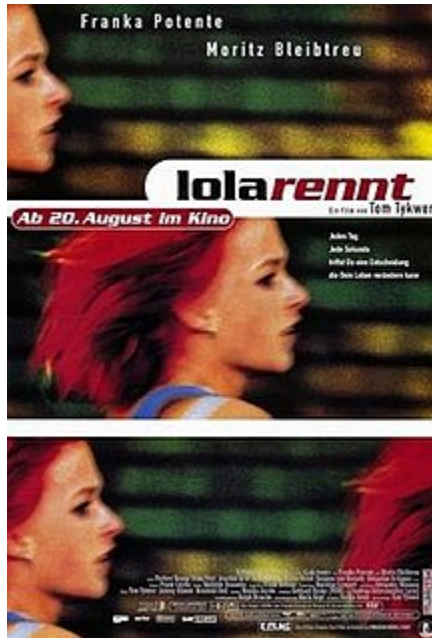


Film Analysis

Run Lola Run



Run Lola Run (1998), directed by Tom Tykwer, is an intense, fast paced action film with a rather simplistic plot and unexpectedly deeper philosophical implications about fate, chance, time, choice, and consequence. Not a second in this movie is boring as it is as high paced as the title implies, both physically and mentally straining.

At the beginning of *Run Lola Run*, two quotes are shown, one about time and exploration as sort of a cyclical process and the other is a philosophical statement about what a game is. These two statements taken together give rise to idea that life is like a game, an important concept of the movie. Then the pendulum of a clock is shown swinging back and forth. The camera enters the "mouth" of the expressionistic looking clock. The concept of time in this movie is invariably important and this action of entering this strange looking clock implies that the audience is entering a place where time is different from what we experience.

Interestingly, the film treats life (or at least in the universe of the characters) as if it were a type of game. There is a reference to the rules/theory of a soccer game at the beginning. Two references to roulette, implying how some things can come about by chance. The sort of instantaneous re-spawns Lola is capable of and the cartoon cut scenes are reminiscent of video games. This idea in addition to how the movie plays out illustrates the multitude of choices one is faced and the various consequences which can result, including butterfly effects (where one choice effects the outcome of another), with some chance and probability thrown in.

Andre Bazin in the "Evolution of the Language of Cinema" postulated two distinguishable aspects in film: plastics and reality. I would argue that this film puts its faith in reality. Though *Run Lola Run* certainly has plastic elements, the reality in it is what really makes the movie memorable. The prime example of reality in this film are the philosophical underpinnings of this film as discussed before. It allows for deeper thought and really drives the action and gives a greater sense weight to every action and consequence in the movie. In addition, the verisimilitude of time and space in each of Lola's run (each approximately 20 minutes as expected for temporal consistency) plays out to give a more realistic feeling. The mise en scene of much of *Run Lola Run* also seems to be based in reality. All of the lighting seems realistic, Lola's clothing dirty with a messy room, she lacks make up, the locations are realistic, and consistent spatial distances. All in all, *Run Lola Run* is like a mix between reality and a video game. The video game aspect gives it a stylistic appeal, but the reality aspect is what really makes the film what it is.

Let's analyze more closely a scene from near the start of the film to greater understand the methods and concepts of this film. Just after the introduction of the film, the basic narrative of the story is constructed by a telephone conversation between the two main characters of the film Manni (Moritz Bleibtreu) and to Lola (Franka Potente). As they converse, chronological flashbacks of first Lola's then Manni's memories introduce the narrative of the film.

The scene begins with a stationary establishing satellite shot of Berlin which then flies continuously through Lola's window finally focusing on Lola's ringing phone. As Lola picks up the phone, a camera flies to the phone booth where Manni is. These two initial flying shots set a sense of urgency. Manni is clearly in a panic and asks Lola why she was not there for him. Lola explains how she was not able to pick him up as her scooter was stolen when she was purchasing cigarettes, as a flashback to this action is shown in black and white on the screen. This action facilitates the film's underlying philosophical idea of chance, coincidence, and the causality which becomes more important later in the film; if Lola did not stop to get cigarettes, then the scooter would not have been stolen and the entire situation would very likely have been averted. Then, Manni talks of the process of trading the cars for diamonds and then selling the diamonds for cash which is shown in black and white as well. He tells of leaving the bag of cash on the subway in a more grainy black and white film stock. This grainy film serves to give a greater sense of realism. When Manni tells of his dire situation, his panic becomes gradually mirrored by Lola as the bag is lost and the weight of the situation becomes recognized. Then, Manni panics about the missing money and wonders where the homeless person could have traveled to by now with the money. Pictures of possible cities are flashed on the screen as Manni says them. Then Manni's gangster "boss" is shown in the punishment Manni received in the past for stealing a carton of cigarettes. Though the job Manni took is likely illegal, there is a sense of sympathy in favor of Manni knowing he is under large pressure by an overbearing boss but, also a feeling of hopelessness is present knowing that his story would not be believed and the punishment for losing such a large sum of money will be much more brutal.

This scene consists of an overlay of two different actions separated temporally. They are shown talking on the phone in color while past events are shown in black and white with a slightly quicker progression of time. The black and white aspect indicates the action is in the past while the faster time progression contributes to the important concept of the time anomaly in the movie while also portraying the racing thoughts and panic both characters have.

Initially, Lola's knowledge of the situation is on the same level as that as the viewer. Thus, naturally, Lola is more composed than Manni, which quickly changes as Manni's situation becomes clearer, presumably also acting to gradually increase the tension felt by the viewer. The presence of the deep connection and love between them both (the image of their strong love recurs several times in the film) is established to the viewer by Lola's unwavering motivation to help Manni in any way possible. Primarily close-ups are used as Lola and Manni are on the phone to capture the strong emotion in both of their faces due to the situation. The anger and fear possessed by Manni is also reflected in these camera shots. The shots of Manni on the phone are relatively intermittent and many different perspectives are used really acting to encapsulate his angry emotions. In contrast, the shots of Lola are for a longer duration and are steadier reflecting her composure. In the flashback scenes medium shots and long shots are employed as a way to better show the progression of events. The backing techno track raises the tension and carries the fast pace of the film as well as establishing the main musical genre employed throughout the film.

The mise-en-scene of the entire film is set up in this scene. Lola becomes associated primarily with the color red. Her hair is red, she has red candles, a red phone, and red posters. Manni is associated with yellow. The phone booth is yellow and has blonde hair highlights. The spatial distances are all realistic and the phone booth and room dimensions are typical. The phone booth Manni is in has a close, claustrophobic feeling, reinforcing the tension filled "tight" situation that he has found himself in, while Lola's room is has a typical apartment size. The main characters are wearing realistic clothing for the era and the lighting is natural and realistic. Lola's room is messy with dark with tattered blinds only letting in a small amount of light. Meanwhile, Manni is in a phone booth in the light of day. Everything is realistic and expected for a typical day in a German city. This realistic mise-en-scene *Run Lola Run* possesses importantly puts the viewer in the same frame of thought as the characters. This both adds tension to the scene and makes a deeper connection the viewers have with the characters about choice and consequence.

This flashback visual narrative works as a great introduction to set up the rest of the movie. It is basically the "establishing scene" for the entirety of the movie. This scene establishes the mise en scene of the film, it starts the narrative, and gives a good sense of the two main characters in the film. In addition, it sets the setting, the high tension, and the fast pace of the film. Tykwer used a large amount of editing techniques, the character's visual and verbal emotion, realistic mise-en-scene, and backing techno music to this effect. Conclusively this flashback scene serves an incredibly important role in its ability to set the fast pace of the film while introducing the general aspects of the film.