

Auteur theory

Film studies

The start of auteur theory

An auteur is a film director who influences their films so much that they rank as their author. Even before the auteur theory was clearly defined, the director was considered to be the most important among the people working on a film. Auteur theory is a film making theory where the director is seen as a major creative force in a film .

Before auteur theory was introduced most if not all credit was given to the director. This went as far to cause a well renowned film critic to say “the best films are personal ones, made by forceful directors”. French film critics furthered this thought going on to say that a director uses the film to express their thoughts and emotions whilst utilising lighting, staging, camera work, and editing. Through this the auteur could express how they felt about certain subjects as well as showing their own unique style of film.

Development

Whilst developing the auteur theory it was discovered that directors that just followed the script were more those who set the stage rather than being creative and gaining the title of auteur.

However there were directors that bent the script in different ways to help convey a message or reoccurring style. These were also seen as the directors that were capable of making better, more enjoyable films. Jerry Lewis was one of the first to be critiqued as an auteur due to his attention to the creative and the business sides of production he did this by paying close attention to the writing, directing, lighting, editing and art direction.

Use and significance

The phrase auteur was first used in 1962 in an essay written by Andrew Sarris who came up with it to allow other countries to understand instead of learning the full French phrase of la politique des auteurs which translates to “the policy of the author”.

A new generation of directors appeared in the 1960's and 70's. These directors would be allowed more control over the films and projects they would be working on and studios would willingly let them take more risks. However it didn't last very long ending in the 1980's due to large financial failures.

This form of thinking did not go without criticism. Pauline Kael argued with the likes of Andrew Sarris saying that the production of films should be seen as a collaborative effort instead of crediting a single person. In her 1971 essay (Raising Kane) she brings attention to the co-writer and cinematographer who were made useful throughout the entirety of the film Citizen Kane.

Others argued other points, these points being that the writing is more important than the directing (Richard Corliss, David Kippen), George Sadoul had made it apparent that the author of a film isn't necessarily the director of the film. There were also many different other thoughts and opinions on the idea of auteur theory.

Examples of auteurs in the films we have been studying would be Edgar Wright and Duncan Jones due to their overall influence on their respective films.

For Shaun of the Dead Edgar Wright is the director .

Edgar Wright has done films other than Shaun of the Dead such as Hot Fuzz , Land of the Dead, Baby Driver and many more.

For Moon it would be Duncan Jones who was the director for Moon , Warcraft, Source Code, Whistle and Mute.