International Baccalaureate

Extended essay cover

SAMPLE B

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: FILM

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: HOW DOES TECHNOLOGY AFFECT FILM LANGUAGE AND PEOPLE'S RESPONSE TO IT IN KING KONG 1933 AND ITS REMAKE IN 2005?

Candidate's declaration

If this declaration is not signed by the candidate the extended essay will not be assessed.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature: _____ Date: January 7th

IB Cardiff use only: A: _____ B: _____

Supervisor's report

The supervisor must complete the report below and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator. The supervisor must sign this report; otherwise the extended essay will not be assessed and may be returned to the school.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) _____

Comments

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

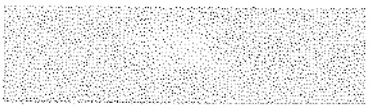
No report as required

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent [4] hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

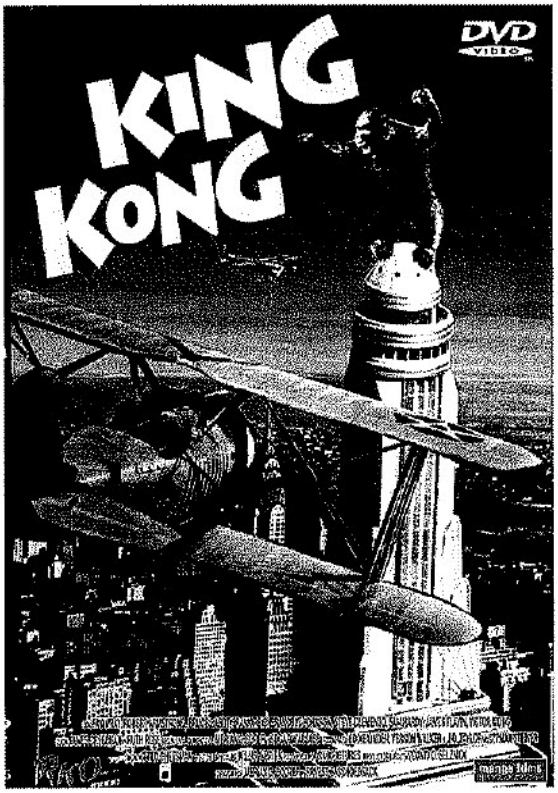
Supervisor's signature: _____ Date: 29.01.09



Extended Essay

Session : May 2009

Subject : Group 6, Film



Research Question:

How does the technology affect film language and people's response to it in King Kong 1933 and its remake in 2005?

Candidate Name:

Candidate Number:

Session Number:

Supervisor:

Centre Name:

Centre Number:

Word Count: 3990

✓

Abstract

My research question for my extended essay was "How does the technology affect film language and people's response to in King Kong 1933 and its remake in 2005?". To do this investigation I had to watch the two movies in order to be able to analyze different aspects of film language and the technology that was used. I decided to take the exact same scenes from both movies and looked more closely at the way each one was shot, to see the different impacts and reactions it could have on the audience. I also watched the making of and read books about how the two movies were created, so I could contrast the different technology that had been used. After having done this, I concluded that both movies had had a great use of technology. Even though the first one had less special effects it had a huge impact on the world of cinema and on its early audience. The remake also created an impact on Kong's audience since it showed a more realistic world and character. Seeing this evolution in filmmaking, I could predict that another remake of this movie could occur, but with a brand new sort of technology which would make the movie seem even more realistic than the 2005 version.

CONTENTS

Introduction:

Throughout the ages, film technology has evolved. Cameras, audio and special effects have developed and became more realistic than before. The evolution of movies, and especially the evolution of King Kong, has not only been affected by the equipment that has been used for its production, but has also been influenced by the director's perspective. In the early years of cinema, people were not used to horrific scenes this is why the giant spiders and lizards were removed from the "Pit" scene in King Kong 1933. Its director, Cooper, said that it had been removed from the movie because it "stopped the show"[1], meaning that the people got extremely shocked with scenes like these, they would not pay attention to main plot of the story, or they could simple leave the theatre without actually finishing the movie. As the years passed, new discoveries were made and cinema and people's tolerance for movies evolved. A proof for that is that in the 2005 remake, the "Pit" scene actually included all the giant bugs that start attacking some of the SS Venture's crew. Peter Jackson, the director of the 2005 remake, includes one of the men being eaten alive, but as the audience is more focused on the main characters they do not get too shocked. Also he did not want to show a close-up reaction of the character that was being attacked because it would have created a moment of intimacy between the man and the audience and therefore this scene would have become more dramatic, making the plot line move away to another subject. In my research, I wanted to analyze how technology and film language affected the audience response and it is why I chose to ignore the remake in 1976. I wanted to show the evolution of technological development in cinema with a greater lapse of time between the movies, but this would also show us the human development towards the industry of cinema.

[1] "King Kong – The History of a Movie Icon" p.64

King Kong:

In King Kong 1933, everything that was going to be used to appear in the movie had to be on the shooting set, there was no advanced digital processing and graphic. King Kong itself had to be created in different model sizes and by different artists to be able to shoot different scenes. The entire ape had a miniature structure (about 18 inches high) but two bigger models of the ape's hand and arm were created in order to be used for the close up scenes. Also, a model of Kong's "Big Head" was created, so that it could be used for the close up shots of Kong's face. "The Big Leg" was created for the close-up scenes were Kong stats squashing the natives that get in his way. One of the hand models was unarticulated and the other one was; each for their own specific purpose. "Both were built from steel, fleshed out with sponge rubber and covered in rubber and bearskin"[2]. The articulated hand and arm model were made out of a metal structure that worked like a crane; it could be raised and lowered. It measured about 8 feet in length and was used for scenes like the first time Ann and Kong meet. The second hand, did not need to have articulated fingers since it would only be used for "still" scenes.

In 1933, all the scenes where the miniature model of Kong is present have been animated with the use of stop-motion, by chief animator O'Brien. As the model is not mechanically moved with a remote control, pictures of the ape have to be taken every time it is slightly moved. This was the process used at the time, like any other animation. In 2005, King Kong had nothing to do with stop-motion and projections, like they were used in the previous movies. Everything was now computer-generated imagery or CGI. Kong was created by the use of motion capture. This was an innovation for movies since it could "give life" to a still image. The process of motion capture is to put many small reflective spheres on a suit being worn by the actor. The actor is filmed playing his role and with the computer, animators, get rid of every movement except for the reflective spheres. The movement of the small balls are recorded on computer, then combined with the digitized image of Kong, making him move. Once this is done, actors only need to practice to be synchronized with the movements of the digital image so that it appears to be real. The actor that played Kong's role was Andy Serki. In order to learn the behaviour of gorillas he visited the London Zoo, but was not satisfied by having to analyze gorillas in captivity. He then decided to go to Rwanda in

[2] "King Kong – The History of a Movie Icon" p. 36

order to be able to see the behaviour of wild gorillas and therefore to be able to play a more realistic ape[3].

The invention of a new sort of rear projection, the cellulose-acetate screen, was used in the 1933 film[4]. Most of the scenes had to be filmed with real actors but at the same time with miniature models of Kong and dinosaurs. Rear projection allowed the actors to act in front of a transparent screen where background images were projected and therefore the cameraman could record two different actions taking place at the same time. In the most famous scene of the movie, the one where Kong is at the very top of the Empire State Building, the mechanical hand is holding Fay Wray's animated dummy and at the same time projected images are being showed in the background. This gives the viewers the impression that the woman and the ape are really being filmed from the top of a building, which in fact is being filmed in a studio with miniature models. In another scene where Kong is lifting the woman in the jungle, it has been filmed with an over the "ape's" shoulder shot so that the miniature model could be combined with the mechanical hand holding Ann Darrow. In most of the scenes the projections that are being used are increasing the sizes of the objects and Kong itself, but when Kong is gently touching the actress the opposite projection is made. The actress was filmed first being alone with the mechanical hand and then the shot is minimized and is projected later in front of the small Kong model that is the only thing really being present on the set. By doing this it, the two movements are combined in one and it seems that the life-size actress and hand have the same size as the Kong model.

In 2005, Jackson made use of chroma-keying. Actors had to perform their roles in front of a blue or green screen (depending on the lighting) and a CGI world was later superimposed. For most of the jungle scenes, Jackson only used some real trees. These trees were specifically chosen depending on their importance in the shot, therefore all the less important plants and trees that had to appear as a background were inserted later during the editing. Chroma-key was also used to create the scenes where the SS Venture is at sea, but that was not the only thing that was used to have a very realistic impression on the audience. For some scenes, like the arrival at Skull Island, the blue screen has some orange markers, who are really called tracking markers, stuck unto them. As Peter Jackson says "They are

[3] King Kong "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Kong_(2005_film)"
[4] King Kong "http://www.filmreference.com/Films-Jo-Ko/King-Kong.html"

critical to the process"[5], this is because these tracking markers "are creating a virtual camera that mimics the movements of the real camera. And we use that for any computer-generated portions of the shots"[6]. This means that the real set will be able to be combined with the virtual set and the whole scene would appear to have been shot as one and only scene.

Let's take the storm scene on the Venture as an example in the 2005 version. The scene was shot in a parking lot surrounded by blue screens. The boat was a prop that had been created in the original size but it was fixed to the ground. Actors had the difficult task to pretend to be at sea in the middle of a storm. Peter Jackson decided, in order to help them be in the mood of the scene, that they had to be sprayed with water, looked like heavy rain falling on them and at the same time they had to be soaked by the splashing waves hitting the Venture. "To make the ocean storms look authentic, "dump tanks" were created to simulate giant waves crashing against and onto the ship"[7]. These dump tanks were massive water tanks which could contain hundreds of thousands of gallons of water. Huge buckets with pivoting cranes were attached at the top of the tanks and as the special effects technicians pull on a rope, the water is released creating the big splashes crashing onto the ship. The bottom part of the dump tanks can be moved to different angles in order to change the height (steep or shallow) at which the wave touches the ship. After all the main storm scenes were shot, the only thing left, was to superimpose shots of a dark sky and the rough movement of the sea. Another important scene where the use of chroma-keying was used was the "Swamp" scene. The giant pond was also created in the parking lot and was also surrounded of blue screens. For this set only the trees that were close to were the actors had to perform had been made as props. All the swamp trees that were further away on the background were added during post-production. Materials used in the latest version of the movie we're not original (not real mud, trees, dirt, pond scum) and they had been created with hygienic materials (painted polystyrene) for actors' health.

The cameras used for the filming of both version of King Kong were extremely different, since technology drastically advanced. Cameras in the 1930's could not be moved around a lot without making them lose focus. Light was extremely important when filming otherwise the image would not appear on the film. Cameras had to be controlled manually and did not have many options of movement, like zooming in and out of an object. The cameras

[5] Peter Jackson (Director) « King Kong – Peter Jackson's Production Diaries », 2005
[6] Malcolm Angel (VFX On-Set Surveyor) « King Kong – Peter Jackson's Production Diaries », 2005
[7] « King Kong – Peter Jackson's Production Diaries », 2005

used today and the ones used for the remake of King Kong are way more complex than the first cameras invented. In the 2005 film there are a lot of chasing and moving shots, which means the director of photography has to be constantly checking that the objects being filmed are always focused. The use of Lens Control System (LCS) was necessary for a movie with a lot of action, since the actors are constantly moving and the camera could be positioned on a dolly and therefore it would also be moving. The LCS is a remote focus device or a "focus puller" which enables the camera assistants to be a further from the camera but at the same time always being able to check if the shot is focused or not with a video assist[8]. There were also a lot more variation of lenses in 2005 compared to the ones used in 1933. Lenses in the remake could make the shots look different depending on the size used. They could control the zoom, focus and also lighting. Light coming in the camera could manually be changed depending on how the shot was going to be filmed. Film magazines used for the production of King Kong were huge. It was decided by the cameramen and Peter Jackson that 400-foot magazine was going to be used for hand-held shooting, since it was lighter and it would make the film have a documentary style[9].

When the first Kong movie was made, sound effects were just being introduced. It was only in 1932 that sound tracks could be separated, before that every sound that would appear in the movie had to be recorded on the set[10]; it was like a live recording. In 1933 the movie used three different tracks: one for the dialogue, one for music and the last one for other effects. All the scenes where the animated Kong appeared had been filmed without sound. All the sound of the wilderness had to be done in post production. To create the growl of the ape, Murray Spivak, the head of the RKO's sound department, had to record tigers and lions growling, then joining the two tracks together, and finally playing them backwards at a very slow speed. All the other sounds that appear in the movie were done by the one an only Spivak, except for Ann's screaming which was done by Fay Wray. Spivak recorded himself grunting, croaking, breathing, screaming. The hardest thing he had to do was to imitate the sound of a gorilla's chest beats. He later managed to find the sound he was looking for by hitting in his assistant's chest with a drumstick and at the same time holding a microphone onto his assistant's back[11].

[8] Cameras « King Kong – Peter Jackson's Production Diaries », 2005
[9] Cameras « King Kong – Peter Jackson's Production Diaries », 2005
[10] "King Kong – The History of a Movie Icon" p.75
[11] "King Kong – The History of a Movie Icon" p.75-76

In 2005 the sound recording possibilities were huge compared to the ones used in the first movie. First of all sound could be recorded, at synchronous time, as the scene was being shot, but an important difference between now and then, is that if a there is a slight mistake on one of the sounds being recorded, it could just be removed later on and be replaced by a new sound take. In 1933 microphones were hid on set, but in 2005, sound engineers could place microphones in ties, scarves, ankles, etc. In addition to these small devices the boom still needed to be used since it could record a better quality sound, cutting off all the background noises. Kong's roars and the dinosaurs bellowing screeches were later added in post production. These sounds were computer-generated. Everything could be done with the computer. The speed and volume of the voices and the noises could be changed to very low and slow or vice-versa.

Shots are also being used differently in both versions of King Kong. In the 1933 "Watery Menace" scene the Ventura crew is walking from left to right as they are heading towards the swamp. The eye tends to read pictures from left to right, therefore, it makes the scene look natural[12]. Once they are in the water we have a full shot of the crew who is standing on the raft, then the camera cuts to a different shot, which is a long shot of the brontosaurus' head coming out of the water. We have a revelation since the audience knows something the characters do not know[13]. The brontosaurus is heading towards them. Seeing the dinosaur put his head back into the water and seeing small waves being created as it advances under the water creates a big amount of tension and suspense for the audience. Then the raft is being filmed from the back to allow the audience to see that the characters have to face the brontosaurus which is right in front of them. In this scene there is a lot of cutting. This is because the dinosaur was animated through stop-motion and it was therefore hard to make a projection behind the raft and in the water. Medium shots are used in this scene, instead of close-up shots, to make the audience be more intimate with the characters but at the same time to realize where they are and how they are struggling to get out of the swamp.

In the 2005 version of this scene shots are filmed in a way that creates even more tension than Cooper's shots. The scene doesn't start the same way as the 1933 one. We do not see the Ventura crew building the raft. We directly cut to men paddling on the raft going from left to right. This part is being filmed using a track shot of the crew and we have pieces of branches and plants that hide, from time to time, the characters, this makes the audience be

[12] "Understanding Movies (Tenth edition)" p. 104
[13] "The Tools of Screenwriting- A Writer's Guide to the Craft and Elements of a Screenplay" p. 69

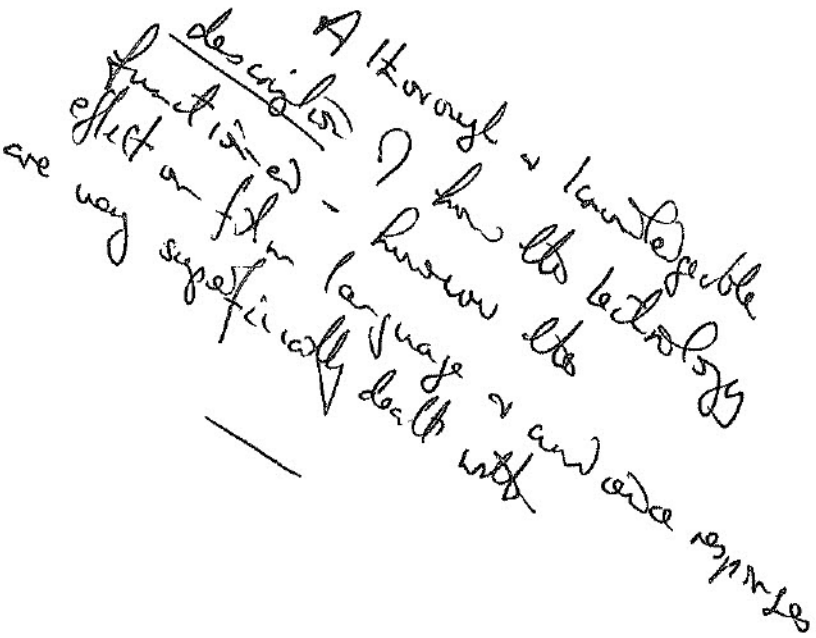
spyers. We then cut to a close-up of Jack , by his expression the audience can already detect that something is not right, and some seconds later we realize that some creatures start attacking the men. From then on, all the scenes with these creatures and men are being rapidly cut from one character to the other, to emphasize the confusion and tension the characters are feeling. Then the camera shoots at bird-eye view, making the audience see that all of a sudden the creatures stop attacking and leave the raft quickly. Why would the creatures stop attacking just like that, if a minute ago they were trying to kill the men? That question is immediately answered when we see close-ups of every character being afraid of something. The camera then goes back to bird-eye view but this time even higher up, and it is at that moment that we see the brontosaurus swimming right underneath the men's raft. Tension is created with this shot, since we are the only ones that notice what danger awaits the Ventura's crew. Then we have a point-of-view shot from the brontosaurus. This shot makes the audience be afraid and worried, since you feel you are getting closer and faster to the raft. When the dinosaur hits the first raft, the shot cuts to a frontal view of the boat being lifted from behind and we are able to see the expression of all the men that were on it. Again, when the brontosaurus starts attacking and men start falling in the water the scene is being edited with high paced shots, showing the state of mind of the people; all confused, scared, worried.

The last scene that really needs to be analyzed is the most famous scene of Kong, standing on the Empire State Building. In the 1933 movie, the first shot of this scene is an extreme long shot and an establishing shot of Kong climbing up the building and airplanes flying towards him. Then cut to a medium shot of Kong that allows the audience to see that he is holding Ann Darrow in his hand. We then have full shots on Ann once Kong has released her on the roof, to allow the audience to see where she is and how she feels. Then we have point-of-view shots of King Kong, the planes coming towards him, so we think that the plane is actually going to hit him and make him fall of the tower. When one of the planes comes towards Kong and he manages to catch it, we have another point-of-view shot but this time it is from the pilot. We see what he sees as we are falling down. There, the camera loses its focus, since it is moving very fast. Once the planes start firing bullets to Kong we get close-ups on his face to create interaction between the audience and his suffering. He then takes Ann one last time puts her back on the building gently strokes her and then we have a close-up shot of his face again to see his expressions. Then we see a full shot as Kong lets go of the peak he is holding on to and we switch to a extreme long shot as he is falling down. Suspense is created, will Kong be saved?

In 2005, this scene is shot in a different way. We start off seeing Kong from a full shot and slowly the camera slowly evades showing us he is climbing up the Empire State building. Then we have a frontal shot of Kong, still climbing, and having Ann in his hand. Once he is at the top of the building we have close-up shots of Kong and of Ann to make us sympathize with them. There is a panoramic shot of the sun going down and cut to a close up on his face again. This is symbolism emphasizing Kong's home sickness. Then we also have close-ups on Ann who comes to understand his feeling. We then have full shots of the planes coming towards Kong and then it cuts off to close up shots of the pilots, there we see that the pilots do not intend to have any pity on Kong. When Ann is going up the ladder to meet up with Kong it is a frontal shot, to emphasize on the height of the place but also to make us understand that she is feeling afraid. Like in Cooper's movie we also get a point-of-view shot where the plane is falling down the sky, but unlike the older version, the shot does not get blurry. It is so clear as it spins and falls down that it makes people's head spin as well. We then have a frontal shot of Ann on the ladder as it comes of the wall of the building to emphasize, again, on the height of the building. Once she lets go of it we cut to a full shot in which Kong is there to catch her when she falls. We cut to close-ups between the characters. Ann crying because Kong is taking care of her, and shots of Kong looking back at her. When the airplanes start attacking, we have a long shot of Kong and Ann standing on the building, creating loyalty between the two characters since they are willing to help each other. We then cut to a medium shot on Kong when he gets shot many times by the airplanes, and we cut to a close up of both characters. Faces showing sadness in their eyes, and especially Ann's, as she sees Kong letting go of the building and slowly falling. The shot when Kong is falling down is filmed in slow motion as to portray his slow and painful death. Lastly, is a long shot of Ann, alone, showing that she now feels lonely and sad.

Conclusion:

Both directors, Cooper and Jackson made maximum use of technology available. Of course, in 1933, technology wasn't as advanced as in 2005. Therefore, the 1933 version, nowadays, seems very unrealistic. Also, during the two different periods, the audiences were expecting different things from a movie. Back in the old days, being able to create a monster like Kong, was something very impressive and innovative. Today, the audience is more demanding. They want to see new special effects and brand new filming tricks. In 25 year-time there would probably be a new remake because filming techniques will have evolved allowing new horizons for cinema to explore. An example for this could be the development of 3D cinema. Movies are getting into a new era and soon enough, as director of Axis Films, Paul Carter said, "3D is starting to get rid of the image that it's a dark art"[14]. 3D movies will have a huge impact on the world of cinema and will certainly have a greater audience.



[14] Why 3D is about to break through "http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/7213534.stm"

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Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Candidate session number	0	0	

		Achievement level		
		First examiner	maximum	Second examiner
Assessment criteria	**A** research question	2	2	
	B introduction	2	2	
	C investigation	2	4	
	D knowledge and understanding	3	4	
	E reasoned argument	2	4	
	F analysis and evaluation	3	4	
	G use of subject language	3	4	
	H conclusion	1	2	
	I formal presentation	4	4	
	J abstract	2	2	
	K holistic judgment	2	4	
	Total out of 36	26		

Name of first examiner: _____ Examiner number: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of second examiner: _____ Examiner number: _____
(CAPITAL letters)