

Top gun analysis

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Adventure film. The film was made by Paramount and directed by Tony Scott, who is well accounted for his Action/Adventure films worldwide. He has directed such films as Days of Thunder (1990) and Last Boy Scout (1991).

The non original music used in the film was composed by Harold Falkenmeyer and was heavily acclaimed in its day. The cast of Top Gun comprises of the young and enthusiastic Tom Cruise who plays ‘Maverick’. Kelly McGillis plays an attractive Charlotte ‘Charlie’ Blackwood.

Anthony Edwards plays the ill fated but eccentric and fun loving ‘Goose’. Finally Iceman is played by a rather sycophantic Val Kilmer. Top Gun received Oscar nominations for special sound effects, editing and for sound. It however won an Oscar for the soundtrack used throughout the film “Take My Breath Away. The films further use of aeronautic display was revolutionary and the fact that none of the lead actors in the film actually flew makes the effects even more ore inspiring due to the reality of the film.

Top gun is an American film about two fighter pilots who are sent to America’s best fighter school “Top Gun”. After a brief insight in to the film’s story the viewer is thrown in to an intense action scene. “Maverick” and “Goose” and their wingmen “Cougar” and “Merlin” are on patrol when enemy aircraft fly into their area. The Mise en Scene of this part of the film is of mountainous terrain with clear shots of all the planes involved in the shot. Heavy blue sky and few clouds help to breach the viewer’s subconscious and makes them realise the seriousness of the situation due to how height of the planes from the ground. The height and size of the planes are enhanced due to the effective use of lighting.

Heavy shadows are cast on the barren landscape which helps create a false illusion of grandeur. Lighting on the pilots is kept to a minimum however it is used to enhance the sweat on the pilot's foreheads. This effect is used to great advantage on the faces of the pilots which help increase the anxiety of the scene. The scene begins with practical silence however this is interrupted with one of the signature soundtracks of the film ' Danger zone' this is music compacts the danger that the pilots are now faced with, the non-diegetic soundtrack is only introduced when danger is presented to the pilots and when Tom Cruise acts upon the impending danger. The diegetic roars of the aircrafts' engines help enhance the realistic element of the scene also.

Quick cut frames are used within this scene which would be expected to build up the intense danger that the pilots are in. When the pilots are ' out of danger' the speed of the frames is lessened as is the speed of the music which gradually fades out as the danger is overcome. The second action scene sees Maverick and Goose being assessed on their flying capabilities at Top Gun. The Mise en Scene of this scene once again shows that the director has taken full advantage of the American mountainous landscape. However the director seems to make more use of the sea and the sun than in previous scenes. We are shown four planes flying however Maverick and Goose lose control of the plane and the plane begins to fly out of control.

The music used in this scene is like the other action parts, extremely realistic. The diegetic roars of the engines across the barren landscape are powerful and allow the viewer to become absorbed in the realism of sound created by them. The non-diegetic music of the scene enforces what

happens through out the scene. As danger begins to creep the signature tune of Top Gun begins and reaches climax when the plane spins erratically out of control and both Maverick and Goose eject from the plane. The tone of the music after this is of a much more different state. Goose is badly injured and so the tone of the music is lowered and slows down.

The camera angles used in this scene are extremely enthralling. A rotational camera movement is used when the plane is out of control which shows how frantic the situation they are faced with. Maverick is usually very good at controlling the aircraft, however he takes control of the aircraft later in the scene and so retains his hero status. A close up is first used to help to educate the viewer on what has happened to Goose. The camera then gradually pans out with a high angle shot which then moves in to a very long shot which exposes both Maverick and Goose in the empty landscape which makes the viewer feel emotionally for the two characters as Maverick although wants to desperately help cannot as he is completely helpless in that situation.

This scene is edited to consider with the peril of the scene. Thus the uses of quick cut scenes are imperative. However as we realise that Goose is injured editing of the scene is much more slow paced and the fading of one camera angle to the next is staggered. At the beginning of the scene the lighting is bright and intense which is contrasted at the end of the scene when it becomes dark and cloudy which I believe has double meaning which is, the darkness symbolises the end of the day which also suggests the end of Gooses life. Lighting as in the previous paragraph what I talked about is once again used to put emphasis on the intensity of the scene (the sweat, redness
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and worried expressions on the characters faces)The third main action scene takes place near the end of the film.

Here Maverick, Iceman and another pilot are entered in to real combat. The Mise en Scene of the scene shows Maverick distressing over the death of his friend Goose. However he overcomes this and is needed to help the desperate situation that is unfolding in the skies. The dramatic landscape used in other scenes is not used in this scene as much as it is in others. The lighting of the scene is quite dull, and no sense of Maverick being worried or anxious can be gained.

Which is of great contrast to the lighting of the control room and of the men in there who are sweating heavily? The lighting of the scene turns to more of a darker tone when Maverick walks to his plane that he is going to fly. As he walks and gets in the plane however, light glimmers from the clouds which could be symbolic and suggest to the viewer that Maverick (the hero) is the saviour i. e. the saviour of the other pilots in the sky. When Maverick is back up in the sky, light shines on to the left of his helmet which emphasises the US flag on it, which is mainly more common in American patriotic army, navy films similar to Top Gun. Editing of this scene is done to perfection.

As with the other scenes there is swift cut editing like the other scenes this happens although doesn't really come in to full effect until Tom Cruise is in the air. When Maverick is called up to assist the desperate situation the camera just follows him as he walks to the jet, a slow motion effect is also used, which truly polishes his hero prominence. This also helps us to realise that the next scene is important to Maverick and to the film. There are close-

ups of the engines lighting up when Maverick is seated and ready to fly off which promotes the power and strength both emotionally and mentally of Maverick and the plane. There finally is also an extreme close up of Goose's chain which emphasises the personal dilemma that he is going through.

The rapid diageitic instructions from base help to add to the confusion and suspense of the scene when Maverick is not flying. In the final scene it is important to note that the signature track only begins playing when Maverick joins the other pilots in the sky, this helps the viewer to realise that he is truly the hero and the situation will be resolved as he is there.