

Analyse the ways in  
which alfred  
hitchcock builds  
tension and fear in  
the shower ...



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Alfred Hitchcock is known as the 'Master of Suspense' as he directed movies based on murder and mystery. Hitchcock's films are still considered masterpieces forty years later. This is because he mainly concentrated on the actor's performances, camera techniques, music and sound effects to build up tension, suspense and fear.

He also, often left his audience in suspense till the very end, by which time the viewers were sitting at the edge of their seats. The film 'Psycho' is about the murder of a young woman called Marion Crane who is running away to her boyfriend's house, because she had stolen \$40 000 from her employer. Marion Crane stops at the Bates Motel, which is isolated and within hours she is murdered. It is then left to her sister to investigate the disappearance. The film was set in 1960 and was filmed in Phoenix, Arizona. The fact that it was made in the 1960's shows that Hitchcock was very successful as he used original craft and techniques to commence the audience, this is because at that time there was a lot of rules and regulations about what was shown on the screens, e.

g. certain parts of the body can only be shown. Tension is initially built up is when Marion sees her employer from her car after she has stolen the \$40 000. A medium camera shot is used to show this event taking place, when Marion drives from her flat to Sam's house, to seek a new debt free life with him. The lighting in her car is darker than the lighting in the surrounding environment; this shows that Marion is isolated from the World around her. This portrays Marion as separate and different from the rest of the world, which seems to be carrying on as normal.

Marion feels out of place and disturbed when she suddenly sees her employer glaring at her, because at this point, she was supposed to be at home with a headache. As Marion is on her way to her boyfriend's house, a police officer assumes something is wrong and therefore goes over to her car while she is sleeping. The close up camera view shows the police officer's face looking down at Marion in the car, and shows his and Marion's facial expressions. The officer wore dark sunglasses which make him look even scary. Marion then looks up and seems to be agitated as the law enforcer asks her what is wrong. After the officer finishes interrogating her, she begins her journey to Sam's house.

The police officer however, suspects that something is wrong and therefore follows her and spies on her at the car showroom, where Marion is buying a new car. At the car showroom, the salesman also sees that something is wrong with Marion, as she was acting strange and when Marion told the salesman that she'll pay in cash straight up, he was even more curious about Marion. This scene was made up of lots of close up shots of Marions and the salesman's face, to show all the expressions on their faces. The scene creates tension because the audience feel as if the salesman will clock on to her. When Marion reaches the Bates Motel in the pouring rain at night she is arriving in a scene which is typical of the horror genre.

We see a shadow of a manly figure though the window of a dull isolated house. The lighting is dark, and the audience can hardly see the silhouette of the house and there is an eerie rain mist hanging in the evening air which is typical of the horror genre. A very long shot is used as well as a low angle shot which makes the house seem larger than life and feels as if it has power

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. She signs into the motel as Marie Samuels, her intentions is to conceal her identity because she is a criminal.

ironically by doing this she in fact conceals the id of the murderer who kills her later on. Suspense is created when Norman Bates, the motel manager, chooses the room key. He moves his hand pass all the keys and then goes back to the key for room one and stops his hand there for a while. He then gives Marion the key to room one.

The anticipation is created because the audience know that Norman is up to something but they don't know exactly what he is up to, because he has been very pleasant with her. When Marion is shown her room, Norman does something strange, when he opens the window of the room, to let air in. He also stutters when he says the word ' bathroom', in fact Marion has to say it for him. This creates further suspense as we wonder why he becomes nervous about saying ' bathroom'. Norman and Marion are having a conversation in the parlour. Norman sits in the darkest corner of the room and speaks to Marion who sits with the light focused on her.

This gives the feeling of fear as it seems as if Norman is questing her. The room is full of stuffed birds; this creates an evil and unpleasant atmosphere. The shower scene uses many camera shots and sound effects to help build the tension and scare the audience. Tension is built up in the scene because there is no music while Marion is by herself in her room. The fact that Marion flushes a sheet of paper down the toilet presents some kind of normality.

The camera shot used is the medium close up which allows us to see the full face of the victim and the background behind her. When Marion closes the  
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bathroom door, the normality is sustained and a natural routine is occurring because she is getting ready for a shower. However, this is typical of the horror thriller genre, when there is no music and everything looks fine, the audience has a feeling that something is going to happen which keeps the audience at the edge of their seats. There is no real sense of foreboding in this scene. The camera shots used in this scene are medium close up shots of her upper half of her body is taken, which is then replaced with another shot, but this time of her legs. When Marion begins to wash her self, medium close up shot and over the shoulder shot is used in this scene this is used to show the audience what Marion sees and what her reactions are like the camera also zooms in; this makes the audience feel as if someone is watching her.

However, we also get a sense of relaxation as Marion is smiling and enjoying her shower. She gives us the idea of her being calm, unperturbed and serene. There is still no music, but the sound effects strangely exaggerated by the sound of the water in the shower. An over the shoulder shot shows the audience insider information as a dark, mysterious figure is seen approaching the shower. This automatically creates suspense and tension. The audience somehow feel they want to warn Marion and, at the same time, want to know who the figure is, and why they are there.

A sense of eeriness and fear of the unknown is created in the atmosphere. A medium close up is used to show the curtain pulled open and reveals the dark figure brandishing a large knife, however, we still can't see the face or any other detail of the figure because Hitchcock makes it then seem as a mystery. As soon as the curtain is pulled back, sharp screeching violin music <https://assignbuster.com/analyse-the-ways-in-which-alfred-hitchcock-builds-tension-and-fear-in-the-shower-scene-in-the-film-psycho/>

is played to create tension and keep the audience at the edge of their seats. There is a close up of Marion's face when she screams to show the fear and an extreme close up of Marion's mouth is used to show this.

Another sound effect used in this scene is the piercing of the flesh with the. This scene is very dramatic and it sustains the incredible tension and fear throughout the film. As the figure stabs at Marion, a high angle camera shot is used, making it seem as if there is a CCTV camera watching her. The music is eerie and we can still hear the knife brutally stabbing the young women.

A close up of Marions legs and blood going down the drain is showed this makes the audience realize Marion's life is being drained away. Hitchcock wants us to see that Marion is dying, and also makes us wonder why she has been killed. The music still creates a weird sound, which lets the viewer know that the figure is still attacking the victim. Marion then turns her back on her assailant, and is shown with a medium close up shot of her back, neck and side profile.

The viewing of the back, neck and side makes viewers feel revolted, as back in 1960, certain regulations were directors had to ensure that only certain parts of the body were seen by the audience. What was shown reflected the horror of a naked, defenceless women being brutally murdered. As the mother leaves the sound of the water keeps on flowing, and eerie music is still playing. This continues to frighten the audience because they don't know what will happen next.

Over the shoulder shot shows the murderer leave. Marion, fatally injured, slowly slides down the wall with a medium close up. This makes us see Marions expression, the scenes are rapid and shocking, and makes the audience sit on the edge of their seats. The Extreme close up of Marion is shown reaching for the shower curtain which highlights her agony and her struggle to hold on to life. The sound of the water is still flowing; it is as if her life is draining away with the water. The extreme close up shows us how slowly Marion is dying.

When Marion falls forward, pulling the shower curtain off its hooks, it is shown with a high angle shot which shows she is smaller and powerless. Viewers are shocked that she has been attacked for no reason. As Marion lies dead, face down on the floor of the bathroom an extreme camera shot shoots this scene and zooms out, it shows the terror in her eyes and how scared she was before she died, especially as she has seen who killed her. Alfred Hitchcock was an extremely successful film producer who made a name for him self by creating very successful horror films.

The fact that he is successful seems to be that he has a talent to create mysteries which the audience can not work out and at the same time, he used new and unusual techniques to build enormous scenes of tension and suspense. Among their techniques were the unusual use of lighting, an verity of camera angles, the sound effects that was silence to screeching panic, and the use of weak or incomplete characters that some how seemed unreal, or quite unlike normal people.