

The pianist

Countries, Germany



'The Pianist' is a film directed by Roman Polanski and based around the life of Wladyslaw Szpilman during the Nazi invasion of Poland. Roman used visual techniques in the opening scenes such as black and white film, camera positioning and motifs to create an atmosphere for the audience. The first scene in the film is a montage of grainy black and white scenes of Polish life before the Nazi invasion on Poland. The footage shows a dated world with old English style building and technology, people are shown walking about the town in aged clothing. The grainy dated look of the film also makes the scenes appear gloomy but relaxed at the same time. These images are used to drive the notion that it is set in a time long ago, in a different era. This scene is a critical part in the film as it refines the time and emotion, in which the film is set, so the audience can relate better to the characters and what is happening to them. Wladyslaw Szpilman is shown in almost every scene at the beginning of the film. This helps us get a better understanding of Szpilman as we can see how he reacts to the situations he gets placed in. When the Szpilman family got notices of rules they would react to the situation and do what they could. Most of the time Wladyslaw was shown in the centre of the scene and things would happen around him. This shows us that Wladyslaw was strong willed and single minded as he resisted the controls of the Nazi. He does not want to leave his home during the invasion which also tells us that he was a dedicated to his country and would not give in that easily to the Nazis. These scenes are important as they show Wladyslaw's character in depth. Midshots are used through out the most of the opening scenes in the film. Roman used this type of shot while the family was packing up to move out of Warsaw, listening to the radio, and

arguing about what to do with the valuables. These shots were used for those scenes as it gives the audience a wide shot of what is going on in the current vicinity. It is able to show how the entire family reacts to the events that are taking place. It also allows the audience to see the expressions and emotions of the characters during the harsh and difficult times. These shots are important as it helps us to connect with the characters and a higher level. The Star of David is a constant motif used in the film. During the later stages of the opening scene it is used by the Nazis to label the Jews. It was announced in the paper that all Jews are required to wear one on their sleeve. After the war the Star of David symbolised strife, death, and horror as the world was informed about the inhuman acts upon the Jews during the war. The symbol was used in the film as a main sign that the Jews were getting organised by the Nazis and a major movement was set in motion. Roman uses this as it helps the audience recognise what was happening and recall stories and memories about the war. The visual techniques used by Roman Polanski in the film helps the audiences get a better understanding of the events and characters within the film. They are crucial to the film as they set the 'ground works' on which the story gets built around.