

The ways in which steven spielberg creates tension in 'duel' essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

'Duel' is a marvellous film, directed by Steven Spielberg. It was not Spielberg's first film, but it is the one that made him famous. It was made for Americans television but was also released in Europe and Australia and Japan and was followed by two further films, 'Savage' and 'Something Evil'.

'Duel' is a psychological thriller and also a road movie. Road movies usually involve a long journey across America. 'Duel' is about a man, David Mann, and his epic journey to get to work.

On his trip, he strays from the main highways and proceeds to the 'open road' where he falls behind a truck; he overtakes the truck but can't quite shake off the truck on his travel. He makes a stop and phones his dominant wife. He doesn't mention his day to his wife, and continues on his journey. After a crash, he stops at a diner and shows his paranoia. He gets back on his way finally thinking it is all over. He runs into a troubled school bus, and makes one last stop, fearing for his life.

In the final showdown he shows some strength for the first time in the film. He then sits and thinks about his and, more specifically, his life. Within the film many camera angles are used, and between these the tension is created. Long shots are used in the film. These are effective. They allow you to see how close the small car and overpowering truck are to each other. It also allows you to see both at one time, thus showing the comparison in size between one another. Long shots also show a lot of the background, allowing you to see what a desolate landscape it is.

The low angle shots are from a very close up angle, which makes the truck bigger than in the other shots, but it also shows the truck in all its menacing

beauty. In the opposite way, high angle shots make the car seem even smaller as the truck tries to zoom in towards it. This makes you realise how dangerous a position the car is in. Spielberg uses several camera views including some which are within David Mann's car, which shows you his personal viewpoint for this terrible situation. From these camera angles you can see his fear, and make you fear for him.

These include angles such as that of his mirror, which shows how close the truck is from his viewpoint. This builds up a lot of tension by looking from his point of view. There are a lot of different close up shots of the car. These are used to show the fact the car is old and unstable. They show the fuel gradually run out, and also the warning lights when the temperature gauge reaches high. All of the close ups of the truck build up the effect of how menacing it is. The truck is very big and strong which makes it seem evil as if it owns the road.

It is black, a very dull colour, which look more threatening than other colours such as yellow. A lot of the film has no music. It starts off with the car radio on in the background, although this is not significant. When the action first begins everything is silent, only the car engine can be heard. Suddenly, the music appears in the background. This music is played as the tension builds up, and the pace and volume of the soundtrack both increases as this happens. Just as the music started when the action dies down, the music rapidly drops, and we are left with silence in the background again.

This background music effect happens several times, when the action increases and tension is greater. There are several remember able sound

affects from the film. Near the start of the film while, he is talking to his wife on the telephone you can sense a certain fear within his voice. When he is in the washroom you can have his thoughts. This shows his fears of the days events very clearly but they also show his naivety, by him thinking the days events were over, although this is quite early in the film. There is a lot of tension where the car becomes overheated.

There is a “ beeping” sound coming from the dashboard, Mann is shouting at the car, and you can hear the engine is not performing correctly. At the end when the truck and the car collide, there is an explosion, which shows the colossal power of the truck when it crashes the car off the cliff. In the film, we only see the truck driver’s hands and feet. For this reason we cannot identify the driver, or set a personality for him. The truck seems to be based on one goal, only to cause havoc and destruction for David Mann and his car. The truck seems to have a human face, a very angry, dull face.

There is a moment where the truck parks up within a dark tunnel, everything is dark and silent, then, suddenly once Mann looks in the tunnel, the lights are switched on as if they were eyes. The end of the film is very dramatic. Mann waits until the last moments, and grabs his only chance while at the top of a cliff with a high-speed flammable truck speeding at him. He puts his briefcase on the pedal and jumps out of the car, leaving the truck to drive an empty car over the cliff. This scene is shown from many different shots which all increase the tension of when the truck crashes off the cliff.

There are views, which reveal how little of the cliff is shown. This is shown from the truck driver’s point of view, and Mann’s view of the flames from his

car blocking out the truck driver's viewpoint. When the truck first reaches the edge of the cliff, you can see it through the truck driver's point of view. Then you get a straight on view and can see the truck go down in nearly a horizontal line before it reaches the bottom and starts to break up. As the truck goes over the cliff it reminds me of a dinosaur, especially with the sound effects added.

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