

Classical hollywood systems



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ABSTRACT:

The main objective of this course work is to provide various similarities and differences in the classical Hollywood systems. The classical version of the Hollywood studio systems are roughly between 1910 and 1960. Though it's the longest period to evaluate, the films between 1930 and 1949 are considered. There are huge number of studios are present in the Hollywood cinema where only few studios exist from the beginning. The two major film studios are UNIVERSAL STUDIOS and WARNER BROTHERS. In this project, these 2 studios are analyzed in detail. In particular their studio systems, similarities and differences in their style of film making.

WARNER BROTHERS:

Warner bros studios were found by four brothers Harry Warner, Albert Warner, Sam Warner and Jack Warner. The four brothers were Jews emigrated from Poland. They started the business by having a own projector. The projector was used for the exhibition business. The first theater was opened in Pennsylvania in 1903. In the initial stage, they begin to produce some ordinary movies to bag success. Getting successful response from the people Warner brothers started thinking differently with sound, color and style. The movies produced before are soundless motion pictures. This sound movies was the idea gave by the youngest Sam Warner. Initially the request was not been accepted by Harry. But to produce movie at different area, the request was acknowledged.

Screen play was the division which was concentrated more by the Warner brothers. Their ultimate goal was to explicate the art of screenplay in classical Hollywood cinema. Warner brothers divided the studio system into

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various tasks such as directing, sound, cinematography, art direction, story acquisition and editing. The screenplay was further divided into discrete tasks such as synopsis, treatment continuing, shooting script conclusion. These categories are evenly distributed among three writers while a writer can easily concentrate on a particular field.

1930 to 1950 is the golden period for warner brothers. Because they categorized the motion pictures into various genres. Such as

- Crime
- Gangster
- Horror-detective-murder
- Comedy
- Women's films
- Western
- Musical
- War
- Social drama
- Prestige movies.

To illustrate important variations in narrative form each and every category was chosen. The gangster movies were produced based on the social problems. The myth of success was the first influence defined America as an open classless society. The second influence was the boss politics and the third influence was prohibition. Some example for the successful gangster movies are

- 1931-Little Caesar

- 1931-Public enemy
- 1932- Scarface
- 1933- Blondie Johnson.

Considering the first category, James Cagney dominated the genre during 1930's. In the second category dark streets, bars, clubs, penthouse apartments and some stations are shown as a genre's vital part. The third category shows the gangster as a modern city man and holds most of the parts on his own.

The myth of the G-Man is the movie which enforces the stiffer production code. This major turn back is considered to be the second cycle of gangster pictures. In 1936, bullets or ballots shows the same gangster movie but shown in a different context such as the hero joins the gang and works as an undercover and destroys the gang.

As far as social dramas, the black fury was the first movie which has been released in the year 1935. This movie reveals the dramatized labor and industrial unrest. Basically social dramas falls into three categories. They are social consciousness, yellow journalism and working men's movies. The social dramas as a production strategy was eclipsed by problems of greater concern during the 1940's as America entered World War II.

The next genre is musical movies. Warner brothers produced all kind of movies in a certain time span. The first musical movie was produced in 1926. Jazz singer was the first musical movie which was directed by Alan Crosland. In 1928, the singing fool was created by warner brothers. As a variation of the gangster's genre, warner brothers potentially find a perfect formula as

crime movies. Warner uses the same stars as gangster movies as well as crime movies. Among crime movies, prison pictures are very popular. The first groups of prison movies were produced during 1930's and 1933's. The second group of crime movies in 1936. Alcatraz Island in a movie with more action sequences and was a good tough movie.

The next important genre was war movies in which warner brothers concentrated more because of spirit. From 1915 to 1970 warner brothers created more and more war movies which virtually shows the American fighting as determined, brave and successful. After the first world war, the war genre enters the outbreak of hostilities in Europe. These movies depicts

- Tolerance to intolerance
- Progressivism to reaction
- Pacifism to militarism.

During the interval between the two world wars, warner started producing patriotic movies with admiration.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS:

The toughest competition for warner brothers during their production is universal studios. Universal pictures concentrated on a very few genre movies such as

- Women's movies
- Detective movies
- Horror movies
- Western movies.

Though women's movies are consigned to a very minor status and not all the studios took risk in producing such movies. This genre movies was mostly produced between 1935 and 1950. These years gave more women's movies in which all credit goes to universal studios. The women's films antecedents are found at melodrama and these genres were not developed until 1920's. The genre appeared to be different in various studios.

In 1940, universal studios decide to develop some noir women's film. This second phase was considered to be an amalgamation of the personal taste of universal pictures. Some elements sustains women's films. They are

- Flashback sequences
- Cynical themes
- Voice over narration
- Realistic action
- Lighting techniques and
- Expressionistic camera.

Universal studios now have the thought about horror movies. Dracula and Frankenstein were the movies which attains a greater success during thirties. Then the company begins to unleash the mummies and werewolves. These horror movies begin to haunt the people. This encourages directors and the universal studio to create various monsters based movies with completely different thought. Mystery of the wax museum was a sequel and it is a modern horror film. During these productions, some original stories are planned to make as a movie. These kind of plans gave some good movies to Hollywood cinema which are even perfect in the present technical world.

During the thirties, detective movies did some good service to not only film producers and the audiences as well. Sherlock Holmes did the job to universal pictures whereas the thin man series for MGM. Sherlock Holmes becomes a model for all directors for making a detective movie. Aiming at juvenile audiences, universal pictures produces a lot of Nancy drew and torchy blane movies. Nearly nine movies were represented by torchy blane who stars with Glenda Farrell. On the other hand, the Nancy drew series were starred by Bonita Granville which was adopted from a novel of Carolyn Keene. There are four movies in this series and all were directed by the same person William Clemens.

Murder movies are the next front line genre which attains success because of the thrilling and mystery sequences present in the movie. Western movies are the most richest and enduring genre in Hollywood. It consists of a heroic story with some visual elements and narrative formats. The only genre whose life span is long is the western movies. Even though the genre face a strong set back due to the lack of technical factors.

SIMILARITIES:

We have discussed about various genres and movies in the previous sections. Those films are produced in two different studios and they possess different qualities. Now let us discuss the common factors that these studios possess and how these factors made them common.

Filmmakers developed formal methods that made shooting relatively quick and easy:

- Shoot whatever scenes are most economical to shoot at a given time
(shoot out of
Sequence when necessary)
- Cover any given sequence from as many different angles as possible
and with multiple
Takes of each angle to give the producer and editor a lot of material to
choose from
- Edit the material to create linear continuity, cut on movement, and
keep eyeliners matched

(Maintaining the direction a person is gazing from one shot to another).

Among various genres, both universal studios and warner brother's pictures use some common genre movies. War, musical, women, western, horror is some of the common genres. Cross cutting is a vital device used for continuity style. This technique was used by both the studios. The main objective of this technique is to increase the tension during narration. Meanwhile is a simple narrative technique which is literary equivalent to cross cutting. The cross cutting technique used for the story line at the time of introducing two leading characters in a movie and intriguing way.

The next common aspect is point of view shot. In this technique, editing is important device used by filmmakers to create good audience identification with the film characters. It replaces the audience in place of main character in the movie. This technique is common for the horror genre in which the director often places the viewer within the viewing position of the monster.

The next similarity will be cinematography. The key feature in this technique is three point lighting. These classical studios are the good example of three point lighting. In order to light the subject, key, fill and back lights are used. Three point lighting scheme is the commonly used lighting scheme and it helps us to enable and understand how lighting gives good effect on one's perception of a character. The key light is used as a common source of illumination. Even though another light will be needed. So in order to cover the areas of darkness and to soften the shadows, the key light contains cast. It is called as fill light which is a secondary source. The combination of key and fill light should be supplemented further. The back light which is the third source provides necessary depth and placed above and behind the subject. High key and low key lighting are the common divisions of the lighting techniques. These are some similarities between the two studios.

DIFFERENCES:

The two studios namely warner brothers and universal pictures had some similarities. But they possess some differences too. Some common differences are

- Setting & Props
- Costume, Hair and Make-Up
- Movement, Positioning and Performance
- Lighting and Cinematography.

Settings are mostly backgrounds but they are integral to atmosphere creation and narration building in a movie. In some rare cases, a location or building can be considered as a character in the movie itself. Props are the

objects which can be viewed within the movie world. it also forms some integral part in the action of the film. It also carries some symbolic meaning.

Costume and makeup plays a vital role in a scene because it can provide immediate sense and their status in the movie. They also give an instant idea of what period that the film is set.

Movement, performance and positioning of characters within a frame is important for both characterization and narration in a film. Positioning can be utilized as an indicator for people relationships. Performance includes the expression coming from the actor's face and body language. The feelings and emotions can be identified through performance.

These are some common factors that these film makers differs in their way and let us see some more technical factors in which they differ while making movie.

Camera framing: There are 3 key areas in camera framing. They are shot type, camera positioning and camera angle. Shot type refers to the positioning and distance between the camera and its subject. Camera positioning indicates the presence of the camera. High angle and low angle are the two camera angles.

Camera movement: panning, crane, tilting, zooming and tracking are the divisions in camera movement. In panning, cameras move from side to side. Crane is used for lifting cameras which will be mounted on it. Tilting makes camera move up and down from fixed axis.

These are the key areas in which both the studios differs in film making.

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CONCLUSION:

After discussing about various factors, it is clear that not all the aspects are same for all the studios. Warner brothers involved in many film productions in different genres. But the universal studios produce few genre movies. This essay clearly gives the information about the key principles in film making and their efforts to bring their thoughts to screen. Later on, we discussed about the similar facts that these two studios possess. There is some technical differences in implementing them.

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