

The summer of sam



Summer of Sam This essay examines formal narrative and plot elements in the film ' Summer of Sam'. The film begins with a somewhat fresh and slightlyambiguous narrative format. After an introduction by a writer into the nature of New York, the film jumps back in time and contains a scene of a tortured man banging his head against a bare mattress. This scene then cuts to two individuals seated in a car. It's a confusing narrative jump, but the juxtaposition it presents functions to create viewer interest and excitement in what is set to occur. The film delivers on these viewer expectations as the individuals seated in the car are shot. The film then cuts to a car driving through New York. In these opening scenes great emphasis is placed on the juxtaposition off sonic and visual elements to create impact and viewer interest. As the film advances it begins to assume more of a traditional linear narrative format. As it follows a man and his wife as they go into a nightclub, and the follows the man as he leaves and engages in intercourse with a woman he picked up there; they are ultimately interrupted by a mysterious car. The next scene at 7: 32 includes another murder. It's clear that while the narrative appears to be centered around these characters, in reality the viewer has in part been placed in the position of the mysterious murderer, who hovers in the background throughout these narrative developments. The film then cuts back to the man in who has returned to the nightclub. These characters, in contrast to the murderer, represents the film's first developed parallel narrative structure. At 13: 00 the film introduces the third narrative element, considering the life of Richie, a punk rock youth. At 20: 25, the film then combines these parallel narratives as Richie and the man from the nightclub meet-up. At 30: 00, the narrative then seamlessly gives way to an encounter between two cops and perceived Mafioso. While the film

has explored at this point four separate narrative elements they all have unifying features, as well as the general backdrop of the killings that links them together. It is perhaps for these reasons that the film functions so seamlessly. Many times throughout the film, the narrative returns to the killer. In large part the film's narrative functions by only revealing small portions of the killer, yet in more progressively developed ways. For instance, towards the beginning of the film all that is revealed is the killer's gun shooting the victims. Later the killer's apartment is shown, with his hand moving letter-blocks; still later, a voice-over by the killer further develops his perspective. In all, it represents a powerful means of creating narrative interest, as the viewer struggles to piece together the character and nature of this mysterious individual. These major narrative developments then constitute the major structural nature of the film, as the rest of the film follows these main character archs and the progressing serial murder mystery.