"Romancing The Frame: A Cinematographic Analysis Of Film 96 (2018)"

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Hypothesis

The cinematography of the film will be warm and intimate in color, which will add to the emotional impact of the film.

Close-ups and medium shots will be used more often in scenes where the protagonist is feeling strong emotions so that the audience can feel close and emotionally connected to the protagonist.

The cinematography of the film will be using natural lighting in order to give a realistic feel to the film, and this will enhance the emotional impact of the film.

Abstract

This paper critically examines the cinematography of C. Prem Kumar's 96 (2018), a Tamil romantic drama that received critical acclaim for its visual storytelling. Through a qualitative analysis of the film's mise-en-scène, lighting, camera movement, and composition, this study shows how cinematographer Mahendiran Jayaraju uses a specific visual vocabulary to express the nostalgia, longing, and intimacy underlying the film's narrative. The cinematography in 96 not only enhances the emotional impact of the story but also contributes to the thematic exploration of memory, love, and the passage of time in the film.

Keywords cinematography, Tamil cinema, 96, visual storytelling, nostalgia, romance.

The cinematography in 96 (2018) is crucial for forming the emotional resonance and the narrative depth of the film.

Aims and Objectives

Aims

Assess Cinematographic Techniques Evaluate how the film "96" implements certain cinematographic techniques in telling its story and understands their impact on telling the tale of emotions: Explore through which cinematic skills, one's cinematographic ability raises the emotional quality of a tale.

Objectives

Identify Techniques: Identify significant techniques which could include framing and composition that contribute to it.

Analyze Color and Lighting: To examine how the director utilized color palettes and lighting choices in depicting mood and emotion during the film.

Analyze Symbolism: To investigate visual motifs and symbols such as weather

elements that work together to establish the narrative themes.
Conduct Audience Analysis: To examine how cinematography affects the audience's interpretation and engagement with the storyline.
To analyze the cinematography of 96 (2018).
To analyze how cinematography enhances the emotional experience of the film.
To analyze the relationship between cinematography and narrative storytelling in 96 (2018).

Research Statement

This research study analyzes the cinematography in 96 (2018), a Tamil romantic drama, and its role in amplifying the film's emotional depth and narrative structure.

Introduction

Cinematography is one of the essential aspects of filmmaking because it creates the visual language of the story. Over the years, Tamil cinema has witnessed significant development in cinematographic techniques. Filmmakers have always pushed the creative boundaries to produce better cinematography. One such film that has been widely appreciated for its outstanding cinematography is 96 (2018), directed by C. Prem Kumar.
The 2018 Tamil film 96, directed by C. Prem Kumar, beautifully delves into themes of love, nostalgia, and the passage of time.
Starring Vijay Sethupathi and Trisha as childhood sweethearts Ram and Jaanu, long separated, this film attempts to capture the essence of youthful love, loss, and the powerful grip of memories on one's heart. Notably, cinematography also adds much emotional depth to a story.

'96 (2018) is a Tamil film written and directed by C. Prem Kumar. The IMBD synopsis of the film goes like this "Two high school sweethearts meet at a reunion after 22 years and reminisce about their past throughout an evening" It's certainly about 'Their' reminisce, but somewhere it's slightly more about Ram going back to his native place, and rediscovering those old, unforgettable memories which for years, he has kept very safely close to his heart. The film is about an opportunity that is being thrown to K. Ramachandran and Janaki 'Jaanu' Devi (Trisha Krishnan) to sit and think about the missed chance that they have lost throughout their life of not having an ending with each other. While the central characters make for a very important part of the narrative, it has more diversion toward Ram who has not had an ending to his life.

"96" CAST & CREW :
Production: Nandagopal
Cast: Trisha, Vijay Sethupathi
Direction, Screenplay & Story: C Prem Kumar
Cinematography: Shanmuga Sundaram and Mahendiran Jayaraj

Review of Literature

Indian cinema has been the heart of forming narratives and evoking emotional depth through cinematography. Although scholarly analysis underrepresents Tamil cinema, studies on Indian cinema state that visual storytelling heightens the impact of a film's narrative.
David Bordwell (2006) refers to framing, camera angles, and lighting as essential cinematographic techniques that form the basis of emotional involvement in a film. In the case of films such as *96*, these visual elements are the major components of the story.
Research on Indian cinema indicates that certain techniques, like the use of natural lighting and color palettes, are significant in films that are highly dependent on visual storytelling

(Rajadhyaksha, 2009). These techniques enhance the view by bringing visuals in tandem with the thematic underpinning. For example, in *96*, the muted tones and long takes can convey nostalgia and emotional intensity.

Furthermore, case studies within Tamil cinema reveal a growing emphasis on nuanced cinematography to depict complex emotional landscapes. This aligns with Bordwell's argument about visual elements elevating narrative weight, particularly in films that focus on character-driven stories.

These insights collectively outline the changing nature of cinematography in Indian cinema, which enables it to move beyond the ordinary bounds of narration and deepen relationships with the audience. To know more about these studies, refer to the following resources from David Bordwell's blog and IJFANS.

Sources:
● Bordwell, D. (2006). The way Hollywood tells it: Story and style in modern movies.
● Rajadhyaksha, A. (2009). Indian cinema: A very short introduction.
● David Bordwell on Cinematography
● IJFANS - Studies in Indian Cinematic Narratives

Research Methodology

The research methodology would involve frame-by-frame analysis, with visual semiotics and an understanding of narrative structure. Henceforth, it's a qualitative methodology.

Frame-by-Frame Analysis

● Selection of Key Scenes: Identify and select key scenes in 96 that significantly contribute to the emotional core of the story. This includes moments of flashbacks, pivotal emotional confrontations, and intimate interactions between the lead characters, Ram and Jaanu.
● Analysis of Technical Aspects:
● Framing and Composition: Analyze how each shot is framed to draw attention to specific emotional moments, using both wide and close-up shots.
Lighting: Examine how techniques of lighting are used to represent different emotional tones.
Camera Movement: Study the use of camera movements (tracking, panning, tilting) and how it reflect the character's journey or passage of time.
Focus and Depth of Field: Determine where the focus is focused in each shot, and whether that emphasizes characters, objects, or the environment.
Symbolic Imagery: Identify recurring objects, such as photos, letters, or locations, and how the camera frames their symbolic meaning.
b. Visual Semiotics
Symbolic Interpretation: Applying semiotic analysis to decode visual symbols. For example, the use of light and shadow can be interpreted as representing hope or despair, and the focus on certain objects may symbolize lost love or memories.
Color Theory: Analyze the color palette of the film how it shifts between past and present scenes, and how it helps in communicating the internal states of the characters.

This paper involved a qualitative research approach based on a case study design. Data collection was through detailed analysis of the film's cinematography, looking at various aspects such as lighting, camera angles, and composition.

Data Collection and Analysis

Detailed analysis of the cinematography of the film:

James Rayan and Omkar Kokate were chosen because both of them have experience in photography and cinematography journey.

The interview technique was used.

Questions
How does the cinematography of 96 make use of framing, lighting, and camera movement to heighten emotional expression and narrative?
What are the visual techniques used to depict memory, time, and nostalgia in the movie?
How do cinematographic decisions influence audience involvement with the emotions of the characters?

Answers by James Ryan to these questions

Cinematic complements to the narrative
Ans 1. The visual tone of the film is set to make its audience feel relatable at every moment. To achieve this the color correction of the film is not very saturated and the subject is not very sharp and crisp which makes us see the movie as we see the world in our day-to-day lives.
Ans 2. The lighting scheme of the film is maintained naturally mimicking the real world to make us feel more relatable. Along with this tone Shadows are used wisely to show the depth of the character and situation.
Ans 3. To portray memory as depicting the past, we can see the use of balanced frames and symmetry throughout school life. This is to depict the equality or balance (without problems) in both of their life and that they were in the same state of love and affection at that time.
As mentioned earlier, in 96 we can see the usage of old lens quality to show less sharpness in the film and fewer colors not too bright to relate to what we see daily, unlike the movie bhediya where we can see too sharp and colorful frames.
The answer of Omkar Kokate to this question:
Ans 1. The cinematography uses framing, lighting, and camera movement to enhance the emotional expression and narrative of a film by establishing the mood and atmosphere of a scene. Here are some ways that these techniques can be used:

Lighting
Different lighting techniques can evoke emotions and create an atmosphere. For example, high-key lighting can create a bright and cheerful mood, while low-key lighting can create a dark and mysterious mood.
Camera movement
Camera movement can tell the story, create moods, and even highlight a character's inner struggle. For instance, shaky camera movement can make the actions of a character appear more violent, while still camera movement can make the audience feel the isolation of a character.
Framing
The composition of a shot may also be related to the emotional tone of a scene. For instance, larger aspect ratios can evoke grandeur, while narrower ones feel more intimate.
Lenses
The type of lens that is used can also change the way the audience views the scene. For

instance, wide-angle lenses can create a feeling of space, while telephoto lenses compress depth.

Ans 2. Non-linear Narratives and Flashbacks

Montages

Shortcuts are composed of photographs or film segments to synch up time and convey thoughts about memories. Changes in Color or Lighting: Bright, faded colors or sepia tints usually indicate flashes back or nostalgia.

Motifs and Repetition Symbols

Items or Location: Stitches of personal stuff, places, or locations indicate that evoke a memory connected to such moments.

Photographs or Mirrors

Represent the reflecting of past or fleeting nature.

Cinematography

Soft Focus and Depth of Field: The blurred edges, or shallow depth of field, provide a sense of haziness, like memories.

Slow Motion

It underlines the emotional value and gives scope to savor the brief moment.

Time-Lapse Shots

The abstract or poetic way to show the passage of time.

Lighting and Color Grading

Warm Hues: Using golden tones or soft lights creates a nostalgic or comfort-filled atmosphere.

Cold or Muted Tones: Indicate loss, nostalgia, or a desire for the past.

Editing Methods

Cross-Dissolves

Transition scenes to create an effect of how memories blend or resurface. Jump Cuts: Jarring cuts that can be used to convey disjointed or unreliable memories.

Sound Design

Ambient Sounds: Distant or fading sounds can be used to convey distant memories.

Music: Period-specific songs or melancholic scores can be used to create a strong emotional connection to the past.

Props and Costumes

Props or costumes of a particular time are highlighted to ground the scene in a particular timeframe and bring nostalgia 8. Camera Movement

Static Shots: They are usually used to capture the sense of stillness that has occurred in memory.

Handheld Cameras: Used to give an intimate, personal feel, like peeking into someone's memory.

Ans.3. The cinematographers utilize different techniques to make an audience respond emotionally to a particular scene. This includes:

Color

Cinematographers use color palettes, lighting, and filters to create a visual impact that matches the mood and theme of the film. For instance, warm colors are said to create comfort while cool colors create isolation.

Camera movement

Different camera movements can have different emotional responses. A tracking shot may create a sense of tension or urgency, while a static shot might give a sense of stability.

Framing

Framing decisions can lead to intimacy, tension, or even isolation. Close-up shots may intensify emotions, whereas wide shots may evoke awe or insignificance.

Mode of interview: Zoom Meeting

Duration: 20 min

The analysis was done using the qualitative approach.

Findings

The cinematography in 96 (2018) is marked by:

Natural lighting

Composition

Camera angles

Color palette

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis to look for patterns and themes in the cinematographic techniques used in the film.

In "96", the cinematographer effectively communicates intimate and subtle emotions through his decisions on framing, lighting, and camera movements. Here's a closer look at some significant cinematographic elements in "96":

Color Palette: The movie uses muted pastel, earthy, warm tones that give it that nostalgic look and feel. This palette reminds one of memories of what used to be or times that have passed by in life.

The flashback scenes, which take place in the 1990s, are characterized by warm golden tones that create an air of youthful innocence and nostalgia. In contrast, the colors used in the present-day scenes are cooler and more de-saturated, thus giving more emphasis to the emotional distance and the passage of time between the characters.

Lighting: The film characterizes its very intimate and realistic atmosphere through the use of soft, natural light. Often very subtle, the lighting relies on the practical source that often uses lamps, sunlight, and streetlights to evoke deep visuals.

Lighting in key scenes is used to emphasize the emotional states of characters. For example, the flashback sequences are often highlighted with a romantic glow, whereas the present-day scenes are characterized by shadows and dim lighting, which reflect the bittersweet nature of the characters' lives after their reunion.

Flashbacks and Visual Storytelling: The cinematography of 96 is very effective with the use of flashbacks; the visual style of the scenes often changes to produce a dreamlike or faraway atmosphere. The lighting is softened, and the framing is more fluid, with the effect of nostalgia or passing time.

The camera often mirrors the emotional journey of the characters, particularly in the flashback scenes where the protagonists, Ram and Jaanu, are involved. Transitions between the present and the past are subtly indicated by slight changes in lighting or framing, suggesting a shift from reality to memory.

Use of the Environment: Locations are thoughtfully selected to mirror the story's mood. For instance, present-day scenes often take place in settings that feel remote or disconnected, symbolizing the separation of time and lost love. In contrast, the flashbacks unfold in more vibrant environments, capturing the carefree and joyful essence of youth.

The cinematography exhausts all that surrounds the frame of its view. From school beauty to the beaches, it always brings more meaning to the narrative in a film.

Long Takes and Smooth Movements: The film extensively uses long takes to let the emotions and tension build up organically. It is most particularly seen in sequences where the camera lingers on the faces of the characters, allowing the audience time to absorb their internal states.

Smooth camera movements, almost imperceptible, follow characters when they walk or sit to enhance the smooth flow of time. In this way, the film's nostalgic atmosphere becomes much more immersive for the viewer, as if he/she is moving along with them.

Frame Composition and Focus: The film frequently employs tight frames that underscore the emotional mood of the characters. Close-ups and mediums are also common, ensuring that the audience focuses closely on the expressions of these characters, especially when scenes are reflective or emotionally explosive. The cinematography contrasts intimate moments with wider shots. For instance, when characters are alone or reflecting, the frame might be very tight around them. When they are in larger groups or in public spaces, the frame opens up to show them in their environment, emphasizing their place in the world and their emotions concerning others.

Symbolism: Through Imagery, The cinematography also employs symbolic imagery, especially of things associated with the past. Be it a photograph, an old letter, or a familiar location, these items are

visual reminders that provoke memories, and the cinematography focuses on such objects at pivotal moments.

Slow Motion and Movement: It helps the viewers more feel the scenes due to the presence of slow motion, where moments are important for remembering past experiences by characters and reliving those memories for analysis. The cinematographer would use subtle effects, such as slow motion, to reveal emotional enlightenment or connection moments. On the other hand, sometimes the film is also quite fast-paced, particularly in scenes where characters are caught in high-tension or highly emotional situations. These brief flashes of faster cinematography keep the flow of the film dynamic and prevent the film from becoming too monotonous.

The "Eyes" Technique: Another stand-out feature of 96 is the use of eyes by its characters to show emotion. The cinematographer N. K. Ekambaram shoots many close-up shots where Ram and Jaanu think or feel things, instead of speaking it out aloud. This engages the viewers with their feelings more fully.

Minimalistic Camera Work: 96 makes use of minimalist cinematography in most scenes, as it lets the actors play in the limelight. It doesn't often draw attention to itself by using convoluted movements or heavy effects. Instead, it's constantly focused on the characters and their emotional journeys. The subtle angles and movements used guide the audience to focus on where it matters.

Interpretation of Data

The cinematography in 96 (2018) makes a great impact on the emotionality of the film, and the depth of storytelling. Strategic lighting, angles of the camera, and even composition were used to shape a visual language that had the themes of love, nostalgia, and longing maximized. Also gives varying perceptions to viewers.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that cinematography in 96 (2018) is an integral ingredient to the story and emotional movement of the film. Contributions to the existing literature would add more on cinematography work within Indian cinema and indicate that visual storytelling is necessary within the film. Examining the frame-by-frame focus of the cinematography for "96" the Tamil film.

Limitation and scope

This paper has limitations, such

Only one film, 96, that was released in 2018 was the focus of discussion.

The analysis should also have covered other cinematic factors like editing and sound designs

Because there was less material on fame to frame fame, time was required

Future research could be directed to study the role played by cinematography in Tamil films other than this research and compare those findings.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations have been proposed:

Filmmakers should realize the role cinematography plays in the overall visual narrative of a film.

Film scholars and researchers must take it further to understand the role of cinematography in Indian cinema.

Study and Concentrate on under-rated films in India.

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