

Research in Practice

Question:

Construct a 2500 word written essay that critically examines the works of two or more visionary directors/artists/composers and discuss. The visions, values and agenda in relation to one of the themes, genres or movements covered with the film/music tech lecture series. In your essay also consider how your own creative practice is informed/influenced by the ideas/concepts that you are discussing.

Answer:

Artists:

Han Zimmer – Music Composer

M, Night Shyamalan – Director

Travis Knight – Director

When it comes to creating thriller's in the film industry, a role model I look up to is the famous filmmaker M, Night Shyamalan, best known for his works at creating suspense and delivering mind-boggling plot twists. Films like The Sixth Sense and Split are known as his best works that explore deep and interesting topics that leave the viewer falling down a rabbit hole of thoughts, even enticing them to create doubt on the world we live in.

I find that the thriller's of modern day cinema are very hard to come by, and can be a hit and miss. As it's my favourite style of genre next to horror, I am very passionate about the topic. A thriller isn't just a series of jumpscare and ominous music, it's a prominent feature and can 'spice up' one's film, but thriller is supposed to leave a lingering impression that makes you want more, to make you want to return and view it from a different perspective, and even then you feel like there's more to the film than what meets the eye. Films like Get Out, Doctor Sleep and Inception I believe are near-perfect examples of modern day thrillers, in addition to more past thriller's to me are films like; Misery, The Exorcist, Silence of the Lambs.

Doubt is a common, recurring theme in most thriller films and is one of the core factors in creating a thriller flick. Without it, your film falls into another category, which can be misleading to those who came to see a thriller. Bad directing. This feeling of doubt can be implemented through the message and connotations your film tackles and the consequences it has. For example, Split's ending shows that Bruce Willis' character David Dunn from Unbreakable is a part of the timeline along with another called Mr Glass. Because of this, doubt is immediately placed in the viewers mind and entices them to rewatch Unbreakable with this newfound knowledge. Adding to this, Shyamalan creates the idea that there are many 'unique' individuals with powers in our world, it creates a potential 'doubt' that it might be real.

If I had to draw inspiration from Mr Shymalan's ability as a filmmaker, I would focus my storytelling and directing on the suspension of disbelief. Create a story that highlights something we as humans or a 'society' tend to come across, maintaining that sense of realism to the viewer, build up a sense of unease through a topic whether that be; obsession (*Misery*, *The Visit*), the human condition (*Split*, *Glass*), reality (*The Matrix*, *Inception*) and then deliver the climax with a twist to the story. Oftentimes this can be so subtle that the audience wouldn't notice until another viewing, for example *Inception*'s final scene where the dreidel continues to spin before the screen cuts to black, not telling us if the world was a dream or reality. This proves that the plot twist doesn't have to be so 'on-the-nose' for the viewer, but can be one that leaves more room to interpretation. That is how thriller's leave a lasting impression on the viewers, and I would be incredibly happy to one day create something on that level.

To understand the right topics to address in my thrillers, I'm aware it's important to keep up to date on current day politics and discussions, whether it's linked to politics, racism, homophobia, slavery, war etc. At the same time, it would be a good idea to gain my research from primary sources, so those who may have witnessed and endured these subjects first-hand. I would be able to understand and take notes from a much more personal perspective, thus making the final product a lot more convincing.

While only directing a few films, Travis Knight's works compared to those like Shymalan truly stands out every time, even giving a franchise like Transformers an enjoyable revival with 2018's *Bumblebee*. His work as a director often explores deep themes like; revenge, abandonment, honour yet presents them in an almost child-like style with animation and stop-motion. Films like *Paranorman*, *Kubo and the Two Strings* and *Boxtrolls* are prime examples of this. It's stop-motion exterior almost fools the viewer into believing it's a common kid's film from the first glance, but ultimately raises all expectations after a single viewing. This method of filmmaking from Travis Knight seems to change the status quo in the film industry and shows that good storytelling is never limited by the style and genre.

Going into the film industry, I want to be able to expand my style to draw in a variety of audiences to see my works. Not only to improve my knowledge of genre and themes of directing, but to also open doors to potential employers who may be interested in my skills. If I can blend genres and deliver an incredible piece, not only does that improve my chances of being noticed, it shows that I can be open-minded enough to take on a variety of films.

In addition to this, I would love to take on a directing role to create live action adaptations of all-ready existing media, much like Travis Knight did with *Bumblebee*, a film that unlike Micheal Bay's Transformers films, actually honoured what made the original series likeable and captured the spirit and joy. It wasn't perfect but by far the action, designs and story was more engaging than *The Last Knight*. It was a lifeline to a dying franchise. I would love the chance to direct something similar, perhaps for a game franchise or series I grew up with. I would choose to incorporate what makes the franchise lovable in the first place, mainly by researching into the key points of said franchise, whether it's the action, the story, characters and try less to appease one group of action lovers. At the same time, engage with the audiences of the franchise and ask what they liked about it, both to gain multiple

perspectives and improve my own public image as an engaging and 'human' director.
Relatability can make a film feel more natural and less like a cheap cash grab.
Succeed in all areas of production as a director, and you'll have a perfect adaptation.
