

Analysis of the First 3-5 minutes of Sin City

Opening scene

Basin City, almost universally referred to by the nickname **Sin City**, is a fictional town in the American west. The movie is based on a series of graphic novels by Frank Miller and Film Noir was the genre of its time. The directors of this movie were Frank Miller, Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino (special guest director).

The movie starts off black and white, there is Non diegetic sound (nds) which is slow and sounds like a saxophone is playing which could mean a series of outcomes such as a slow build up to a love scene. The first few seconds the camera is focused on the city. This may tell the audience the look of the film, the focus then immediately changes to the woman in the red dress which makes the audience wonder why everything else is in black and white and only her dress is light up. A meaning to what the red dress could mean would be that she is in danger or she herself is the danger. The camera then switches to a over the shoulder shot and we can now see a in a black suit walking towards the lady and behind him the lights turn brighter and we can hear his footsteps (ds). Police sirens are heard and the saxophone starts to play once again. The weather is cold “it’s cold” as the narrator points out. Reverse camera angle you can see the bright lights, her lips match her dress as they are both red, this could have the same meaning as the dress.

The man in the black suit then reaches into his pocket and pulls out a packet of cigarettes. There’s a close up on the cigarettes which means sex and also another sign of this would be the red lipstick, the cigarette could also resemble to death. The level of sound of the actor’s voice is very low compared to the narrator’s voice. Camera switches to a shot reverse shot and there is a close up on her face and you can see her face light up at the same time the narrator says “it’s not just your face”. Soon as she puts the cigarette to her red lips and there is a close up the director is setting the audience up for a surprise. Once the cigarette is lit up, her eyes go green which could be a sign of evil and her pupils grow bigger and after she takes a puff her eyes go back to black & white and the saxophone and a piano once again starts to play. The audience can hear the wind (nds) and the rain but can’t see the rain and we can’t see the cigarette smoke blow away with the wind. There is a close up on her face, her emotion makes us think that she’s afraid and she’s running from something because she looks startled. She says “I don’t want to face it alone”, this makes the audience wonder what she’s running away from and the red dress and red lips could tie in with her running away and the director is trying to tell the audience something.

The Camera now changes into a long shot and the raindrops start emerging and hear the thunder (nds). The type of the camera turns into negative which refers back to the comic books, as it looks like a comic scene. Also whilst they are kissing they emerge as one and there mouth and body form a love heart. Camera goes back into Black and white; the man comforts her, telling her “everything will be alright”. There is a close up on her face and her facial expression shows she feels happy and comforted because of what she was fearing before. The man then tells her he loves her and a split second after she has bin

shot “silencer makes a whisper of the shot”. The camera then looks down on the characters making the man look more venerable because he has a gun in his hand. He holds her in his arms and the audience can see the big raindrops (ds). The audience is still left in the darkness of the mystery of the lady, and what she was running away from because the narrator himself doesn’t know “ill never know what she was running from”. He was paid to kill her because he says “ill cash her cheque in the morning”. The camera zooms out making them fade into the cities darkness and mysteries and the nds grows faster n louder and the city buildings form the words “**sin city**” in red (blood).

Analysis

“Sin City” elucidates tried and true themes of the film noir canon like isolation and desperation. Although they seem outwardly confident and aggressive, the film’s characters are inwardly lost, sharing in the sense of a world that is spiraling out of their control. How they react to that feeling determines which side of the law they come down on, but it is all relative in a town where the cops, the church, and the Mafia all work together.

The opening where The Man kills the girl in the red dress is a standalone short story called *The Customer is Always Right*. It has nothing to do with any of the other stories, and is complete as you see it on screen. The idea is that Hartnett is a hit man, and the woman paid to have herself killed (hence the line "I'll never know what she was running from. I'll cash her check in the morning"). Miller explains this on the DVD commentary. Further, Miller expands that he told Marley Shelton, the actress who plays The Customer, that the point was the she got involved with a man who turned out to be a professional criminal. When she tried to break up with him, he promised her a horrible death. Rather than facing that, she hired The Man to kill her, but to do it as gently as possible. Hence the line "I didn't come here for the party. I came here for you," at which point The Customer realizes he's the hit man. Whether this was what Miller actually had in mind when he drew the story or something he came up when asked for an explanation is open to speculation. In any case, that explanation is not necessary for understanding of the scene. You see what you are meant to see, and you are meant to draw your own conclusions.

This scene was actually shot as a "test shoot" that Rodriguez organized so that he could prove to Miller that *Sin City* could be done. As an opening to the film, it serves as an introduction to the passion and violence of *Sin City*, and it also serves to introduce Josh Hartnett's character as a hit man.

The look of the films is meant to mirror the look of the comics. The comics were straight up black and white (no shades of gray) with some spot coloring to highlight certain objects.

In the comics, there was never any red blood. Blood was either black or white. It was white when it appeared on a black surface (like clothing), and black when it appeared on a white surface (like a face). This was simply for contrast, so that you could see it. The

film attempted to mirror this look. However, when they tried to do black blood, they felt that it came out looking a little too much like mud. So in instances where the blood should have been black, it was turned red. Thus, in the film, blood is red when it appears on a light surface (like a face) and white when it appears on a dark surface (like clothing).

However, there are two or three instances in the film where the blood does remain black (for instance, when Shellie is bleeding from the nose). It's not clear if the filmmakers just thought that the black blood looked fine in those instances, if they were just overlooked, or if there was some other reason that prevented them from using red blood.

Highlight an object, for example the "Basin City" sign changes between the stories to hint that some time has passed in between, but there is absolutely no symbolism to the specific colour used. Of the comics that were adapted to the screen for this film.