

An Auteur Study of Director Danny Boyle

All artists have a particular style that is unique to them and is continually expressed throughout their art. Whether it is a form of literature, a style of painting, or the way one directs a film, there will always be specific factors to any piece of art that can be identified to its creator. One such artist is the well renowned film director, Danny Boyle. Danny Boyle is among the many that add a personal stamp, of sorts, to his films. While his style is evident in all of his films, there are some that portray it more enthusiastically. Danny Boyle's unique and captivating film style is demonstrated magnificently through his films *28 Days Later*, *127 Hours*, and *Slumdog Millionaire*.

One great illustration of Danny Boyle's style of directing is that of *28 Days Later*. This film is one of Boyle's earlier films and it takes place in the UK after the outbreak of a rage-inducing virus. It centers on a young man named Jim, who wakes up from a coma to discover an empty world full of rabid shells that used to be humans. Boyle's style is precisely demonstrated from the very beginning. He has a distinct method of using very powerful, even disturbing, opening shots. In this case, it was a bone-chilling shot of a restrained monkey, forced to look at a slideshow of violent images. He also employs the use of close-up shots that give the audience a sort of claustrophobic feeling, such as the scene when Jim wakes up from his coma. In this shot, it shows his face, half hidden by blankets, with a particular focus on his eye. As he looks around the room, it is noticeable that his eyelashes are long, and they look as if they had been stuck together during the month that he had spent unconscious. As he discovers his surroundings, the audience feels as if they are in his shoes, thanks to the close-up shot. Later on in the movie, when Jim leaves the hospital to discover a desolate city littered with debris, Boyle's spectacular usage of wide-angled shots is paired with vivid scenery and an array of bright colors. During an interview, Boyle says of the topic, "We wanted to say: here's a big film with a large agenda and with a

huge landscape to look at.” One instance of this is when Jim is walking over a large bridge with a bright blue sky above, and the only sign of movement is the slow pace of Jim in the lower right corner of the shot. This is yet another trademark of his that makes each individual shot an impressive work of art. Through such shots of bleak, bright scenery, Boyle allows the audience to feel the emptiness of this forsaken world, along with the confusion that Jim is feeling. He also employs the use of a kinetic camera, or a type of filming that is from the point of view of a character and gives the illusion of suspense or chaos. In *28 Days Later*, this technique is used when Jim first discovers the infected, ravenous humans, and is running for his life. The image on the screen is sporadic and gives the audience the feeling that they, too, are running from a certain death. Boyle is also known for using flashbacks as an instrument to give a character a back-story. In this case, he uses them to depict the unfortunate fate of Jim’s parents. The final tool that contributes to this auteur’s style is the specific music that is played throughout the film. Boyle often uses electronic music that brings the precise emotion of the characters out, but in an unconventional manner. In this film, the song “The Tunnel” by John Murphy uses an electronic beat with an overlay of suspenseful electric guitar. While there is a not-so-subtle intensity of many of the songs in this film, there are also songs that are happy and encouraging, like “AM180” by Grandaddy. The unusual electronic music played throughout this film just further exemplifies Boyle’s style. All of these aspects of *28 Days Later* work together to form an illustration of Boyle’s unique style, while clearly demonstrating the personal stamp he leaves on his films.

28 Days Later does a most excellent job of portraying how director Danny Boyle impacts his films with his personal style. Another great example of this is *127 Hours*. In this film, the story of the unfortunate canyoneering Aron Ralston is told. Ralston’s story begins when his arm becomes lodged in one of Utah’s isolated slot canyons and tells the tale of his emotional journey towards survival. This movie begins with various images of thousands of people. This is a demonstration of the powerful opening shots that are in Boyle’s films. In *127 Hours* in particular, the opening shot is significant because

of the irony exuding from it: that is to say that, soon, Ralston will be very alone, far from civilization, with nobody to rely on but himself. In the opening sequence, Boyle's close-up shots are exemplified as Ralston is preparing for his adventurous trip to Utah. This, combined with the quick cuts that he uses, gives the audience a rushed, somewhat uneasy feeling. It is evident that Ralston is not concerned with any potential dangers, due to his spontaneity. Not long after, it shows Ralston taking on the rough terrain of southern Utah. Boyle, yet again, applies wide-angled shots on the bright red landscape, a scene that emanates a false sense of security: how could something so bad happen in such a beautiful environment? Kinetic camera movement is yet again employed to show the vivacity in which Ralston explores the terrain, as well as the hold-your-breath moment when he plummets to the bottom of a canyon, a huge boulder crushing his right hand. Again, there are close-up shots that exude a feeling of being trapped, just like Ralston. From this point on, Boyle's trademark flashbacks (and even some daydreams!) are used as a tool to give the main character depth that the audience can relate to, as well as explaining Ralston's foolish habits that led him there. All of these factors are amplified through the film's spectacular soundtrack. The intense electronic music used reinforces that the great Danny Boyle worked behind the scenes on this film. A particularly impressive application of music, and effects, in this case, is during the falling action, when Ralston decides to amputate his own arm. As he cuts each nerve, an erratic burst of electricity erupts from the song and forces the audience to shiver and cringe as if they were the ones severing their nerves. "I had a clear idea of how I wanted to make it... [I] would put the audience through the experience with him," Boyle states in an interview. All of these factors combined create yet another fantastic film at the hands of Danny Boyle. *127 Hours* simply reinstates the fact that its' marvelous director has a clear, identifiable imprint on the films he helps bring to life.

Like *127 Hours*, Danny Boyle's style is also accurately depicted in his most successful film, *Slumdog Millionaire*. This film begins with the sound of a person being hit, and only after that, a close-up shot reveals the exhausted, sad face of Jamal Malik. Instantly, Boyle uses multiple techniques that he

is known for. The shot is very vivid and bright, a huge contrast from the hopeless expression adorning his face and the close-up radiates a claustrophobic feeling. Soon after the initial sequence, flashbacks come into play. *Slumdog Millionaire* is heavily reliant on flashbacks to accurately tell the dramatic story of two people who love each other, but are repeatedly separated, and their journey to find each other. The entire film applies the usage of bright scenery, regardless of the fact that much of the film takes place in the poverty-stricken slums of Mumbai, India. From the huge basins of different dyes to city train stations to the set of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire," the setting is always uplifting and vibrant, even in the darkest of times. It gives a sense of hope to the audience that Jamal will be reunited with his one true love, Latika, once and for all. As expected, panoramic views of Jamal's surroundings exemplify the artistry of Boyle, while clearly portraying the setting, as well as the mood, of a specific shot. Kinetic camera movement is yet again used in this film in instances like when a younger Jamal is running from authorities or when him and his brother jump from the top of a train and roll down a hill, a technique that works great in pulling the audience into the film. Finally, one of the most outstanding features of *Slumdog Millionaire*, one that proves true to Boyle's style of film, but also creates a new eccentricity, is the soundtrack. It is predominantly composed by A.R. Rahman, but also features two tracks from hip-hop artist, M.I.A. Boyle says of his experience working with Rahman, "I think it was lovely for him because he does a lot of Bollywood movies. It was great for me because Bollywood movies use music really proudly and boldly. They don't hide the music. They really use it up front. And so we did that." Boyle sums up his use of music perfectly. It is a soundtrack consisting of new electronic sounds, while still ringing true to the traditional music of India. It conveys the emotions of each scene to a tee, and perhaps the most impressive aspect is that it never goes unnoticed. *Slumdog Millionaire* expertly uses all of these factors to create an absolutely spectacular film. This film demonstrates the skill and personalization that Boyle puts into his films and is arguably the best he has ever done.

In conclusion, through the analysis of these three films: *28 Days Later*, *127 Hours*, and *Slumdog Millionaire*, Danny Boyle's magnificent style shines. It is very clear that he is an auteur director and truly makes his films his own, regardless of the fact that he jumps from genre to genre. He has an amazing knack for allowing the audience to experience the movie firsthand through his use of things like kinetic camera movement and close-up shots, while also presenting vivid, beautiful imagery in each individual shot. Boyle is arguably one of the greatest directors in modern-day film and one cannot doubt the fact that every future film he makes will demonstrate the same characteristics of style and deliver the same great quality that all directors could only hope for.

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