

# Goodfellas – content analysis essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



The scene starts with a close up of two character's hands exchanging a set of car keys. Then the camera zooms out into a very brief establishing mid shot, showing three characters: two men and a woman. The main character, Henry Hill joins the woman, and the camera starts to track them from behind. They go down into the club's basement, skipping the queue and walk through, what appears to be, a complicated kind of maze through the club's kitchen and hallways.

Already we can get a sense that the main character has something dark, mysterious and very underground about him. This is because he somehow has the power over these people working at the club, to be privileged enough to skip the club's queue. During the characters walk through the kitchens the audience gets a real sense of the popularity of the club and the importance the main character has.

This is because some of the other underground characters are happily saying hello to him and getting out of his and his girlfriends way. The camera still tracks them from behind and at one point Henry turns over to the side to look at something. The camera briefly follows this movement only to show another cook happily greeting him. Always keeping a small distance away from the main characters, the camera shows several random actors walking past behind them. Though it is a simple technique, it adds to the tense atmosphere.

This whole scene is all one shot. I think it is very effective. If there had been any cuts during the characters walk into the club, the audience would not get the idea of this complicated walk they must complete just to get to the

main part of the club. Tracking characters progress from behind is almost creating the effect that something is chasing them, which I think adds to the excitement of this gangster film. Sound and Editing During the exchanging of the keys, there is non-diegetic sound of jazz music in the background. This music starts off quite loud at the opening of the scene.

This is maybe to let the audience know that there is new and exciting scene about to begin. The volume of the music soon decreases as the first few lines of dialogue are spoken. The music stays on this volume until the characters reach the main area inside the club. When the characters are crossing the road at the beginning, the diegetic sounds are people talking, the traffic and the footsteps of the characters. However the volume of the dialogue seems to have been increased at this moment, so it drowns out the diegetic sounds. In reality, the noise of traffic would drown out people's conversations. Near the point when the two characters walk down the stairs, faster rhythm/tempo enters into the music and that builds up more excitement to the scene. This is effective because the film has entered a new location in the scene.

The characters were outside, but now they are inside, so the music helps the change of setting. Through the hallways, the occasional dialogue is spoken. The main character, Henry greets people in quite a loud voice showing that he is comfortable in this club and the people there seem to look up to him. I think that his loud talking perhaps adds to the power he has over these people. Henry enters the kitchen with his date and at this point, the diegetic sounds of the kitchen raises to quite loud level almost draining out the non-diegetic music.

Henry greets some people even louder than before to show that he is struggling to be heard in this loud area. Once they leave the kitchen and walk into the main area of the club, the diegetic sounds fade out and even the music has slightly quietened. This is maybe to create the effect of a much calmer atmosphere. Though the club is still full of people and noise, in my opinion it is no way near as dramatic as the kitchen.

At this point, Henry and his date are welcomed by another very powerful man. This man orders a table 'down in front' for the couple and then the camera pans left to show a waiter carrying this table. Though the camera is now not focusing on Henry and this other man, we still hear their voices loud and clear as if they were up close to the camera. This maybe makes the audience keep their attention on Henry because as we can still hear his voice, we know that he will be back on the camera once again soon. When the table is placed down at the front pretty close to the stage, Henry and his girl take their seats. Once they are settled, the girl asks 'What exactly do you do?' and he replies, 'I'm in construction.' We know quite well that Henry is not in construction, as people would not care to treat an ordinary builder like some royalty in a club.

This tops off how effective this scene is. The audience has not been told directly what Henry does for a living, but what they do know, it must be something quite secretive, dark, dangerous and underground. Mise-En-Scene There were lots of characters and objects in this one shot scene and I think it made it easier for the director in some cases. This is because if there were any cuts, then the mise-en scene would always have to be correct in every

cut, which would be very difficult in this busy scene. However as it was only one shot this was not an issue.

There are many extras in this scene to show the popularity of this club. Also the other characters reactions to Henry and his date are really important. Especially the moment they enter the main area of the club and casually walk past the queue to get a table. Not only are these people queuing annoyed but also wondering to why this character has privilege over them. In conclusion, I think this scene is very effective at how it makes this character out to be very powerful with almost no dialogue.

It also is very effective at showing how this club is the club to go to in town with the use of the non-diagetic music and the mise-en scene. In this one shot scene, it is very rare that the camera pans off to the side away from Henry. It is obvious that Henry is a main character.