

Alright let's just stop right there.

So, for a lot of people, you might not understand is going on right here. What you just watched is what I known as a "Travel Film" Travel video, whatever you want to call it. For the past 24 months, this is what I've been watching, this is what I've been inspiring to do, to create, to travel, but "From the deepest desires often come the deadliest hate" (Habyarimana)

Now a quick trivia, before I made this video, I actually made another one, all about how I love travel films, and all about their techniques and how they're shot beautifully and how they're a source of inspiration for me, but, what did I learn through doing that? Absolutely nothing. I learned I liked travel films, and that it's something I inspire to do, but I already knew this. It was pointless in a way.

So, before this video begins, I want to state a disclaimer off the bat. I absolutely adore travel films. I gain more inspirational and passion watching these kinds of films then I ever have watching some film in the cinema that I really just don't care about. See I don't really know actors, I don't even really know directors, I don't much about the film world, but what I do know and what I do really care about, are this kind of short form online content.

But for the first time in my life, I'm about to go against the thing that I've been embracing, in the hope I learn something new, and hopefully find out why I want to make this kind of content.

So, without further ado, this is, the problem with modern travel films.

So, like every video essay, we have to dive into the start of travel filmmaking.

I guess the first type of travel film shot was 'Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat' (Lumière & Lumière, L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat, 1895) back in 1896, but let's be honest, you don't want to hear about some old films that have absolutely no relation to the modern travel films. So really, we need to dive back to 2011.

Leonardo Dalessandri an Italian film maker, and more importantly the creator of a film called the "Watch Tower of Turkey" (Dalessandri, Watch Tower of Turkey, 2011). A viral sensation created by slick editing, perfectly timed sound design, upbeat music and beautiful cinematography. This film incorporated something new. This type of fast paced editing to music was very rare for online content, and when done well, it was guaranteed to be a success. From Leonardo, like all things that go viral, this kind of video quickly became a trend online, with Vimeo even introducing it as a whole category on their website. Travel films started to gain large traction, and so many young individuals jumped on this trend and started selling their talents to companies to travel the world for free, in exchange for a similar film.

Okay so now you have a little knowledge on travel films, let's take a look at some of the conventions that come together to create them.

Just watching these films, you can see that transitions are all over the place to hide cuts, but why? Feature films have hundreds of cuts in them with very little use of transitions, so why are travel films the polar opposite? What is it trying to hide?

"We dream in dissolves, but we think in cuts." (Gitner, 2015)

Travel films are made to create an ore around a certain location, to make it stand out, to make it look beautiful in its own unique style. Transitions allow you to move seemingly between one place to another, and it's appealing on the eye to watch. Here watch, this sequence, which one looks more visually interesting?

Now you see what I mean with the transitions, they elevate the video and really increase the scale of the location, when really, that's not what it's going to look like.

We dream in dissolves. A phrase that really sums up travel film editing. The idea in these hyper realistic films is create a dream like place, something you could only imagine, the perfect place in fact. But can you really go there and experience this for yourself? We all know the effects of clickbait, and how things are manipulated for the purpose and benefit of someone or something. So, are these transitions just there to heighten the clickbait of the video? Are they a good gimmick that allows these creators to get the next paid gig? Are the transitions there to give this unrealistic place a well-crafted story? Anyone that's ever gone away and or even done an activity, knows that not everything goes to plan all the time, it's not always fun and adventure, so why isn't that side shown?

In these films, you see so many different angles, so many different camera techniques put together, however is an island from 300ft in the air really going to look like that for the average tourist? The manipulation of equipment and how it's utilised to create this insane scale for the destination, bridges the gap between feature length cinematic film and keeping real to the platform that it will get uploaded up to, mainly YouTube. Equipment like GoPro's are used throughout some of the films. These have always been known as the point of view type of camera, something that when shown, the audience instantly imagines that's what it was like from the eyes of the creators, however this was probably the real view for them.

For creators who are supposed to be about seeing the world and living a travel lifestyle, they're not really getting to see it. "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." (Davies, 2008) So maybe for these filmmakers, it's not about seeing the country but capturing it through a lens and showing a worldwide audience online. But how much depth is there to the imagery presented to us on screen? Is it a true representation of what the country has to offer or is it, like so much in this world, covering up the truth.

I'm not really here to tell you what's wrong and what's right, what this imagery means, and what that one means. Looking at travel films conventions and clichés, it's clear that there's a current style which seems to only change drastically every once in a while. Filmmakers like Leonardo Dalessandri created something different which clearly inspired a whole generation of online filmmakers, and this isn't really a bad thing. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" (Fritz, 2005) I only question what some of these films mean, and how many times can we see a certain shot used before it becomes just numb to us. I think it's more about creating something for yourself, than for someone else. See the problem with viral filmmaking at the moment, is once someone has done it, it can't be made that way again, because someone out there has already covered it, I could go on about creating for a purpose etc etc, so I will leave you with this.

"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken." (Wallace & Alexander, 2017)

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