

Cinematography analysis of the film rebel without a cause

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The movie "Rebel without a cause" is directed by Nicholas Ray, and is about a teenage boy named Jim Stark. Jim just moved into a new neighborhood, and he seems to be depressed because his family keeps moving from place to place because of Jim. This makes it really hard for Jim to have friends. He starts to a new school, and the kids in his school are mostly as they consider "bad boys". Their biggest fear is to be called a coward. And they all try to look more brave and manly than they actually are. In this ethos system what teens have to do in order to be considered someone respectable, they keep putting on some challenges and challenge each other. These bravery challenges could be so dangerous that sometimes it can be deadly.

The movie is mostly about Jim, Judy and Plato and the psychological problems, rebellious feelings and struggles that they go through. Mise-en-scene is everything that exists in front of the camera and it is a major part of a film, the directors spend a lot of time staging a set. As one of the four key features of mise-en-scene, the costumes and specifically their colors indicate and symbolize a lot in this movie.

Color of the costumes of the main characters is used as an indicator that indicates the emotions and the of the character's sense of rebellion and action that is going to take place. For instance the color red is used in couple different places, and most of the time it indicates a rebellion or a feeling of the character. Judy wears a red dress at the beginning of the movie when she argues with her dad leaves the house, later on in the movie the color red transfers to Jim in his red jacket that he wears before the race against Buzz which eventually causes the death of Buzz, and towards the end of the

movie Jim gives his red jacket to Plato, and Plato shoots one of the gang members wearing that red jacket. The color red symbolizes rebellion and the fact that Plato wears the same red jacket when he dies shows us that his rebellion caused his death. The color red had a particular impact, but we can see that throughout the movie the color of the costumes contrast between dreary and bright colors. And most of the time separates the trio from their parents and friends.

The main characters are seen as wearing dreary and dull colors most of the time, and whenever there are wearing bold, bright colors we know that something interesting is coming up. One of the best examples of mise-en-scene in this movie is the usage of colors and costumes in the movie. As far as cinematography goes in this film the angle of shots are making a huge difference and really help us realize a presence of a hierarchy, difference in power and dominance of one character to one another within the movie. The director Nicholas Ray does a great job of using in different angles from different sides, and point of view shots in order to emphasize a hierarchy and weakness of a character from the other. One of the examples is when the gang discovers Plato in the mansion. The beginning of the scene is a high angle shot of Plato while he is asleep, and as soon as he wakes up, the camera quickly moves upward to make a low angle shot and shows the faces of the gang members. This shows that Plato is the weakest character in the scene, and the gang as being more powerful than Plato.

Another shot where the angle of the camera shows power is the part where Plato is at the police station in the beginning of the movie. When Plato is in the

interview the camera constantly switches to an angle that is behind the interviewing policeman. And creates the effect that he is looking down at Plato. This shot shows the difference in dominance between the policeman and Plato. In both cases these shots establish Plato as a character with little or no power. We can tell by the angle that we see Plato, because he is being looked down upon in these shots. And since our brains interpret the lower as a weaker these types of shots really add a depth in the usage of cinematography.

As one of the other key elements of mise-en-scene lighting also has a huge role in the movie. In majority of the film the source of the light is visible. We see a lot of table lamps and other various sources of lighting which gives the movie a more of a realistic effect and feel. The usage of lighting is executed so professionally that it doesn't only provide brightness for the scenes but it is also used to highlight a character and make the audience focus on that character, or some times to hide the character from the audience. Every character is being lit from a different angle in order to show their role by the shadows in their face. Judy for an instance, is lit from above majority of the time, when the light hits her face from above and it makes us focus on her beautiful face. Jim on the other side is mostly lit from below, which indicates the confusion of feelings that he have, and the light hitting from below his face gives us the effect of his confusion and uncertainty. One of the other scenes where lighting was used brilliantly was the scene with Jim and Judy laying down moments before they kiss. Half of Jim's face is covered by Judy's face, and this effect shows us that they are now together and unified. So we

can see that lighting plays a huge role and helps us understand the film better.

The sets of the scenes also have a significant role in this film. Sets that are used by Nicholas ray are known to have a lot of barricades, like doors and staircases. Doors in specific have an important role which is to divide the generational gap between the teens and their families. In the beginning of the film Jim's dad says " Why do you always have to slam the door in my face?" Later on we can see Jim peeking through a hole at his parents, which helps us to say that it is not just us the audience but also the actors and the characters who can translate features of mise-en-scene and are aware of the effect of the setting.