

The filmmaking of quentin tarantino essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Quentin Tarantino is perhaps the most distinctive and volatile talent to emerge in American film in the last 15 years. Unlike the previous generation of American filmmakers, Tarantino learned his craft from his days as a video clerk, rather than as a film school student. Consequently, he developed an audacious fusion of pop culture and independent art house cinema; his films are distinguished as much by their clever, twisting dialogue as their outbursts of extreme violence. Tarantino is one of the very few filmmakers in the contemporary film industry who can be seen as an auteur.

Being an auteur means that you're ascribed overall responsibility for the creation of a film and its personal vision, identifiable style, thematic aspects and techniques, that you are the 'true' authors of film (rather than the screenwriters) because you exercise such control over all facets of film making and impart a distinctive, personal style to your films. Tarantino's personal style incorporates a lot of well thought out violence, swearing, repetitive casting, and many other filming techniques, all of which earn him the elusive title of auteur.

Violence plays a key role in Tarantino's films and in particular his first three: Reservoir Dogs, Jackie Brown and Pulp Fiction which I will be mainly focusing on today. Violence is prevalent in "Reservoir Dogs", notably when Mr. Blonde tortures the captured police officer and cuts off his ear. This intense violence portrays many things about the film and about what Tarantino is trying to suggest. He manifests these gangster characters with such disregard to living, going to jail, and swearing simply to show the audience how he believes criminals act.

Quentin therefore tries to present a criminal lifestyle as it most likely is, not worth it. He suggests that a life of crime and violence leads to dead ends such as jail, death, or predicaments such as having an informant on a well-planned out diamond heist! We also see violence cleverly utilised in Jackie Brown. In one scene Samuel L Jackson's character, Ordell, kills one of his gun dealers after locking him the boot of his car without remorse or hesitation, simply because he does not trust him.

Tarantino presents a character that shows very little guilt for his actions, and a very short thought process before a murder. Once again, Tarantino uses these violent sequences in a didactic fashion to demonstrate the futility of a life of crime. Pulp Fiction is often cited as Tarantino's greatest work, and is undoubtedly my favourite Tarantino film. Violence also has a role to play in this critically acclaimed film. The most prominent use of violence is when Butch and Marcellus are locked up, and Marcellus is raped, Marcellus, in retribution shoots the genitals off of the fake cop that was raping him.

This violence once again acts as a manifestation of a criminal lifestyle, and the path that one follows when entering this type of lifestyle; which is one made up of money, sex, drugs, and heaps of violence. All in all, violence is just one of the many stylistic devices used by Tarantino that merit his title as a cult-classic creator. Tarantino's stylistic uniqueness is also seen in his use of camerawork. He uses tracking shots to great effect in all three films. For instance, when Mr. Blonde starts to lead his fellow criminals out to the car to look at the cop he has captured.

The camera begins to follow the group out to the car from their backsides, and then opens up to the outside of the warehouse, from dark to light. This shows the criminals containment in the warehouse; in a way trapped from leaving. When they arrive to the car, the camera shows the criminals from a low-angle. This represents their power over the cop, and the misconception they hold of their superiority over law. Another example of Tarantino's stylistic use of tracking is in the main shot of Jackie Brown. The camera first begins to track Jackie as she packs the bag with the cash and the towels and starts to walk into the mall.

The camera tracks her from the side and then focuses on Jackie's face from the front, showing her paranoia and nervousness before completing her job. The camera stops tracking Jackie Brown when she enters the dressing room and begins to switch bags. The tracking here is to emphasise the panic and unease of Jackie as she daringly tempts fate. The startling and unexpected death of Vincent in Pulp Fiction is preceded by a tracking shot. This shot begins with Butch dismounting his chopper. The camera starts to follow him from the back through a field filled with weeds and dead grass until he reaches his apartment.

The camera focuses on Butch from a low-angle shot on the first floor while he is on the second, tip-toeing to his apartment. The camera still follows him until he is about to open the door, and then cuts to his shaky hand about to turn the key. He opens the door quickly, and proceeds to put pop-tarts in the toaster, which serves as a distraction for the audience in their heightened suspense. The tracking in this sequence is used so as to add suspense, and

make the anticlimactical death of our protagonist more shocking. As you can see, the distinct use of camerawork attributes to Tarantino's auteur status.

Tarantino's use of editing is pioneering. He does not opt for the conventional "beginning, middle, end" storytelling device. Instead he uses various other distinctive methods. For example, Tarantino himself dubbed *Reservoir Dogs* a "heist" film, Quentin Tarantino set this film within the heist genre of other films perfectly, yet managed to completely change around the way a heist is normally shot. This movie is completely exclusive to the other heist movies that have been filmed due to the way it is shot in reverse, with the story unfolding as the characters meet in the warehouse.

Whereas other heist films are straightforward from the beginning. This use of retrospective storytelling sets Tarantino apart from other filmmakers.

Similarly, *Pulp Fiction* incorporates three seemingly unrelated narratives into an interwoven story through the usage of non-linear editing. The film manages to pull this off while still giving each of its narrative segments equal weight, and so demonstrates Tarantino's unique ability and process. Quentin Tarantino uses violence as his main motif to suggest what he believes the criminal lifestyle incorporates, and the road it leads one to.

Tarantino uses the tracking shots in his movies as a stylistic element to build up the suspense of a scene and to show the paranoia of the actors fulfilling the role. Although not explored, Tarantino uses the swearing of the gangsters/criminals to further display their roles in each movie. Yet, the actors and actresses that did not act as a criminal tended not to curse at all, which can be found interesting. To further extend Quentin Tarantino's role as

an auteur, he repeatedly uses the same actors, actresses, and objects in each movie.

The characters in each movie learn that a life of crime leads to death and/or other bad situations. The audience learns that thinking before one's actions and leading a clean lifestyle, will lengthen one's life. In looking at Reservoir Dogs, Jackie Brown, and Pulp Fiction by Quentin Tarantino, we see the visual and stylistic comparisons between the films that portray Quentin Tarantino as an auteur, and find that these comparisons are advocated through the severe violence, similar casting, and unique filming of each of these movies.