

Movie analysis



Allan Clarke's 1989 version of *Elephant* compared to Gus Van Sant's 2003 version was far more subliminal in the sense that it offered minimal information on the identities of the killer and the victims which in effect, gives a feel of reality to the viewers. On the contrary, for viewers who prefer films with an obvious storyline, Van Sant's would be a better pick.

Clarke's film was based on the killings in North Ireland (*The Title*) it was a way of Clarke to show his condemnation of these killings. The film dynamically gave viewers the impression of witnessing cold and heartless killings. The successive scenes showing seemingly random acts of shooting with the grainy film used also helped to give an effect that the viewers are watching footages of actual killings. The drawback on Clarke's film is that it was deemed unusual for such a killing spree to get unnoticed by the police, thus some commented that Clarke's *Elephant* was unrealistic.

Van Sant's tribute to the 1989 film by Clarke was much acclaimed by film critics winning at the Cannes Film Festival 2003 because of its timely storyline of school shootings (*Mitchell*). Patterned after the incident at the Columbine High School, the film was similar to Clarke's film because of its minimalism and use of tracking shots (*Mitchell*). Contributing to its effective portrayal of an actual shooting incident were the inexperienced actors in the cast and the same tracking shots used by Clarke in the 1989 version of the film.

The conclusion for both films is that they had extensively made an impact on the viewers with Clarke's and Van Sant's minimalist style effectively conveying their message through the screen. Clarke's 1989 *Elephant* had conveyed the ambience of cold, brutal and unremorseful killings during his time while Van Sant's version conveyed in a subtler and more dramatic

approach the senseless shootings in our time. Both films, as the title connotes, are elephants in the living room or in simpler terms, problems that the society simply chooses to take for granted (Mitchell).

WORKS CITED

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