

From dusk till dawn essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

How does the film form portray each of the individual characters personalities and how is authority and power over each of the characters presented in the sequence? The chosen sequence begins when Ritchie, Seth and the hostage enter the motel room and finishes at the end of the diner scene which includes Kate, Scott and Jacob. The main characters are introduced in this sequence and their personalities are revealed. The establishing shot of this sequence shows the characters entering the motel room. The layout and mise-en-scene consists of cheap orange decor of the early or mid-nineties.

The film was released in 1996, so the audience at the time will recognise it as been fairly modern. The small room also takes form of a waiting area in a large reception, this could represent the fact the hostage is waiting for her fate. The bright orange lighting diffuses the situation and makes it almost tranquil. The back of the room is darkest and Ritchie seats himself closest to the shadows. This immediately separates him from the other characters. Ritchie is a dark character and this detail compliments his personality.

The use of low angle shots from the hostage's point of view shows the authority and power over her. High angle shots from her captors point of view shows the audience how helpless and weak she is against Ritchie and Seth. The brothers are in the same shot to begin with showing the audience that they are close and working on the same side. However the fact that Seth is quick to respond to the woman's plea, " I said plant yourself, plants don't talk. " and that Ritchie is behind him shows the audience that it is Seth who has more control over the situation than his brother.

The next shot of Seth tending to his brother's hand shows the audience that Seth cares a great deal for his brother. However the wide angle shot of the two brothers breaks the bond Seth has made. The following shot of Ritchie staring intently at the woman disregarding Seth accompanied by the sound of non- diegetic thunder for effect makes the audience aware of Ritchie's motives. The brothers obviously have different morals and principles. Using previous knowledge that Ritchie is a sex offender, the audience can interpret that he may abuse the hostage. The fact that Ritchie is a sex offender is now very clear.

The shot then returns to the brothers, Seth being the dominant object of the shot; however the camera is slightly further away. This reaffirms Seth's position as a caring brother but also removes the audience from the closeness they had. Another shot of the woman alone shows her anxiety and uneasiness of the situation. Seth stands and the camera is yet again at a low angle and Ritchie is behind him, Seth regains his control unaware of his brother's slight sexual inclination. As Seth leaves and closes the door there is a shot of the woman breathing heavily under fright as she looks toward Ritchie, she knows that he is looking at her.

As the door closes a shadow moves over Ritchie's face as he looks towards the woman and the non- diegetic music of thunder is played again. This represents that he is a dark character and he has dark motives. The orange and bright lighting makes the room neutral and calm when the shadow is cast over Ritchie's face. It shows a clear contrast between what happens with Seth in control and the cruel deeds Ritchie performs when he is in control. The audience is reassured that Ritchie's motives are cruel.

The thunder along with the shadow represents a sinister side to Ritchie's personality and his instability also confirms that he is planning something unpleasant. The non-diegetic music and intent stares only occur when Seth is out of the room or not looking at his brother. This confirms that Seth and Ritchie have different morals and principles. The camera continuously changes proximity reflecting the instability and differences between Seth and Ritchie. The shot of Seth outside is a low angle shot, Seth does not look in the direction of the camera and this gives the impression of someone spying on him.

The suitcase contains stolen money and the police are pursuing the brothers, this camera angle could possibly be seen as a police man hiding away and watching him as he suspiciously removes the suitcase from the trunk. When Seth re-enters the motel room the camera follows the suit case containing the money. Seth carelessly places the case on a chair clearly illustrating his trust in his brother to be near it. Seth's control and authority is clear in this shot as the camera is at a low angle from when he re-entered the room, "What time does it get dark around here? The high angle shot again gives him control.

This small phrase could also symbolise the dark motives Ritchie is considering and the darkness in the room. The next few shots leave the hostage out as the brothers argue; Seth is, again, in more control. His knowledge and manner, "This conversation's over" clearly shows that Ritchie has no say or power in his brother's presence. The shots become wider as the argument begins getting closer to Seth's face as he becomes

more agitated and serious but stays calm. One last close up of Seth's face as his eye twitches shows that he is angry underneath.

The next shot contains all three characters, Seth is in the foreground emphasising his control, the hostage barely in the picture illustrating her insignificance to the brothers and the film and Ritchie, again, behind his brother. Again, Ritchie is staring intently at the hostage as Seth instructs her. Shots backward and forth to the hostage show she understands and that Seth and Ritchie are in control. The dialect Seth uses also compliments the shots and as the hostage hears more of the rules that are being put forth, the medium shots of her face become close ups.

These shots reassure the fact that this is a serious situation and the hostage understands. After Seth leaves, Ritchie invites the hostage into the bedroom. An extremely high shot of the hostage on the couch, gives the impression that she is in a great deal of danger. The camera views Ritchie from outside the bedroom from the hostage's point of view. This separates the audience from the reality of anything bad happening. After the hostage has moved over to the bed the audience see Ritchie and the hostage in the same shot for the first time, it makes the audience aware of the fatal events.

Inviting the hostage onto the bed and out of the room that Seth was so in control of puts Ritchie in control and makes the audience remember the intense stares that began the sinister sexual innuendo. The establishing context shot shows the beginning of a new scene. The non-diegetic music removes the audience from the tense situation that preceded the scene. A tracking shot of the waitress introduces the relaxed environment. As the

next group of main characters are introduced the non-diegetic music becomes diegetic and dialogue amongst the group begins.

Jacob becomes the main focus of the camera making it clear that he is the dominant character at this point. The shot of Kate and Scott makes it clear that they are close siblings. Cut shots show a comfortable attitude amongst the group as they discuss their plans for the trip and Jacob explains why he wants to stop at a hotel. As the audience learn more about these new characters the camera proximity changes and becomes close to Jacob. The audience become intimate with the family thus making it easier to sympathise with future decisions.

The camera stays level making the family seem as though they are all at neutral levels. As Jacob becomes more serious and relates to the family, a shot from over Kate's shoulder makes her seem like the more mature of the siblings. When Scott leaves the table the bond between Jacob and Kate becomes clearer and the audience can see that she is more aware and mature and that Scott is still only seen as a child. Jacob's proper dialect also makes him seem educated and throughout the scene he also seems very philosophical. The close up shots and medium shots could also represent his change in faith or lack of.

The closer the camera the more sensitive the conversation becomes and it seems to be about his faith. When Jacob becomes negative about his Christianity the shots are not as intimate or close demonstrating the change in his faith. They talk of Jacob's wife, Kate and Scott's mother and as the conversation between Kate and Jacob becomes serious and the audience

learns about the past of the family, close up cut shots of Kate and Jacob show that this is an intimate moment between the father and daughter. The fact the shots at Jacob are over the shoulder shots from Kate shows that this is a personal moment between the two.

When the conversation becomes tense medium shots reflects the break in tranquillity. Jacob clearly becomes disgusted in the subject of his past and grimaces tightly. The effect on Kate is that of realisation and shock. The audience become involved with the family because they now know of their past and this makes it easier to sympathise with the family. In conclusion, it is clear that high angle shots and low angle shots give the criminals, Ritchie and Seth, a great deal of power in the varied situations however it is very clear that Seth seems even more in control than his brother.

The audience can be clear on this because high angle shots give Seth power over his brother as well as the hostage alone. Close ups make the audience intimate with the characters. As seen in the motel scene but more clearly in the restaurant. When the characters are talking about a more intimate and sensitive parts of their lives the audience get closer and intimate too. This is how personalities and authority is demonstrated in the sequence.

Read next:

Boys From The Blackstuff