and forces them into action where they must rely on one another to solve the problem. By the end, there is satisfaction after Merrick installs the virus and threatens death to those associated with the problem.

CHARACTERS (4)

The protagonists are strong and have an emotional depth within their environment. The antagonists are despicable as they use god as a means to carry forward their spiteful plans among society. The protagonist, Merrick, has an external passion for solving the mystery of why the government is performing these body transfers, while his anger grows stronger during his investigation. Merrick believes this is a result of his Memex switched into a body that retains feelings from the previous inhabitant (35). Although Merrick can be angry and violent, his sensitive side makes him identifiable. Although his wife is dead, her ghost remains with him in his apartment. Merrick still loves her as though she continues to live, and wants her transferred to a new body. Victoria and Ava, Merrick's dead wife, both are loving and strong characters that are active in the fight against the government (88, 90). The antagonists are cold, ruthless characters from the beginning (2). Their reign of terror and lack of emotion portrays them as hateful, adding to the anticipation of their demise by the protagonists.

DIALOGUE (4)

What the characters say correlates with their personalities. Merrick is a tough man who becomes tougher once he undergoes a body transfer, having an effect on the way he talks, making him colder (49, 50). The dialogue is quite chilling when antagonists are at the podium, notably Vannevar's propaganda speech (66, 67, 68, etc). The dialogue is effective and adds tension to the story.

WRITING ABILITY (5)

The proper writing style has been followed and is effective. The action scenes are fast paced, sustaining interest to the end. The action scenes are not all complete sentences. However, the scenes sprint along creating a sense of urgency and tension (52). No spelling errors are present.

Reader 4 Comments

OVERALL (3)

"Second Born" is solid, highly conceptual science fiction. It is expertly written with the only potential problem being the few lengthy action sequences. The structure and pacing are both excellent in that they provide a gripping, action-filled tale. Dialogue, however, is a weak point: most conversations revolve around one or two theme subjects. Similarly, characters are slightly one-dimensional and hard to define due to the narrowness of this focus.

PREMISE (3)

In the year 2045, Special Agent Thane (35) investigates the assassination of Chief Justice Laura Damato (65). Lauras assistant claims that when Laura is brought back to life through cloning, her Memex - a common memory chip that downloads the entire brain - was replaced with someone else's. Deputy Director Vannevar Koch (44) writes this off.

Thane investigates anyway with Agent Io (30s), and he realizes that Io is an imposter. He is killed, but his Memex is mysteriously restored into a new body by a masked man. Victoria (26), a woman with a special talent for scanning peoples memories, reveals to Thane that she is "second born", and that she is 91 years old. Through a series of events, Thane finds Lauras real Memex and learns that his friend Christof is the "Doppelganger" - the man who restored Thanes Memex to a new body after he was killed. Christof reveals that bodies are sold on the black market for the rebirth of criminals. It is revealed that Koch is behind Lauras assassination. Victorias finds out that her Memex contains a virus which could destroy other Memexes if inserted into the Mausoleum. Thane inserts Victorias Memex and kills Koch, vowing to end the conspiracy.

The premise of a memory chip that can be placed into a brain is easily understandable and intriguing, especially when coupled with the possible implications of eternal life and the "second born" idea. This concept is adhered to throughout - sometimes too much, as little else is focused on. However, this makes for a fast-paced, intense ride.

STRUCTURE (3)

It follows a conventional three act structure. The first act revolves around the assassination of the Chief Justice and her possible Memex replacement. In the second act, Thane is killed and he switches bodies. He and Victoria discover the meaning of the assassination. The third is climactic and provides a strong ending. Subplots such as Thane and Avas romance and possible religious significance of the Memex are well-done and captivating as well as informational.

PACING (4)

Pacing is excellent. There are no slow scenes as action and mystery are the driving forces. There is a good balance of dialogue and action as both fight scenes and sit-down conversations are given equal time.

CHARACTER (3)

While the characters fulfill their roles well, they are slightly flat and behave predictably for the genre. Thane and Avas romance is sad but intriguing in that Ava is a ghost who could, someday, realistically return to her former life. Victoria is interesting yet not fully developed, and Io is a complete stereotype of an female action heroine. Vannevar Koch, Christof and the Chief Justice seem to exist to move the plot along and their personalities are barely developed. Thanes body-switch is unavoidable, but it is a little off-putting as he is one person for the first thirty pages and then changes to someone else for the rest.

DIALOGUE (3)

Dialogue is written well but feels stilted and expository. Because of the highly technical and futuristic overtones, it is necessary to quickly explain most of it in the first act in order to understand the rest. However, it is hard to get a read on anyones personality as most conversations revolve around the Memex, the Sorrow, or conflicting philosophical views about the state of the world in light of these technological advances. If this had truly been these peoples reality for the last 100 years, the Memex would just be another part of their everyday life, but they all behave as if it was invented yesterday. The moral questions that are raised are valid, but they are not addressed subtly - this in itself gives the dialogue an unrealistic, blunt feeling.

CONFLICT (3)

Conflict is present at all times and lends to a fast-paced atmosphere, though it usually originates from one of two sources: the assassination plot and the Memex controversy. The fact that the Memex is still controversial after 100 years is confusing. Religious overtones in the third act are strong and believable, but they are introduced somewhat randomly and are not fully explored.

ORIGINALITY (3)

"Second Born" is an interesting "what if?" look at the state of a futuristic world. Common tropes such as futuristic cities, technology being the savior of humanity but also its downfall, corrupted futuristic government and protesters, etc. are used, but fit the story.

WRITING ABILITY (4)

The writing is excellent. There are no typos or grammatical errors, and the overall tone contributes to the action and suspense. There are several action scenes which are slightly too long and/or descriptive (2.5, 31, 40.8, 52, 54.2, 84, 85).