

Scott Pilgrim vs The World is a film directed by Edgar Wright and was released in theaters in August of 2010. The film is a unique blend of video game culture and storytelling which delivers an experience to it's audience unlike any other. As both it's greatest strength and it's biggest shortcoming, the film invokes feelings among it's viewers that they are watching a video game in motion as much as they are watching a feature length film. Depending on your point of view, this surreal experience can be invigorating, nostalgic, or perhaps even boring. Regardless of your opinion on the quality of the film, no one can disagree that there is nothing else quite like Scott Pilgrim vs The World.

Scott Pilgrim vs The World maintains a consistent, surreal, world which is simultaneously that of a stereotypical video game world merged into our real world. In order to maintain such a perfect balance between video games and reality, the film uses contrast of saturated color to distinguish between real world and video game elements, depth of field, lighting, and balanced forces between different elements on screen.

The opening sequences of Scott Pilgrim vs The World is one of the best representations of how various techniques converge together to make the film such a magical mesh of two different realities. The film begins with the Universal Pictures company logo and jingle altered to that of pixelated 16-bit graphics and sound so that it looks and sounds like it is a title card for an older video game. This short title card

demonstrates one of many ways in which video games are blended into scenarios we're used to seeing. The film actually begins after the Universal Pictures title card with a narrow angle shot panning down from the sky to the rooftops of houses. All the colors in this scene have a very bright white hue. As the camera moves downward, contrasting dark, black text appears on the screen. This creates a surreal effect with the text overlapping the foreground of the real world. The next shot takes place inside the apartment of the film's protagonist Scott Pilgrim. As characters appear on screen for the first time a dark black box filled with white text appears next to them. The text gives a short biography of each character. This is commonly done in video games to help players more quickly jump into the story. This appearance of the text boxes is prime example of how stylistic elements of video games are meshed seamlessly into live action shots which look like the real world, thus creating a completely surreal world for the viewer. Despite the live action scene playing out in the background, the text box in the foreground feels natural. The box is small so that it has little gravity attracting the viewers attention to it and the vectors projecting from characters do not project toward it. Yet, the contrast of the box still gets viewers to read it. It's all balanced, it's all surreal, and to me personally it's all very effective as I quickly read the biography box and think nothing of how conventionally it should not be there. This is the genius and the beauty of the world which the film creates.

Scott Pilgrim vs The World frequently reuses what it does with biography text boxes in the opening scenes. Throughout the film we see entirely two dimensional video game elements such as health bars, hearts, onomatopoeias, and points edited into

shots. Depth of field is heavily used with these two dimensional elements by almost exclusively placing them in the very front of the foreground of scenes. While this does make these images stick out, they are consistently balanced with the weight of the real world objects on screen and never distract from the real world despite being typically placed in the foreground. Thus, these artificial elements are integrated so naturally that I personally as a viewer do not ever question even once why they are there. These two dimensional objects actually compliment what's taking place in the live action sequences going on behind them and serve to only enhance the feelings being given off from them.

The use of lighting in Scott Pilgrim vs The World is a very interesting choice which I believe is ultimately very successful for the film. Almost every scene is very brightly lit with every object fully uncovered. Shadows are nearly non-existent and only appear as dark, contrasting cast shadows when they are present. The beginning of fight scenes tend to be the only scenes which are ever dimly lit. Fight scenes later become completely filled with light when a fight begins and then typically return to being dark when a fight concludes. Since the producers of the film are trying to merge together video games and film I believe they made this lighting choice to better represent their goals. Nearly all video games from made prior to 1990 lacked any kind of lighting and used clear, bright colors. The film seems to be following the style of those older video games as it mimics this color and lighting scheme and fills it's plot with references to specific video games from this era.

Color is heavily saturated throughout *Scott Pilgrim vs The World* and used to help enhance the stylistic elements of the film. Sharp contrast between the pure hues is used to better exemplify opposing characters and to separate video game elements from real world ones. This use of heavily saturated color furthers the film's surreality for me as a viewer as well. I feel it helps to blend objects on screen together and thus to make everything look more natural yet still giving off the lingering notion that the world portrayed in the film is different from the one we live in.

The plot of *Scott Pilgrim vs The World* centers around Scott Pilgrim having to defeat the seven evil ex boyfriends of his love Ramona Flowers. Each of these fight sequences defy all previous conventions of the film and transform it from a gently paced comedy into a fast paced Kung Fu action. As the pace of film increases, so does it's convergence of video games into the real world as the stylistic elements of the film begin to truly flourish. These stylistic transitions are aided by changes in light and narrowing the depth of field to focus on the action. This takes the film from a relaxed environment to a more tense and exciting atmosphere for me as a viewer. It captures my attention and shortens my subjective sense of the time which it takes for the sequence to play out.

The first of the fight sequences in *Scott Pilgrim vs The World* best demonstrates the film's tendency to completely switch nearly it's entire style very rapidly. This sequence of the film takes place at a tavern where Scott Pilgrim's band is giving a concert. Lighting is used by the film here as dark shadows are cast upon the saturated

clothing colors of Scott's band as they play their song. The moment their slowly paced song is interrupted by the first villain in the film the shadows all almost completely disappear and the room is brightly lit. The scene almost instantly erupts into a series of fast punches and kicks with short, close-up shots of the characters as blows are exchanged. Two dimensional motion vectors are edited into the scene to give a greater sense of speed like it is often done in video games. These aesthetic elements all work together beautifully in the film creating a tense environment with fast yet easy to follow action. At the conclusion of the fight the scene returns to being dimly lit, the shadows are cast back into place, and the pacing of the film slows down as characters begin to slowly stir and react to what has just taken place. While these transitions are sudden, they are still done smoothly enough for me as a viewer to be able to easily follow along. Everything is balanced in this scene with converging vectors and characters placed evenly on the screen helping to ease the flow and stylistic transitions made in the scene.

Each of the fight sequences throughout the film take a notably different approach to how the unique stylistic elements of the film are used. The final fight scene of the film is perhaps the most interesting of them all as it combines all of the previously used styles of the film into something truly unforgettable. The entire scene is brightly lit with no obstructing objects in-between the viewer and the action taking place. Characters fight each other using swift, fast motions while holding pixelated, three dimensional swords. As characters exchange blows their bodies emit a highly saturated red hue implying that they have taken damage. Bright blue, small numbers flashes across the screen as the action goes underway indicating that characters are earning points of

some sort as they inflict damage upon each other. Contrary to other parts of the film, these numbers are further back in the depth of field instead of being placed upfront in the foreground as they had been being placed. This makes for an effect of them seeming even more natural than they did in prior sequences in the film. For the most part, the entire fight sequence is shot in a narrow angle lens. The entire fight sequence was balanced with opposing characters positioned and sized evenly with converging vectors not allowing for my eye to be drawn to either side. The combination of all these aesthetic techniques along with the quick paced action of the fight yields a truly enjoyable, smooth, fight scene which arises excitement out of me as a viewer. The fight scene reaches an utterly satisfying conclusion as the protagonist is able to land a series of blows which explode the final villain into a bevy of coins and points all over the screen. As a viewer I feel relief for the protagonist and I have a thrilled feeling having just seen something truly awesome.

Scott Pilgrim vs The World is a film which truly stands out from every other. It manages to combine stereotypical elements of video game realms with our world to create a surreal setting for the film which is vastly different from anything ever done before. Scott Pilgrim vs The World uses depth of field, contrasting colors, balanced forces of on screen objects, and lighting to successfully maintain a world which feels natural but is still unlike any other ever seen before in film.