

A Study: The unique blend of levity, naturally layered dialogue and violence in Quentin Tarantino's groundbreaking movies

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Abstract - Quentin Tarantino is undoubtedly an exceptional and passionate Director of the current Hollywood movie industry. He believes that if you are an artist, "You are your taste". The way he takes genre elements and shifts them into a different level in his own movies is commendable. Sometimes he is seen playing with our feelings, he being the conductor and we being the orchestra. He provides us with strange situations and creates a unique and definitive experience that we can only have in Tarantino movies. His movies contain remarkable music that has the power of maximizing the impact of a scene. He is even found to use anachronistic music. To him historical accuracy is less important as compared to capturing the feelings of what's happening. Another important aspect of Tarantino movies are his dialogues. Tarantino uses the American Vernacular very carefully in most of his movies. His characters always have time for gossiping no matter how grave the situation is. His movies are often found to exemplify criticism of other movies too. On the whole, Quentin Tarantino loves breaking conventional rules, denies that past has outgrown, reintroduces it, giving it a different quality and uses it as a shared experience and a shared joke.

Index Terms - Tarantino, Pulp Fiction, Kill Bill, Once Upon A Time in Hollywood.

QUENTIN TARANTINO AND STEALING

He has stated in an interview; "I steal from every single movie ever made. Great artists steal, they don't do homages". His movies are inspired by every single genre including spaghetti westerns, b movies, black exploitation flicks, samurai films, car movies and even cinema classics. He believes that a director is defined by what he is a fan of.

Be it criminals or special operation soldiers or even bounty hunters, he portrays unorthodox careers. In movies like Pulp Fiction and Reservoir Dogs; we find

that his movies lay emphasis on professionalism and perfection no matter what the role of the characters are. In a way his characters echo the personality and traits of Tarantino himself. In Pulp Fiction Jules and Vincent are professional criminals and don't like to leave behind a mess. On the other hand, Lieutenant Aldo considers himself to be a master of his craft i.e. drawing swastikas on Nazi's foreheads. Most of the times his characters try to be someone he is not and tension arises from situations where their true identity is revealed.

Tarantino has created his own cinematic Universe that consists of fictional brands such as The Big Kahuna Burger and for characters, Mr. Blonde is the brother of Vincent. In Pulp Fiction Mia had talked about a failed plot in which she was the main character and there was a Kung Fu master and a Demolition Expert along with her which sounded a lot like the story of Kill Bill where the role of Kiddo was played again by Uma Therman.

His love towards the Western genre comes through his fondness for outlaws, gunfights, Mexican standoffs, western music and a general sense of lawlessness. He himself has stated that Pulp fiction is a modern-day Spaghetti Western. Sergio Leone was the filmmaker who had greatest influence on his career. The title Once Upon A Time in Hollywood pays tribute to Leone's Once Upon a Time in The West, which is considered by Tarantino to be the movie that made him consider Filmmaking.

Tarantino once said, "I am a cheerleader towards violence in cinema". The director rejects our impulse to ascribe a sophisticated external meaning and comes down to the entertainment value. In his movies violence is creative. It captures our minds and it is unabashedly gruesome and gory. He said," if a guy is

shot in the stomach and he's bleeding like a stuck pig, I wanna see him bleeding like a stuck pig", that is now the situation they are dealing with. It's not he's like oohaah, like it's a stomach ache."

TARANTINO'S WORLD OF MOVIES

Tarantino doesn't concern himself with verisimilitude. He is overjoyed to know that his audience are in a world that he has created. He expresses this through visual flourishes and the use of text onscreen as well as by giving himself cameos on small yet memorable roles and he is not averse to playing pretty, nasty personalities too. Tarantino also loves playing with viewer's pop culture knowledge.

Tarantino's movies have a nonlinear structure. For example, in *Pulp Fiction* all the vignettes are out of chronological order, but the movie feels cohesive because each part contains references to the other story threads. It also feels connected because of the way it is structured; the main characters are alive till the end. Even though Vincent dies earlier on, but at the end everyone being active and alive adds an upbeat feel. A reason for Tarantino's love for nonlinear structure, maybe because he thinks of his scripts as literature and hence often divides his films into chapters.

REVENGE IS A DISH BEST SERVED COLD

As part of playing with our emotions like an orchestra, Tarantino shows innocent people being hurt to make us crave revenge on behalf of his characters, and then partake in their sense of empowerment when they get it. Yet as good as it feels, once the characters have chosen retribution, they might end up committing the rest of their lives to it. After the bride in *Kill Bill* kills Vernita Green, she accepts that Vernita's young daughter may someday come after her, thereby establishing the fact that the cycle of vengeance is never ending.

ELEMENTS OF A MOVIE

Now coming to the different elements that makes a movie complete like cinematography, production design, story, editing, sound design and music. We see that he creates highly effective dialogues that has a unique style of leaving loose ends and moving away from conversations to more interesting situations that

flip. He uses natural dialogue; willfully ignoring screenwriting convention that succinctly advances the plot or illuminates a character in its true sense. The best example of showing Tarantino's versatile dialogue writing is Jules' Bible Verse that doesn't exist in the actual Bible.

Ezekiel 25:17. "The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the inequities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men. Blessed is he who, in the name of charity and good will, shepherds the weak through the valley of the darkness, for he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children. And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who attempt to poison and destroy my brothers. And you will know I am the Lord when I lay my vengeance upon you."

Production design steers tone, mood and provides story details through visual choices. The costume that the characters have are their trademark or their visual identity. As we see in *Reservoir Dogs* all the crew members wear the same suit except Joe Cabbot and his son nice guy Eddie. In the narrative, a boundary has been created between the enlisted men and the officers. In *Django Unchained*, Django wears a blue suit that forms a contrast between former self and the present, but his blue suit also stands out from the plantation owner's attire. The costume of Django clearly echoes the form and title of the movie, loud and proud; *Django Unchained*.

COLOUR

For Tarantino colour is an emotional trigger. He experiments with black and white and then suddenly colours pop out to highlight the character. When a character is seeking revenge he or she is draped in bold primary colors like royal blue for Django, canary yellow for Kiddo and scarlet red for Soshanna. Tarantino also uses colour to set a mood. As evident in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* the bright shades of yellow and orange set a different tone for the movie. *Jackie Brown* starts with the colour blue; blue represents calmness, peace and tranquility. Jackie moves in with his blue uniform reinforces the above stated nature. The blue clothing portrays a bold woman tired of the old hustle, ready for new life.

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Great cinematography is a combination of different techniques like lighting, camera movement, lens choice and framing. For example, when the Nazi officer and Lapadit were conversing, the conversation began with a medium shot for the officer and a single medium shot for Lapadit indicating isolation and suspense. Gradually as the mood shifts, they start talking about rumors with single medium shots and when they start talking about children, the camera flips and goes below the floorboard where the people who were being enquired about are hidden. The very next shot is a medium close up building suspense, magnifying the intensity. Tarantino looks for opportunities to elicit strong emotions from the viewer. The camera placement and movement connects the viewer's emotions with character and plot of the movie.

EDITING

In Tarantino's movies edits build anticipation. Citing the example of the above movie again it's seen that Soshanna (a Jew in disguise) attends a dinner with Nazis. The audience as well as Soshanna want the dinner to end and then all of a sudden the Nazi Officer, Landa, who had killed Soshanna's entire family arrives. The camera then focuses on Soshanna and then the entire scene focuses on Soshanna, even when Landa and Zola argue. This edit connects us with Soshanna, making us fear for her. Thus, it's pretty evident that Tarantino loves to stretch out the anticipation in us.

SOUND DESIGN

In Tarantino's movies sounds are a mix-up between highly authentic and cheeky ones; the latter being used for emphasis. For example, during the kitchen scene in Kill Bill where Verneta goes to make coffee and pulls out a gun and shoots it, gunshot echoes out. When Kiddo throws the knife, there is a metal cutting sound that cuts through the air. A cartoon like screech is heard as Verneta's head slides down the glass.

The key element however that defines Tarantino's movies is levity behind violence. The interaction between Mr. Blonde and the police officer in Reservoir Dogs, the conversation for throwing out a gun in The Hateful Eight are all examples of scenes instances of ideal combination of violence and levity.

MUSIC

Pulp Fiction starts with the iconic Miserlou playing that sets the mood for the entire movie. His movies contain some memorable masterpieces in music. For example, the maneuver during the shooting scene in Django Unchained by Tupac Shakur and James Brown makes the scene stand out from the others.

CONCLUSION

Quentin Tarantino surely is one of the greatest directors to be born. His movies though outlandish have always been accessible. Be it naturally layered dialogues or breaking conventional rules. Be it long scenes with hidden elements that throw a wrench in the gears or production design that uses contrast and emphasis. Be it robust cinematography, built on eliciting emotions or utilizing unexpected editing opportunities to help build fear, anticipation and energy this man has done it all; that too in a flawless manner. Quentin Tarantino had promised retirement after making ten movies and 'Once Upon a Time in Hollywood' being the ninth we know he is nearing towards the end of his extravagant and highly successful career. We hope that the tenth movie would exceed all our expectations, bash the box office and make him so much money that he would get indulged in making another movie for us, the enthusiastic viewers.