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*You Were Never Really Here* is an interesting film in how it switches from its drama mode to its “action” mode, and it’s for that reason that *You Were Never Really Here* serves as an interesting introspection on how a director can blend together two different types of films together in a unique, interesting way. Much of the film, the “drama”, the more “normal” scenes of the movie are shot in full color, with a wide variety of shot framing, composition, and source of sound, all in the emphasis of exploring who Joe is: the frequent use of flashbacks is how we, as an audience, are shown his trauma from his work in the past in his service to his country, such as his time in the military or his time in the FBI. Much of the film that focuses on him seems to have a blue tone to it or an abundance of the color blue in the scene, which is, of course, an English teacher’s favorite color as it sets the mood of depression, of sadness, of all of downtrodden emotions possible; here, of course, it reflects Joe’s suicidal tendencies and desires. Scenes with other characters as the focus seem to lack this blueness, but a lot of the time when Joe is alone or the primary focus, we get the blue.

There are scenes, then, where the action is present, but was not originally the focus, such as the hotel room. Unlike movies such as *John Wick*, where the protagonist is able to easily fight, Joe is slow, and the fights in this movie feel more akin to something like those found in *No Country For Old Men* or *Drive*: they’re brutal, they’re slow, and all it takes is one second for a character to go from alive to dead. The interrogation scene, as well, at Joe’s house after his mother is killed is similarly brutal and slow, it’s almost painful to watch. It sells to us that violence is not easy, it is not painless, it is not something to aspire to. Violence, in *You Were Never Really Here*, is shown to not something to be desired.

Music is interesting in the film, too, as it too has two modes: it is either loud, discordant, buzzing noises that almost sound like they’re about to break into something like the electro-thriller score for a movie like *John Wick*, but they never do: they’re only ever tense. If it is not this discordant noise, the music is instead fully diegetic, which suggests a similar quality to the first type of “music” found in the film: it’s the noise inside of Joe’s head versus the noise around Joe’s head.

There’s one point in the film, however, that we get outside of Joe’s head truly: the initial rescue of Nina, which, as the first true combat set piece of the film – punches are thrown here and there before, but this is the true “extended” fight of the film – isn’t shown to us as Joe saw it but instead as the security cameras saw it, full with the diegetic sound and showing us only a limited view of whatever violence was truly happening. It stands in contrast to his later “rescuing” of Nina, who’s already saved herself by the time that Joe arrived by slitting the governor’s throat herself. It’s perhaps *because* the film didn’t switch to this same perspective that the audience may be suggested that there isn’t going to be a second roaring rampage in the film like there was the first time Joe rescued Nina.

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