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Mr. Sabot

Horror in Cinema

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Clockwork Orange Analysis

Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) has always been an extremely controversial and horrifying film. Touching on many taboo subjects and showing things that are typically frowned upon on by society. The visuals, music, positioning of the subjects, and small details provide a deeper analysis of certain scenes that people may not notice. Scenes such as the dance scene, the daydream of the crucifixion scene, and the final shot of the film. Kubrick's brilliant visual and auditory storytelling helps us look deeper into the shots even though they might be quick.

The dance scene is strong in both visual and auditory aspects. Greeted by Ludwig Van Beethoven's 9th Symphony, a snake, and a poster of a naked woman, the juxtaposition is clear. The audience expects something different upon hearing the classical symphony and is shocked when the quick cuts of the bloody figures of Jesus are depicted as dancing. The disturbing visuals continue as we see a close up of the main character Alex (Malcolm

McDowell), Alex who appears to be masturbating to this. Taking pleasure in his music and dark thoughts. We then see a montage of death, fire, and destruction spliced together with the visual of Alex with a pair of vampiric fangs dripping with blood. These visuals are meant to show what he enjoys doing and watching, evil.

After Alex is imprisoned for murder, he takes up reading the bible with the prison chaplain. As Alex can only think and commit acts of evil, his mind goes to a visual daydream in which he is depicted in old testament biblical stories. The first visual is Alex as a Roman centurion, flogging Christ as he drags the cross. Alex's twisted mind takes pleasure in the violence and being in prison, this is the only sort of violence he can read about and visualize. The next visual is him sitting on a bed with multiple naked handmaidens. The prominent colors of red and orange symbolizing lust, fascination, and sexuality. As Alex's desire for women and his disrespect for them is clear in the earlier stages of the movie, he turns to the bible again for stories about it since he's trying to find a way to feel his sick demented pleasure somehow. On a larger scale, this scene represents the idea that although he knows that he has done wrong (murder) and is in prison, deep down he still hasn't changed and his mind remains in the same ultra-violent, sex-crazed state it was in all along. This visual aide is required because in the previous scenes of prison, Alex seems to be turning around and doing much better. However, after this daydream, his mental state is clearly the same as before and he is still having dark and demented thoughts.

Being treated with the Ludovico method treatment in order to “cure” him, Alex can now only do good. This proves extremely problematic and people take advantage of him driving him to a point where he attempts to end his own life. After the attempt, Alex is in a hospital bed recovering. The man who insisted that the Ludovico method is used on Alex comes to apologize and make amends. He promises a surprise for Alex and in comes a crowd of photographers and a speaker system. Blasted by the overwhelming sound of the final movement of Ode to Joy and dazed by the flashes of numerous photographers, Alex becomes numb and begins to fade. The final and most impactful visual of the film shows a crowd of Victorian-era members of high society, all applauding and watching as two young women wrestle naked on the ground below them. This quick visual was extremely confusing for many audiences but taking a closer look at it, the meaning and positioning of the subjects are significant. As the story shows Alex being the embodiment of a clockwork orange, only doing wrong or right, the ending provides us with a visual of balance. The Victorian crowd representing society and proper behavior and the two women representing primal urges and the wild aspects of his life. The positioning symbolizes that he has found a balance between the two, prioritizing being fit for society and functioning in a more acceptable way over sexual desire, wild fantasies, and violence. The closing line of the film further solidifies the point that Alex has found balance as he ends his narration with the statement, “I was cured all right”.

Understanding the visuals and auditory elements of the film is extremely important to better know and truly analyze the story. The ending would not have made sense if not for that final visual daydream and the rest of the story is so much more intriguing when the small details of the visuals depicted are truly analyzed and understood. Kubrick's way of visual storytelling through color, imagery, and positioning of the subject matter show his expertise and provide the audience with a deeper look at the emotions of the characters and a better understanding of the story itself. Without it, the story seems choppy and disjointed from the view of an audience who doesn't fully comprehend the drastic and disturbing visuals. Understanding the simple yet complex details of these shots adds so much more to the story and character progression of Alex DeLarge and shows how music, colors, and placing can have an extremely important role in storytelling.