

# Mission impossible 2 essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Mission impossible 2 was directed by John Woo. He is a director of action movies and specialises in highly choreographed action sequences. Previous films that were directed by John Woo were mainly action films such as "Hard Target" and "Face/Off", this creates an expectation of mission impossible to be an action film with many dramatic stunts and a fast paced plot. Tom Cruise had starred in many films and was already a famous and successful actor. These films were often included romance, such as "Top Gun" and "Far and Away", therefore romance is expected to occur in Mission Impossible 2.

Thandie Newton also starred in romance films such as: "The Leading Man" and "Besieged" which reinforces an expectation for the film to include romance. The first "Mission Impossible" also creates an expectation for "Mission Impossible 2" to have a genre of action; because, it contained lots of action itself. John Woo utilises this expectation by using the same theme tune from the first mission impossible in the title sequence to create anaphoric reference to the first mission impossible creating anticipation of action.

Because it is an action film we expect certain conventions to be used to make it more exiting; however it needs to have a plot that makes sense. This will allow the audiences excitement to be sustained between action scenes. To do this John Woo is likely to use ellipsis so that the audience will not get bored of normal everyday events that happen in the story such as travelling. He may also use non-diegetic music to create and sustain mood. John Woo often uses extreme long shots and the beginning of scenes. This allows the audience to easily understand the setting and mood of the scene quickly.

This is used so the film is action packed and the audience will not get bored but can still understand the plot. An example of this is the establishing extreme long tracking shot of Sydney opera house. This tells the audience that it is in Sydney because of the famous land mark. It also shows the time of day and the weather. We can tell he is using this shot for that purpose because he also uses a subtitle saying it is in Sydney to reinforce the fact that the setting is Sydney. John Woo uses close ups on objects and faces to show their importance.

This is necessary because audiences of action films may not be following the plot or its significance may not have explained in order to create a mysterious atmosphere and make the audience curious. For example a close up of the syringe gun held by the character: " Vladimir Nekhorvich". This shows the audience that the syringe is important and dangerous. We know that Woo was trying to create this effect because the syringe was shaped like a gun, which is a dangerous, and contained a red blood-like liquid which is associated with danger because blood leaks from people when they have been shot or injured.

Another example of these close ups is when the character: " Vladimir" looks from side to side to check if he is being watched. This tells the audience that he is not meant to take the drug and is anxious about being found out. This creates an uneasy atmosphere as well as telling the audience he is a character of significance and not on the same side as the other scientists. Other examples of close ups in this scene include: close ups on the briefcase, close ups on the timer and the watch. He also uses extreme close ups to show the significance of an action.

For example when “ Vladimir” injects himself there is an extreme close up the liquid being shot into his arm. This tells the viewer that this action is significant to the plot and also makes it more dramatic. To create this effect he also includes the diegetic noise of the syringe combined with a non diegetic gun shot. This signifies that he has caused death of himself or others. John Woo uses fades to blur different shots together. This creates a sense that there has been a jump cut to a new frame or allows two images to be viewed at once.

For example when the shot of the children singing “ ring-a-ring-a-roses” Woo uses a fade into a reaction shot of the character “ Vladimir”. This allows the audience to empathise with his feeling and it also creates an implicit meaning: “ chimera” is like Black Death. Another use of the fade is in the establishing shot of the climbing scene; there is an extreme long tracking shot of mesas and buttes in the desert the shot moves quickly forwards past these desert features before fading into a tracking shot that moves into a long shot of the character “ Ethan Hunt”.

This shows the viewer that he is far away from civilisation because of the scale of the shot and because of the speed of the tracking and the way it fades out showing the viewer that the shot would carry on even further before it gets to “ Hunt” if the shot was not changed. This sense of distance from settlements means that if the character were to hurt himself then he would not be helped. Therefore he is reckless. John Woo makes him appear as reckless because it creates intrigue as the audience believes that if the character is reckless he is more likely to get into exciting situations.

Woo also uses a high angle crane long shot in the climbing scene when the character "Ethan" lands on a ledge to show his recklessness. This shows his recklessness because it involves a good view of the considerable distance he would fall if he failed the jump. John Woo does this to show the audience that the character would put his life at risk for the fun of it. This shot also creates suspense as the audience fears the character will die or just because they suffer from vertigo. John Woo often includes symbolic images in shots to create atmosphere; however, since it is a fast paced action film it cannot devote shots to atmosphere.

This avoids making the story slow paced which suits the audience because they watch this film because they want a fast thrilling plot; therefore, it must be concentrated and only include as few shots as possible. Atmosphere still needs to be created but few shots can be spared. For example when Woo shows the reaction shots of the characters "Nyah" and "Ethan" he also includes the twirling red dresses of the flamenco dancer. These symbolise fire and explosions which are often used in action films and therefore have connotations of action. This adds intrigue because the audience anticipates the action that comes later.

Another example is when the characters "Ethan" and "Nyah" are in the bathtub and "Nyah" is picking the lock. There is a close up shot of "Ethan" and the shot also includes a high angle view of the top "Nyah's" breasts. This creates sexual tension between the characters creating intrigue as the audience is interested in how their relationship develops. John Woo also uses short close ups on objects devoted to creating atmosphere, however, these are short and in frequent as the scene must be fast. For example in the

scene set in Spain there is a close up on a bowl of fire. This adds to the fire imagery that has connotations of action.

During high scenes with lots of action shots jump quickly. For example in the climbing scene when the character: " Ethan" slides and almost falls. John Woo uses shots that cut from one another rapidly: first a long shot of him sliding, then a cut to a low angle shot of him as he goes over the edge with no transition, then it cuts to a shot of him scraping against the side of the edge, then it jumps to a similar shot but from the side and then it jumps to his hand grabbing a crack in the rock. Woo uses these fast short shots to create a fast, action filled atmosphere because the shots are unanticipated.

If they blurred into each other they would be anticipated and less shocking as they cut. By contrast in calm scenes such as in the scene set in Spain the shots are long and often include zooms or tracking as opposed to jumping between shots quickly. For example John Woo uses a shot of the flamenco dancers with a zoom which allows the audience to see the party guests before focusing on the dancers. This is more effective for creating a mellow atmosphere than if Woo choose a long shot that cuts to a medium shot because the change is less surprising creating a calmer atmosphere.

It also allows things to be emphasized easily because a short shot that is cut to suddenly would stand out. For example when the character " Nyah" is running up the stairs Woo uses close ups of her feet cutting to close ups of the flamenco dancers feet. These fast changing shots create tension because they are unexpected and slightly overwhelming. John Woo does this to allow the audience to empathise with " Nyah's" nervousness before she commits

the crime. Overall the opening sequence to “ Mission Impossible 2” uses mainly long shots as these can include lots of objects with connotations to create Woo’s desired effect.

For example in the scene set in Spain whilst the characters “ Nyah” and “ Ethan” leave the villa a high angle long shot showing the courtyard is used. Woo uses this to create colour imagery as the courtyard is bathed in blue light to create connotations of benevolence and bowls of fire and orange lights in the fountain to create connotations of action. However to show objects of significance Woo uses close ups so the audience isn’t distracted by other objects and the chosen one is obvious and emphasized. For example in the scene of the character “ Vladimir” walking out of the lab Woo uses a close up of the briefcase.

This tells the audience that it contains an object of significance. In the background of the climbing scene Woo uses a non diegetic reggae song. This song tells the audience that the character “ Ethan Hunt” is climbing for fun and not on a mission because the song is cheerful and has a major tonality. It also is a song that didn’t originate from America. This tells the audience that he is on holiday because the film was aimed at Americans who normally would only leave their home country for a holiday so associate foreign music with holidays. Showing that the character is climbing for fun makes him seem reckless, as if he enjoys danger.

This causes the audience to anticipate reckless stunts that happen later in the film. The drums in the background of the non diegetic music are similar to a heart beat and are used to symbolise the characters heartbeat. For

example when he slips and almost falls the music quietens to leave just these drums which are fast to show his heart is beating fast and he is getting thrills from the danger. Whilst the character is climbing Woo uses of screen diegetic sounds to create anticipation to the rest of the film for example Woo uses a sound effect of a vulture screeching.

Vultures have connotations of death so creates anticipation of death later in the film. This adds intrigue because death is regarded as serious and makes the audience curious as to how deaths will occur later. Woo also uses diegetic sound to add to the atmosphere of danger. For example throughout the climbing scene a whistling wind is used. This makes it seem more dangerous as the audience is reminded of how the character could be blown off. This creates tension as the audience fears his death. Woo also uses a sound effect of rock crumbling.

This reminds the audience that the rock could give way and cause the character to fall. This increases the tension. The wind sound also has connotations of death and is often used in that way in western films. This adds to the anticipation of death. When the character reaches the peak the singing raises pitch and bells are added this symbolises the characters satisfaction at reaching the top showing the audience that it was done for fun. It also shows a shot of the view from the top which causes the audience to marvel at the view creating interest in the film.

The music change in pitch also grabs the audience's attention and increases interest in the film. The diegetic helicopter noise that Woo uses when the character reaches the summit contrast with the harmonious music making it



stand out and attract the audience's attention telling them that something important is about to happen. John Woo uses non diegetic music that is similar to the theme music from "Mission Impossible 1". This creates anaphoric reference to the original which reminds the audience of the action that takes in it causing them to anticipate more action in "Mission Impossible 2".

John Woo uses strongly emphasized colour imagery throughout "Mission Impossible 2". In the scene set in the fictional "Biocyte pharmaceuticals" strong green and blue lighting is used. The blue has connotations of sterility and medicine. John Woo uses this to cause the audience to know it is a sterile laboratory and to remind them of the medicine being produced: "Bellerophon". The green has connotations of organisms, because it is the colour of leaves, and poison. Woo uses it to make the audience think that they are experimenting on organisms and poison.

The props in the scene are mainly smooth silver. This increases the atmosphere of sterility and has connotations of science and technology because we have only been able to use metal relatively recently. For example the syringe gun: it is silver coloured to represent the technology, has green light shining on it to symbolise poison and a black ring which has connotations of death. It is also shaped like a gun to remind the audience of guns and how it causes death like a gun. It also contains a red liquid. This has connotations of danger because it is the colour of blood.

The costumes chosen in this scene by Woo are white lab coats. White has connotations of sterility and the lab coats tell the audience they are

scientists. During the shot of children singing “ ring-a-ring-a-roses” the colours change to only black and white. The black is used to create an atmosphere of death and the white creates an atmosphere of death because white is the traditional colour of ghosts. Also it creates reference to old black and white photographs. These are associated with times long ago. This increases the reference to be Black Death.

In the aeroplane scene Woo uses bright white lighting from the plane windows. This reminds the audience that they are in a plane because white is the colour of clouds which are in the sky near where planes fly and it reminds them of snow because the characters are flying over a snowy landscape. Inside the plane, however, it is in shadow. This creates an atmosphere of evil and death which unsettles the audience because it should be a calm atmosphere. The props are mainly grey coloured, for example the chairs.

Grey has connotations of calmness and neutrality. However some objects are black such as the plane floor. This creates a mild atmosphere of death causing the audience to suspect death. The lighting changes before the oxygen masks are dropped. The lights switch off briefly making an area of the plane in shadow. This causes the audience to think something is wrong and the darkness is associated with death and evil creating anticipation to the attack. The costume chosen by Woo for the character “ Sean” when he is disguised as “ Ethan” is black.

This is associated with evil so makes the audience think something is wrong. Also later in the film he disguises himself as “ Ethan” again in order to fool “

Nyah". He also wears black in that scene. Woo does this to create anaphoric reference to the plane scene allowing the audience to predict that it is actually " Sean". This creates dramatic irony because the audience knows he is " Sean" but she doesn't know herself. This Dramatic irony increases the audiences intrigue because they feel frustrated about not being able to warn her; despite her being fictional.

In the climbing scene the main colours used are blue from the sky and orange from the cliff. Blue is associated with good which helps the audience understand that this is the real character in the scene not another fake. The orange is a shade of red but a milder one which creates an atmosphere of danger but not of the same magnitude as in other scenes. John Woo uses the location because it is beautiful so it creates intrigue because the audience wants to see more of it. It is also high up and remote showing the characters recklessness for deliberately putting himself there.

Ethan's" costume is chosen because it contrasts against the rock and to show that he is the real person because it is different from the one worn by the character " Sean" in the previous scene. It also allows his muscles to be easily visible which builds character by showing that he is strong. The men in the helicopter wear black suits and sunglasses. This causes the audience to think their evil which increases intrigue because they think violence will occur and want to discover the outcome. In the title sequence red colours are used in the explosions.

This symbolises the action and danger in mission impossible. Woo also uses blue colours on the fuses that appear in the title sequence to symbolise the

good in mission impossible and the technology because blue light is often used near technology, for example in the sunglasses in the climbing scene. In the background images of blood and cells are used. These represent the experiments of " Biocyte pharmaceuticals" and the disease " chimera". The blood also symbolises death. Woo also uses images of the mythical Greek chimera, the namesake of " chimera" in " Mission Impossible 2".

Also images of Bellerophon the slayer of chimera, the namesake of the cure for " chimera" in the film. In the scene set in Spain dim lighting is used. This creates a dark atmosphere which is more relaxing and romantic than a bright one. The darkness also allows Woo to empathise important objects and people by putting them in light so they stand out against things in the dark. For example in the point-of-view shot of the character " Nyah" she stands out because light is shining on her but not the crowd.

Woo uses this because it is the start of a romance therefore a romantic mood must be used to show this to the audience. The lighting that is used is red and orange like flames; some even originates from flames. This is used to create an atmosphere of action and passion. The location, Spain, according to the director's commentary was chosen because it reminded Woo of romance so is an ideal starting point for the characters' romance. The costumes of the flamenco dancers were chosen because it makes them stand out and because it is like flames therefore it contributes to the atmosphere.

Overall the main effect of the sequence is that the audience is left anticipating the rest of the film. It introduces and builds the characters'

personality and the atmosphere for the rest of the story. It also recreates the genre of the first “ Mission Impossible” putting the audience in the mood for action. The sequence is distinguishable because of its high action content and the way it incorporates famous action stereotypes created in previous “ Mission Impossible” episodes from the television series and the previous film.

For example: “ This message will self destruct in five seconds” is a mime often used in action films and parodies originating from “ mission impossible”. It also incorporates other action film stereotypes such as the appearance of the character “ Vladimir Nekovich”: he is a scientist, he has wild grey hair and glasses. The director builds intrigue rapidly in this sequence using dramatic action such as the climbing scene as well as more subtle suggestions of intriguing events such as the use of flames in the flamenco scene.

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