

How effective is the opening of mississippi burning



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I think that the opening of a film is critical to its success because the opening has to instantly make the audience want to keep watching, just like the first paragraph of a book. If the opening scene doesn't get the viewers attention they won't want to watch the remainder of the film. The two films whose openings I have analysed are very different from each other. "Reservoir Dogs" opening is very different to the next scene whilst "Mississippi Burning" opening reflects what mood the whole film will be based on.

The opening of the Quentin Tarantino directed film "Reservoir Dogs" is very clever. The opening scene is very comical, it begins with the films main characters dining in a restaurant where they are light-heartedly discussing the meaning of the song "Like a Virgin" and why society demands that people tip waitresses. However, after the introductory credits the mood of the film changes dramatically when the scene is changed to a stolen car fleeing from police and one of the members lying on the back seat of the car with a gun shot wound.

I believe that this is a very clever and effective opening because it does the unexpected, it led the audience into believing that the remainder of the film would be a comedy and not very hard hitting. But as soon as the credits are over, camera are techniques used to transport the audience into the stolen car and with the man with the gunshot wound. Suddenly you are part of the film and very eager to find out what will happen to the men in the car. This is achieved through the camera angles used including an overhead view on the gunshot wound that makes the film seem very real.

The soundtrack is also very intense which adds to the tension and excitement, a constant drum beat maintains throughout the police chase and as the police car edges closer to the car the drum beat becomes faster and louder. As the stolen car pulls away from the trailing police car the drum beat fades away to ease the tension and to make the audience aware that the stolen car has lost the police. The opening of Mississippi Burning seems to reflect that the film will be about racism and quite harrowing and serious.

If alert the audience will immediately link the film to racism, as one of the first images in the film is that of segregated drinking fountains for white and black people. The soundtrack also suggests that the film be of a serious nature because it creates an atmosphere of danger by using black gospel music, which cements the racism link further. The images of the burning house combine excellently with the music to make the scene very depressing and sombre.

As the house finally collapses the camera zooms in making the experience more intense. I think that the director combined these images with the soundtrack to make the audience tense before the action unfolds. In the next scene a car is shown driving down a deserted road the camera angle expands to show that the road is in the middle of nowhere and that there is nobody to stop an attack from happening. The camera then switches into the car where the lighting is very dark but the characters seem quite relaxed.

Here I think the director is leading the audience into a false sense of security. Because a drum beat dramatically starts and on the horizon you can see a fleet of cars closing in on the car with the Civil Rights workers in.

As the fleet of cars edge nearer to the Civil Rights workers car like in "Reservoir Dogs" the music gradually becomes faster and more intense until the point where one of the cars ram the Civil Rights workers car where the music momentarily stops only to start again.

When a police siren starts to wail your immediate thought is that the police are here to stop the chase, but it did cross my mind that the police car may have been stolen and it was just a means of getting the car to stop. As the men got out of the police car I was eager to find out if these men were really policemen but the director is very clever by using lighting to hide the mens identity which adds mystery and suspense to the scene.

Right up until the men get to the window of the Civil Rights workers car, lights still hide their identity this leaves the audience open to thought on who these men are. As soon as the man who got out of the car talks it soon becomes apparent that these men are racists and are going to kill or assault the Civil Rights workers. I could tell that this was going to happen by their use of racist language. After the shootings of the Civil Rights workers all images fade away to reveal just a black background with the words "Mississippi 1964" written on the background.

I think this was done so that the audience has time to reflect on the events that have just happened because there were some very strong images on show in the last scene that are vital for the rest of the movie. Although there are no images the sound of the racist killers laughing about the atrocities that they had just committed makes for very disturbing hearing. In

conclusion both the openings of " Reservoir Dogs" and " Mississippi Burning" are vitally important to the success of the film, as are all films openings.

Reservoir Dogs" opening works so well because the two opening scenes are so completely different to each other and there is an element of shock and unexpected drama that instantly gets the viewer interested. " Mississippi Burning" opening works equally as well because of the techniques used such as camera angles, lighting and music by the director this also gets the viewer instantly interested in the film. For a film to be successful the audience has to engage with the right from the start and this is why film openings are so important to the films success.