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Applied Aesthetics

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### **Aesthetic Analysis: Scott Pilgrim vs The World**

For this semester we were assigned multiple movie screenings to watch for this course, which all sparked a distinct category of film techniques that we were going over each week. For this assignment, I chose to conduct an aesthetic analysis of the film *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World* (Edgar Wright, 2010) for which I chose the opening sequence of this film (00:00-04:51) to give an in-depth analysis of how this opening sequence captures not only the narrative of the plot of Scott Pilgrim (Michael Cera) role in this film, yet also brings you into the vulnerability of his love life and the characters around him. Wright also captures the audience with the strong use of graphics, sounds, camera movement, and editing to create a strong opening scene for such a great film.

First I would speak on the editing within the opening scene (00:00-00:21), the film is showcasing the Universal Studios logo yet it's a bit different from what you'll see normally in other films like Jurassic Park (1993) and The Breakfast Club (1985). As which you could see, the institutional logo and theme were edited to an "8-bit" version to create this feeling to the audience a sense of them stepping into a video game. This film also has a significance in emphasizing the action within the opening scene (01:30-01:33), as we hear the sound of the doorbell being rung - we also see the words "Ding Dong" floating by Scott's ears. Wright also carries the sense of being in a video game which we see in (01:36-02:24) with each character being introduced - there is a small black popup box being shown with a small yet funny

description of each character. In another shot of the opening scene (02:40-02:44), Scott and the rest of the characters are displaying that they are about to begin band practice for their group called "Sex Ba Bombs" you can see the character Kim (Alison Pil) begin to scream the countdown of beginning their set, you could see cartoon-like graphics popping out of the sticks with each bang she does with the sticks. As the scene continues to roll (02:44-03:12), we are being shown lighting strikes coming from the instruments being played as well as cartoon woods and drawings coming from the instruments as well, there's a distinct part during this that you also see an effect to which the room begins to shake as well when the tempo of the song begins to follow a certain beat as well. This film also carries out the fast movement of transition to carry the hyperness a person feels when playing video games with fast wipes when transitioning into the next shot or when carrying dialogue.

The camera shots and movement played a great part in this opening scene as well as empathizing with the actions of each character and also using the camera to help with introducing each character within the opening scene. After the opening title scene (0:31-0:38), the camera starts to pan down from the text in the sky to trees, and then to this brown house roof - this creates the illusion of jumping out of a video game genre, and then later placing the audience back into the reality of the real world. The scene then cuts to an establishing shot of a small kitchen of Scott standing by the sink and his bandmates all sitting at the kitchen table. As the conversation continues, the camera then shifts between an over-the-shoulder shot to close-up shots to demonstrate their conversation without any interruptions. As the opening scene continues we are followed by more close-up shots as each character is being introduced, for an example, as the opening scene carries on we see each character is being profiled with the small

black pop-up, which helps the audience to become familiar with each character. This trait is very similar to how it will be portrayed in video games as well. Later as we see Kim (Alison Pil) begin the countdown to start the song, the camera zooms in with each click of her drum stick to create an action build-up of the band beginning to play. As they begin to play, the camera switches from having a close-up of the instruments to switching to zoom in on a close-up of Knives (Ellen Wong) face as you could see she's being swooned by her boyfriend, Scott's band.

The mise en scene and cinematography in this film is also a strong concept as showcased in the opening scene, Wright used a lot of props to assist in helping to tell the story to the audience for an example, the instruments for the band practice, the items that place all over the kitchen to give it a sense of a home grounds the narrative for this film. The lighting for the opening scene is a bit of slightly lowkey lighting in some cases and slightly high-key lighting, due to the setting of the scene I feel as though Wright wanted to create that sense of home by only using neutral home setting lighting to stick to the narrative. The costumes within this opening scene fit the roles of each character and the vibes which they gave off, for an example Kim (Alison Pil), Scott (Michael Cera), and Neil (Johnny Simmons) are given a youthful look of just jeans and a t-shirt whereas to Stephen Stils (Mark Webber) he is dressed more matured and older as compared to the rest of his band mates. Another example would be when Knives (Ellen Wong) who is Scott's younger girlfriend, arrives at the house in which you see she's wearing more of a formal school uniform, which portrays that she is a good girl and that she indeed goes to a private school as they mentioned prior to her arriving. As we see in the establishing shot of the kitchen, we see three people sitting down at the table and we see one person standing up by the sink in which creates some enigma codes of who's house are they in? Who are the people

sitting down next to each other at the table and what relationship do they all have with each other? This is where cinematography comes into play with the scramble of enigma codes as well, the scene starts off with the audience seeing all of the four characters together yet one of them is not in the center of the screen with the rest of them which sparks the question of how is this one character different from the rest of the characters that are sitting at the table? As the scene carries on and displays a few over the shoulder shots and reverses shots between each of the characters, showcasing that they are all having a conversation amongst each other - but at the same time when the camera is shot in Scott's point of view the camera is set to where we see the characters looking up at him and the camera is in a high angle signifying that Scott has more power over the rest of the characters.

In this opening scene, to accompany the titles there is a prologue use to introduce the band which are the main characters in the movie. Wright purposely combines the music with the acting to create an digestic sound by having the characters perform the song as well, this also creates the relationship between the music and setting as well by setting the scene to the opening sequence. The music as displayed in this opening sequence is very chaotic and vibrant which compliments well with the practicing and titles scene, Wright also wanted to throw a extra glimpse with the music as well - while he wanted to hypnotized the audience with the graphics, symbol, and the color/ light placed in the title sequence. He wanted the audience to give off the idea of a manifestation of how incredible Scott's band music was in Knives's mind, which is why they cut to her as the title sequence is over, to represent the titles of showing her mind exploding to how amazing the music was.

For this opening sequence, you could see after the opening non-digetic narration is finished it - the camera begins to tilt down and begins to reveal some trees with no leaves and

and snow on the branches, which signifies that the season in this setting is winter. The camera begins to tilt down further to reveal the roof of a house following a chimney that's attached to the house as well covered with snow on top of the roof as well. The genre is a bit self explanatory as we could see in the beginning of the film in which we see the institutional logo "Universal Studios" being edited into a "8-bit" to resembles what seems to be a video game in which entails to the audience that this film entails some sort of action/adventure/fantasy/comedy. As we carry on within this opening scene, we see a lot of graphics and animation sparking from as the characters doing certain actions amongst dialogue, when the characters are playing their instruments, and also when the movie title "Scott Pilgrim vs The World" appeared in strong special effects and helps the audience effectively enjoy the movie, by showcasing the special effects that would be occurring throughout the film. I've included comedy and fantasy due to based on the opening sequence, by the conversations alone they are more awkward comedy which those who are familiar with Michael Cera's work he always stars in comedy films, in which you see his same comedic persona in this film as well. As far as fantasy, this film is based on a real life comic, which includes a lot of fantasy work involved so being that this film is a book adaptation of the comic - Wright would make sure to follow that theme within the film.

Conclusion:

Scott Pilgrim vs The World (Edgar Wright 2010) as stated captures the audience by the strong graphics, color, and special effects in which Wright made sure to stand out to the audience within the first 4:15 seconds of the film, he creates that sense of question yet excitement similar to the feeling of playing that brand new video game for the first time towards the audience. With the camera movement of creating that reality shift from the opening of the video game with the Universal Studios logo to the camera tilting low to capture the sense of realism. To the

cinematography, creating many enigma codes, to figuring out that the cameras was creating this sense of power that Scott had over the rest of the characters in the kitchen shot with the over the shoulder, reverse shots, and high and low angle shots. To the strong costume choices that Wright decides for the characters, by having their wardrobe create each character owns narrative for ones self. Each of these components, played a great deal to take the components of a video game and mix it with realism to create that exciting dynamic of action to the audience.