

Die Hard - Presentation Script

As the scene opens, we see the tower with a cloud of smoke emerging from it, and an orange lighting hitting the smoke. The colour is most likely from flames still burning, but the mood it represents is still the tense danger we've seen this far through the film. As the camera begins to pan down the palette changes from these warm orange and brown tones to cooler blues in a brighter more visible environment, showing the transition of danger to ease as the threat has been neutralised.

The masses of paper falling from the sky could be symbolic of one or more things; whilst it denotes that an office tower has been sieged and several explosions have launched thousands of pages of paper from inside, it could be seen as representing snowfall as Christmas Day begins. In a different perspective, it could represent money falling from the sky, either as an image of dollar bills or as an image of bonds to serve as irony towards Hans.

Robinson emerges into the scene amongst armed police with their guns clearly visible, giving Robinson a feeling that he could be dangerous, he likes guns and security and his clear ties to law enforcement. The number of guns present in the scene present a phallic presence that retains the masculinity of the previous scenes despite the danger being over.

As Die Hard is regarded by it's screenwriter among many fans as a Christmas movie, it could be argued that the opening of this scene shares themes with a Christmas tree. The shot begins at the top of the tower, lit by a golden (orange) light and it pans down to see the falling papers, previously noted at allusions to snow, as well as the many lit windows of the tower with more lights appearing as we approach the bottom, where everybody is gathering

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around at the dawn of Christmas day; much like the expectation of seeing a Christmas tree from its star down to its presents, and having a family gathered around. This is supported by the Christmas song that begins playing moments before the credits start rolling.

As seen throughout much of the film, the traditional ideologies of a patriarchal society, women being damsels in distress and a man's prize and the American white man triumphs over evil Germans with as little support from his coloured companions as the narrative will allow, continue into the final scene. McClane has rescued his trophy wife from Hans, and leaves the tower a hero. The entire film reflects on McClane's grip on his masculinity as he seeks out resolution with his wife and the final scene is no exception. He shares a masculine moment with Powell to celebrate their victory, he shields and covers his wife and he does not respond to the demands and requests of the law and press but instead walks away to venture his own interests.

Whilst the film does feature a more traditional ideology throughout it does also subvert it on occasions. In this scene for example, when Karl reemerges as a threat McClane shelters Holly in a protective stance whilst Powell, a support character of ethnic minority, saves the hero. A few moments later, when a reporter is after a statement from McClane, Holly punches the reporter in the face, showing she is not a cliché fragile female character. Robinson is shown as the superior law officer, but his authority isn't acknowledged as it should be, subverting the traditional ideology of obeying the law and respecting authority. This modern ideology of an incompetent or less important role of a superior authority is usually to create some level of comic relief in contrast to intense action and terror. Robinson could also be seen as trying to reinstate his authority in a sense of masculinity over McClane.

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Whilst Die Hard may or may not be considered a Christmas movie, it has more in common with the Western genre. John McClane (not dissimilar to John Wayne, the American Western hero) is a lone gunman that was 'passing through' as the action kicked off. He is called 'Cowboy' and 'John Wayne' by the villain Hans to which McClane responds as being more of a Roy Rogers fan.. He single-handedly kills many bad guys with guns and explosives whilst informing Sgt Al Powell, who could represent a sheriff. The theme of a western follows through as far as the closing scene; Powell shoots first with a revolver to take down Karl, with intense expressive close-ups and a down-the-barrel shot, then McClane and Holly ride off as the credits roll.

The scene utilises mostly smooth crane, tracking and panning shots in addition to the longer takes is to convey the calmer mood of the attack having ended. The wider angle of the aftermath allows more events on screen at once as well as the scope of the damage. The camera begins to track in the same motion as a van pulling up where a match cut to the van brings the audience closer to the action in the scene, the crowd arriving.

The emotions of McClane and Powell reuniting are caught by close ups and countering each others expressions before joining the two in a two-shot (whilst it is a three-shot, Holly appears more a support in the background than a focus during these shots).

Karl reemerges and the camera zooms onto him and to counter the camera zooms onto McClane, Holly and Powell in the reverse shot before going to close up reaction shots of Karl and McClane in order to build suspense. It cuts to a close up of the barrel of a revolver which fires several times with a cut on action on each gunfire, utilising the suspense from seconds ago to create a sense of panic and mystery to the gunman who is revealed in a search focus.

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Appendix

Die Hard (1988) Directed by John McTiernan [Stream]. www.sky.com/skygo: 20th Century Fox

Clark, C.C. (2015) *Repurposing Western Genre Elements in Die Hard | Film and Architecture*. Available at:
<https://msufilemandarchitecture.wordpress.com/2015/09/14/repurposing-western-genre-elements-in-die-hard/> (Accessed: 9th January 2019)