Film lighting essay

Introduction

A suitable and efficient lighting design is required in any film production process. An effective design is one that effectively caters for the story in the film and the vision of the film's director. The lighting set up for any particular film reveals a specific emotion, mood, aesthetics or atmosphere to the entire viewing experience of the film. The basic reason for the lighting requirement in the film production process is because every film's shot needs proper and clear exposure.

The brightness of light in the film is one of the variables that must be given careful consideration by a film's cinematographer before being employed in a particular film. Other variables that must be carefully considered include the number and types of lighting used and where the particular lighting is used in the film.

Modern film cinematographers are constantly coming up with new lighting techniques that they then incorporate into films to complement the film's setting, characters, tones, themes amongst other aspects.

I recently watched the film ' Schindler's List' and some of the lighting techniques employed in this particular film are very intriguing. The film released in 1993 and starring Liam Neeson is about Oswald Schindler who helped save many of Jew's lives when he burnt a factory (Burns 2008). The film is shot in black and white and takes place during the Second World War era and the use of the black and white technique helps to amplify the story's impact and evoke the audience perception and imagination of that particular era or period.

The most important advantage of the black and white technique in terms of

artistry is that the impact of the violence depicted in the film is increased and the evil and good duality nature is highlighted. By using the black and white lighting technique, an authentic atmosphere is created and this gives the film timelessness feel and a more believable nature (Goldman 2001). The technique is also used to symbolize the Jew's and German's racial contrast and an eerie sadness feel.

The film employs the noir style and contrast and lighting aspects are used to amplify the brutality and violence shown in each scene . Throughout the film , the Jew's faces are half lit in many shots with the other half being shadow cast, an element that is used to show the inevitable ambush that the Jew's anticipate from the German troops. Simple lighting is used to assist create a calm and cool atmosphere as Jewish families get ready for ambush. In some scenes, for example when the Krakow Ghetto is being evacuated, there is the use of dark lighting to convey the sense of confusion and panic (Burns 2008). In the scene where women are showering at the Auschwitz concentration camp, white light is reflected on their faces to depict their terror as they gaze at the heads of the showers.

There is also use of the dark and light contrast to mark the film protagonist's face, Schindler, which in most of the film is shown a half shadow to depict his dark selfish side. However, when he makes a transformation to a savior from a selfish and profit-seeking bureucrat, his face becomes fully lighted and he becomes more likable. By using this technique, the duality that is the human nature is clearly exhibited by the film.

The 3 point lighting technique is used to portray the different natures of the protagonist. In a specific shot, there is use of bright light to the left to portray

his good and soft side while a dark shadow is cast on the other side to portray his ruthless side.

There is also another scene where a woman is waiting to meet Schindler in the factory. The use of mechanical bouncing of shadows on the wall portrays a sense of hope in the woman. Schindler's List is surely one of the films in which different lighting techniques are employed to improve the storyline of the film and support the film's themes. The lighting is carefully manipulated to drive forward the theme of violence as depicted in many scenes. By using bright light to amplify the positive aspects of the characters and using the dark to portray dark aspects, the cinematographers of the film manage to create a relative balance between these two elements.

This proves that if proper lighting techniques are used correctly in the development of films, they can go a long way in improving the general outlook of the entire film and also help improve the authenticity and the delivery of message in the film.

References

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