

Week 1: Jordan Peele, *Get Out*, 2017

From the start of the movie, the background music was both creepy and upbeat, like a carnival tune. It felt out of place, especially during the intense scene where the man was being taken. This unusual music choice continued throughout the film, with various genres and instruments, including violins. One of the most powerful moments for me was when Chris found the box of photos. In this moment, Chris realizes Rose had lied about her past and had dated many Black men who were now suspiciously working for her family. The scene also built dramatic tension as we waited for Rose to find the keys, even though we already knew she wouldn't.

In terms of what I loved and disliked, there were definitely more aspects I loved. For example, the kiss between Rose and Chris was so passionate, and the timing of Chris's emotional tear at 1:01:54 made it an especially powerful moment. Rose tricked us all, and I was just as shocked as Chris was when the truth came out. Another favorite moment was near the end when Rod humorously says, "I mean, I told you not to go in that house," bringing the film full circle with a bit of comic relief.

There weren't many things I disliked, but if I had to pick one, I'd say I would have preferred something like bidding paddles instead of bingo cards in the auction scene to make it clearer. Overall, *Get Out* isn't just a horror movie—it's a thought-provoking reflection on real-world issues, forcing viewers to confront difficult yet important conversations.

Week 2: Orson Welles, *Citizen Kane*, 1941

The primary aspects that stood out to me were the daunting, mood-fitting music and the unique lighting. Specifically at 12:48, the apparent lighting foreshadowed the importance of certain characters. The seamless transitions were also a bit shocking to me as it's crazy they were able to accomplish those shots in the 1940s. Plus, the film's exploration of the complexities of Charles Foster Kane's life, as revealed through the perspectives of those who knew him, added layers of depth to the narrative.

Another aspect that stood out to me was the brilliant use of symbolism and visual metaphors throughout the film. The iconic image of the sled "Rosebud" and its significance in Kane's life left me pondering the themes of nostalgia, loss, and the quest for meaning. The symbolism extended to the cinematography, with striking compositions that conveyed the isolation and emotional turmoil of the characters. Moreover, the film's commentary on the media's influence and the pursuit of power resonated with contemporary issues. Kane, portrayed by Welles himself, evoked both empathy and disdain, making the audience question the nature of success and the cost of ambition. *Citizen Kane* not only entertained me but also prompted reflection on the human condition, leaving me eager to dive deeper into its layers of meaning.

Week 3: Charlie Chaplin, *City Lights*, 1931

I have heard of the infamous Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* before, but never taken the time to analyze the film. So, I was a little caught off guard and confused when there was no dialogue. The beginning scene around two minutes in made me assume the entire film was going to have audio, but then it randomly went silent and stayed silent. I often found myself distracted because the lack of audio caused boredom. So I forced myself to pay attention. My favorite scene by far was the final scene. The love story between the Tramp and the blind flower girl is so beautifully heartbreaking but I also found it a bit cringy at times. The fact that she is unable to see him, but can feel his kindness is both tragic and heartwarming. As someone who loves all things romance, the part where she touches his face and recognized him by touch alone really pulled my heartstrings.

City Lights taught me about the power of visual and emotional storytelling, proving that sometimes actions and expressions speak louder than words. Although silent films aren't particularly appealing to me, it made me focus more on the character's actions and the overall storyline.

Week 4: Vittorio De Sica, *Bicycle Thieves*, 1948

Bicycle Thieves was quite an emotional film that captured the struggles and desperation of post-war Italy in such a raw manner. The main aspect that stood out to me was the film's use of simplicity in storytelling. The plot wasn't too complex and there weren't many elaborate twists so instead, it focused on the character's everyday struggles. The strongest emotion I experienced was when Antonio and Bruno were going through the harsh realities of poverty and unemployment. I felt frustrated and sad for Antonio when he was searching for his stolen bicycle and had trouble locating it. Bruno's innocence and unwavering faith in Antonio perfectly showcased their father-son trust.

This film ultimately emphasized the importance of empathy as it shed light on the struggles of those living on the margins of society and reminded me to never take the simple things in life for granted. Although the film is quite old, it is a timeless masterpiece that still resonates today.

Week 5: Jean-Luc Godard, *Breathless*, 1960

From the very first scene, I was captivated by the unconventional style of Jean-Luc Godard's filmmaking, although the different language threw me off a bit. I quickly turned on the English subtitles and continued enjoying the film. One of the primary aspects I noticed was the handheld camera work. This gave the film a sense of immediacy, almost as if I were right there on the streets of Paris alongside Michel and Patricia. Another element that stood out to me was the editing. The jump cuts were so jarring yet effective in conveying the frenetic pace of the characters' lives. It felt like Godard was challenging the traditional rules of filmmaking and creating something entirely new.

The strongest emotion I experienced during the film was a mix of admiration and unease. On one hand, I was drawn to Michel's charismatic and reckless personality, but on the other, I couldn't shake the feeling of discomfort knowing the consequences of his actions. It was a complex and conflicting reaction that kept me engaged until the very end. As for Patricia, I found myself both intrigued and frustrated by her character. She seemed to embody the free-spiritedness of the French New Wave, yet her motivations remained elusive and enigmatic. I couldn't decide whether to admire her independence or be exasperated by her indifference. Overall, *Breathless* taught me the power of breaking conventions and pushing boundaries in art. It showed me that filmmaking doesn't have to adhere to strict rules and formulas to be impactful. Instead, it can be a medium for self-expression and experimentation, even if it means challenging the audience's expectations.

Week 6: Djibril Diop Mambety, *Touki Bouki*, 1973

The first scene in *Touki Bouki* was really disturbing and threw me off - I had to pause the film and resume later. I was aware of the content warning, but simply just did not expect the animal cruelty to be so graphic. Once I resumed the film, I immediately noticed clear gender, race, and economic disparities. The language they were speaking was also really fast-paced and difficult to keep up with. Aside from these first impressions, I was ultimately struck by the raw energy and rebellious spirit of the characters, especially Mory and Anta. Their fight against societal norms and longing for freedom and adventure was really touching. I could literally feel their desperation and desire to break free from the constraints of their reality.

I also noticed some sort of significance with birds. I am not exactly sure, but the birds acted as a trigger for flashbacks it seemed. As for emotions, I think the strongest one for me was a mix of exhilaration and melancholy. On one hand, there's this sense of thrill watching Mory and Anta's wild journey towards their dreams. But at the same time, there's this underlying sadness knowing that their aspirations might never be realized, that the world they're fighting against is so unforgiving.

Week 7: Glauber Rocha, *Barravento*, 1962

My favorite aspect of *Barravento* was the overwhelming sense of hope and despair that existed throughout the film. I found myself oscillating between feeling uplifted by the resilience of the characters and heartbroken by the injustices they faced. There was also a sense of betrayal with the broken nets, feelings of grief, and spirituality. It was a rollercoaster of emotions, but ultimately, it left me with a profound sense of empathy and understanding.

As for the characters, I couldn't help but love and admire Firmino. His determination to fight against the status quo and create a better life for himself and his community was truly inspiring. And while there were certainly characters I disliked for their narrow-mindedness and cruelty, I couldn't help but recognize the humanity in their flaws. The minimal dialogue and very

apparent music made sense for this film, although as previously mentioned with *Breathless*, I did not enjoy reading the english subtitles.

Week 8: Quentin Tarantino, *Reservoir Dogs*, 1992

Reservoir Dogs along with *Get Out* are by far my favorite films I have watched throughout my film journal. Tarantino does an exceptional job opening the film with an attention-grabbing scene highlighting a man who does not believe in tipping. Instead of a typical title sequence, this captivates viewers which is a unique order I do not really see in a lot of films nowadays. This non-linear narrative keeps viewers guessing and forces us to piece together the puzzle ourselves. It's like a cinematic game of chess, and I'm all in for it. Tarantino also does a great job utilizing a lot of flashbacks to give viewers insight into what actually happened after the heist. The flashbacks also share Mr. Blonde's journey to joining the group where we learn his real name and story.

There are also a bunch of little moments I noticed throughout the film.

- The male actors tend to continuously comb their hair even when their partner is dying in front of them! This was very common in the 1900s, so it makes sense but it was shocking to see them continue to comb in this situation.
- Tarantino also utilized a great number of POV shots which were fun to watch (ex: the cop in the trunk swap POV shot).
- The hideout studio echoes which is ominous and symbolic of the everlasting hold the failed heist will have on the men.
- The hand held pan out to Mr. Blonde's entrance was awesome and perfectly embodied Mr. Blonde's chill demeanor.
- The racist tropes and sexism throughout the film were shocking and disappointing. However, upon my research, several black actors defended Tarantino because the words were used to provide historical accuracy.
- The dramatic irony with the audience knowing Mr. Orange is an undercover cop was perfectly incorporated and entertaining to watch.
- On a more minor note, the kicking sound effects at 32:20 were not executed very well which threw me off. This made me "think" during a film that I, for the most part, got lost in the storyline.