

Spiderman by sam raimi

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Spiderman was directed by Sam Raimi, known as director of such films as *The Gift* (2000) and *The Quick and the Dead* (1995). He worked closely with Spiderman creator Stan Lee (who has a cameo role) to present a film that was a fair representation of the first two years of the Spiderman comic (first issued in 1963).

The film follows Peter Parker, who adopts his alter-ego after he is bitten by a 'genetically modified spider' as he copes with his new found super powers, tying in with the film's tagline 'With great power comes great responsibility.' The clip starts after Parker's Aunt May has been attacked by the Green Goblin, Spiderman's archenemy in the film. Peter is by her bedside when M. J. arrives with flowers, prompting a gushy speech more suited to a melodrama than an action film, and only enhanced by the soft orchestral music but nevertheless it is of importance to the film as it is the first time that Peter gives M. J. an indication of his feelings.

The personal props include a few cards, the colourful bouquet brought in by M. J. and Peter's work in which projects an idea of the length of time being spent at the hospital by the characters. The drab nature of this set allows the costumes of Peter and in particular M. J. to stand out, in order to express liveliness and above all highlight the way that Peter views M. J., the girl whom he has admired since childhood, naturally stands out in a vivacious green, blue and cream diagonally striped jumper and jeans which surprisingly co-ordinates well with her shocking red hair and makes her a somewhat unconventional beauty.

This allows the audience to register an interest in the relationship between M. J. and Peter, who stands out in a more peculiar way, dressed in a navy blue sweatshirt, with a grey t-shirt underneath and jeans. The colours of Peter's costume reflect the fact that he is shrouded in mystery, a fact which Aunt May comments on in a later scene, but the costumes reflect the normality to both the characters, despite recent extraordinary events.

The lighting is portrayed as a natural source, coming from a large window to the left of the room, with fill light as to simulate the daytime; this lighting changes when the action returns to the hospital, the key light comes from other sources as the window is allowing little light to enter the room, showing a progression of time to evening and uses fill lighting to illuminate the scene. This lighting is used to highlight the faces of M. J. and Peter, leaving subtle attached shadows where the light cannot reach. Shadows, particularly on the face are often associated with deception, or in this case hiding of true emotions.

The conversation is portrayed using the shot reverse shot technique, but each shot does not necessarily coincide with each character's lines; M. J.'s reaction to Peter's conversation with Spiderman is closely monitored by the camera, which zooms in on the faces of both the characters allowing the audience to appreciate the intensity of this particular scene and allow the actors to demonstrate the range of their ability. The end of the scene is punctuated by the arrival of Harry Osborn, which not only disrupts the mood as he discovers his recent girlfriend and best friend holding hands.

The music fades out and Harry, dressed in similar colours to Peter but being more formal in a black polo neck and full length black coat says nothing. This gives an indication to the viewer an indication of what to expect in the next scene, a technique Raimi favours throughout the film. Interestingly, there is an introduction to the second and third scenes of this sequence, the first being an establishing shot of the Osborn's Manhattan mansion, which pans to the right giving an indication of how grand the building is and suggests just how wealthy the Osborn Family is.

Twinned with this is a brief orchestral rise in order to summon the attention of the viewer. I personally find this effective as the previous maudlin scene. At the end of the second scene, a whip pan shot of the Green Goblin, who appears blurred and dreamlike which is tagged with the Goblin's voice ringing is in order to startle and ensure that the viewer is fully focused on the film as the build up to the climax of the film . This is not unlike the similar techniques used in other films and television programmes of this genre.

Batman the television series, featuring Adam West, often used this technique featuring a close-up of one of Batman's enemies, for example the Joker or the Penguin before cutting to the next scene, and usually allowing the viewer to assume that they were plotting or committing crimes. This technique is used again; a shot of the Goblin's mask fades in at the end of the fifth scene just after his death, before fading out to another view of the Osborn mansion, where the action resumes.

In the fourth scene, a fade in is used in order to simulate M. J. regaining consciousness whilst the camera zooms in on her before zooming back out in

order to reveal the offscreen space. This is filmed at a high angle in a crane shot³, the movement not only reveals the setting of Queensboro Bridge, but it also mimics the queasy, disorientating movements that would be experienced at such a height. Camera movement is of paramount importance for this scene, and the crane shots allow the frame to move, continue the quick movement at the pace of the action, to heighten the tension.

A great deal of this scene is created with the use of CGI and digital editing, such as the use of blue screens and highly detailed digital animation that is used to follow Spiderman 'flying' through the actual structure of the bridge when he confronts the Goblin. Another use of CGI are the two images reflected in the mirrored eyes of Spiderman's mask, on the viewer's M. J. falling from the bridge and on the left the plummeting cable car representing the split decision Spiderman has to make.

These obviously computer generated images due to the fact that moments before the eyes the eyes are seemingly made out of the same material as the rest of the suit, rather than a mirror finished material. The use of CGI with in a 'superhero' action film such as this is necessary, due to the availability of the technology but also because such characters like Spiderman who are taken from a long established comic has a well established fan base, which will make up a large majority of the audience.

If the film does not appear realistic, or too stylised in the way that older superhero films can now appear it will disappoint. This scene is crucial to the film, for several reasons. It presents the hero with the choice of rescuing his

love interest or rescuing a group of innocent bystanders, which is typical of superhero films (The Superman films are another example of this), it paves the way for the main battle between the good and evil forces, allows for greater use of special effects and the rallying of the New Yorker's is a key underlying theme in the film.

The solidarity and renewed unity of America as well as a strong patriotism is revealed, particularly as a morale boost and almost like an advertisement for the rest of the world in the wake of September 11th. Spiderman is one of a number of films that were edited for reasons of sensitivity; the cut clip features Spiderman scaling the World Trade Centre. However a glimpse of the Two Towers remains in a flash point scene, once again an image reflected in the mirrored eyes of Spiderman's mask.

Further emphasis is placed on the united front America showed in after the attacks at the end of the film; Spiderman has swung his way through New York and perches on the Empire State Building, a symbol of longstanding power, strength and tradition. He grips the mast which raises the Stars and Stripes, a great image for Raimi to conclude his film with - the all American hero and the national flag side by side. However the strong pro America stance adopted towards the end of the film did wonders for the film, it was 2002 biggest grossing film in the United States but it was less successful worldwide.

Although this seems understandable when considering the highly anticipated films such as Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets and Scorsese's Gangs of New York. The second half of

the fourth scene is paramount to the film in terms of the narrative; it is the last battle between Spiderman and the Green Goblin which will effect the conclusion of the film. The Goblin has captured Spiderman, and smashing him through the wall and plate glass window of an abandoned warehouse he begins his attack.

The sense of foreboding is enhanced by the Goblin's use of a grenade, which is reflected in the eyes of Spiderman in slow motion but is sped up again to allow the force of the blast to carry Spiderman through another wall. The lighting throughout the scene is low key, to enhance the setting as an abandoned warehouse is hardly going to be supplied with electricity, but also to enhance the time of day and maintain continuity. The shot reverse shot used allows maintenance of the tension and plays with the expectations of the viewer, Spiderman (now revealed as Peter Parker) stays remains silent, whilst the Goblin talks on, and the quick succession of cuts builds up the Goblin's next attack but is also symbolic of Spiderman rebuilding his strength.

Once again the space outside of the frame becomes important, as it is from here that the Goblin launches his attack whilst still being onscreen, and this is hinted at from the use of a crane shot to create a greater angle of the frame, looking down on Norman Osborn and Peter Parker dressed as their alter-egos but also depicting as being on a small surfaced raised platform. The camera slowly tilts down as he pressed a button on his suit which signals his hoverboard to attention, something that Spiderman clearly misses but the viewer is privy to, creating further suspense.

When the attack is launched there are a series of cuts and edits which allow for Spiderman to summersault out of the way, and Green Goblin to be pinned to the wall by his own weapon as well as including a cut to close up shot of the Goblin when the split second realisation of his action and its consequences hits. The costume and the mask of the Green Goblin, though not true to that of the Goblin in the comic, is original, the mask, in metallic green and silver tones, with jaunty angles and heavy technological armour he seems superior to Spiderman, yet he is defeated.

The mask allows minimal light to actually reach the face of Willem Dafoe, creating a great deal of shadow as the key light tends to illuminate his eyes and his teeth only, once again indicating a character hiding his true identity and his actions. The film is left open for a sequel, with Harry Osborn seeking vengeance for his father's death, the refusal of M. J. s advances and Peter Parker's own thoughts, relayed via Raimi's trademark use of voiceover, which is the key to revealing the reflections and fears of his character and concluding his film. The covered hands of Harry suggest that he may well take a similar course of action as his father; in the comics he becomes the Hobgoblin therefore allowing for a development in a sequel (consequently Spiderman 2 comes out later this year.) The action and the costumes are vital in this film to allow it to excel in terms of genre.

The action is choreographed well, particularly the fight scene between the Goblin and Peter Parker and the costumes seem fairly realistic in what can be deemed a fantasy world, which is counterbalanced by the real setting of New York and the normality of the characters rather than the intense lives

their alter-egos lead. The sensitivity to which the September 11th attack been considered and come across with a fighting spirit and a tribute to Americans and New Yorker's in particular, as where else would civilians rally attack a threatening figure in the name of their city.

The use of CGI and the camera movement throughout only serve to advance the quality of the film, and aid the narrative by creating realistic action and settings but also by always providing a sense of what is coming next.

Although the narrative and acting may be a stylised in parts, such as the scenes between M. J. and Peter, it serves the genre of a superhero based action films, which often contain the odd 'cheesy' moment, and stays fairly true to the original Spiderman comic storyline.