

# *Shaun of the Dead*

*(2004)*

COMPONENT 1: SECTION C  
BRITISH FILMS SINCE 1995



EVER FELT LIKE YOU WERE SURROUNDED BY ZOMBIES?



# SHAUN OF THE DEAD

A ROMANTIC COMEDY. WITH ZOMBIES.

UNIVERSAL PICTURES PRESENTS A UNIVERSAL PICTURES FILM A UNIVERSAL PICTURES PRODUCTION A FILM BY ZACHARY WALSH SHAUN OF THE DEAD CASTING BY JAMES HAMILTON COSTUME DESIGNER JAMES HAMILTON EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JAMES HAMILTON AND JAMES HAMILTON PRODUCED BY JAMES HAMILTON AND JAMES HAMILTON WRITTEN BY JAMES HAMILTON AND JAMES HAMILTON DIRECTED BY ZACHARY WALSH

www.shaunofthedead.com

SHUFFLING INTO CINEMAS FROM 9TH APRIL

# In a nutshell

*“SOTD offers a humanist examination of initially the ‘shuffling class’, then crossing over into a socio-economic exploration of Britishness; all mediated through literate, intertextual references and black comedy”*

# Two shot encoding buddy representations and eccentric 'Englishness'



# AREAS FOR STUDY

- ◆ FILM FORM INCLUDING NARRATIVE
- ◆ MEANING AND RESPONSE  
(INCLUDING REPRESENTATION)
- ◆ CONTEXTS
- ◆ IDEOLOGY

# Clips for study in class

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF4EyXhZudo> - she's so drunk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqQ8Y9Sjp7o> - shop visit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLquz4Iz-30> - record toss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkYFVKLzFrk> - Shaun kills his Mum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t--mSXDeETc> - flatmate problems

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4tVH7BPb-Q> - Don't Stop me Now

A not insignificant number of extras underpinning the production budget



# Production context 1

- ◆ Working Title/Universal Studios - a **UK/US collaboration**
- ◆ Known in the industry as a **hybridised Zom/Rom/Com** (Working Title/Universal specialise in RomComs e.g. *Four Weddings/Notting Hill/Love Actually* et al)
- ◆ **£4m low production value budget**, shot in 9 weeks
- ◆ After **critical and commercial success** Pegg/Wright given a bigger budget to make *Hot Fuzz* – SOTD now a cult film
- ◆ SOTD was Edgar Wright's 2<sup>nd</sup> film as Director after the ironic micro budget *A Fistful of Fingers* in 1995



# Simon Pegg and Nick Frost as 'stars'



# Production context 2

- ◆ **Wright ‘borrowed’ actors from comedy** e.g. Dylan Moran and Tamsin Greig (*Black Books*). Martin Freeman (then just *The Office*), Reece Shearsmith (*League of Gentleman*)
- ◆ SOTD was a ‘clever’ project and Wright drew heavily on his industry contacts to make the film
- ◆ **Shot on location in North London and at Ealing Studios** (iconic British studio space)
- ◆ Edgar Wright came from television into film directing, notably *Spaced* (1999-2001). SOTD was first part of the ‘Cornetto Trilogy’ with *Hot Fuzz* and *The World’s End*

# Representation of the corner shop, Britishness and black comedy



# Intertextual Context

- ◆ **Deeply intertextual** – Edgar Wright and Simon Pegg reveal a high level of film and music literacy e.g. references to obviously *Spaced*, *Resident Evil 2* video game...
- ◆ Some of the graphic nature of the horror also borrowed from the 2002 British film, *28 Days Later* (Danny Boyle) but also *The Wicker Man* from 1973 and micro budget *I, Zombie* (1998)
- ◆ An ironic nod is also made to the art house Three Colours trilogy by Krzysztof Kieślowski
- ◆ SOTD was also borrowed from itself in 2008 with the micro budget London Zombie film *Colin*, directed by Marc Price

The micro budget *Colin* made 4 years after SOTD  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRtQGo5BlaY>



# Representation of 'Britishness'

(helped Universal sell an exaggerated British cultural identity and heritage for the US theatrical release)

- ◆ UK pub culture – pints, scratchings, the 'concept' of the pub as a community hub/grief hole
- ◆ Accents and dialogue/swearing – London regional identity
- ◆ Divisions of social class – housing, cars, characterisation
- ◆ Notions of eccentricity – 'Englishness'
- ◆ Stiff upper lip stereotype while 'under seige'
- ◆ Iconic British film and music – Queen (in pub), Stone Roses, New Order (record throwing)

# Objects/props, lighting, furniture and 'brown' colour palette – a traditional British pub



# Ideology – meaning and response communicated through ironic, escapist comedy

- ◆ **Hedonism** – mainly through the role of Ed (who is forgiven all his sins). Even after becoming a Zombie he is still on the PlayStation in the last frame
- ◆ **Anti-establishment individualism/youth culture** (slackers)
- ◆ **Divisions of social class** in British society – in that they exist, no in-depth exploration but a satire on modern life
- ◆ Ideas of **Britishness** in terms of national and regional identity
- ◆ **Gender roles, family and friendships** – reinforcing and challenging stereotypes



# Ensemble Cast



# Postmodern readings and Narrative

- ◆ Analysis suggests **postmodern readings** as a result of intertextual references
- ◆ However, an **oppositional reading** suggests the film is linear, has a developmental narrative (including narrative arcs) and resists postmodern 'classification'
- ◆ **Bricolage** may be evident through a pastiche of generic codes but hybridisation in film has been 'the norm' for some time
- ◆ There is no real experimentation in narrative structure, no real blurring of high art and low art

# Iconic London signifier, plus 'the shuffling class'



# Narrative 1

- ◆ The **narrative is linear, single stranded and closed** (must defeat the Zombies) but also character led with an ensemble cast
- ◆ **Narrative arcs** link the buddy theme and Cornetto Trilogy
- ◆ **Todorovian narratology can apply** – equilibrium is Shaun and Ed's shambolic existence, disruption the Zombies, realisation as Shaun has to do something about it (and his fragmented personal life), resolution the Zombies defeated, new equilibrium as Shaun and Ed back together, but under different circumstances....

# A call to action



# Narrative 2

- ◆ A classic 'Hollywood' 3 act structure can also apply....
- ◆ Exposition (act 1): characters, problem, setting introduced
- ◆ Development (act 2): the on-going battle against the Zombies
- ◆ Resolution (act 3): defeat, boy gets girl
- ◆ **Binary oppositions** also underpin SOTD in terms of brands of gender, notions of the other, social class, morality v immorality, the outsider and insider in society, consumerist, capitalist aspiration v hedonism and individualism

# Representation of gender

- ◆ **Representations both reinforce and challenge stereotypes** e.g. Liz has expectations of a relationship but then becomes strong and determined in her stance and an active protagonist
- ◆ Shaun and Ed suggest a stereotypical 'boysey' buddy friendship preventing Shaun from having a 'normal' relationship with Liz
- ◆ However, Shaun is sensitive, caring and ultimately does the right thing
- ◆ **Pluralism and diversity would be too far fetched** (its primary objective is comedy while key areas for representation remain

# Opening sequence 1

- ◆ Non diegetic *Ghost Town* by The Specials has connotations of emptiness /Thatcher's Britain (1981) & foreshadows Zombies
- ◆ A CU of Shaun, camera zooming out identifies character and location (disheveled tie, pint and fag in hand)
- ◆ Shot/reverse/shot establishes character relationships with Liz – she is framed as stereotypically pretty (blond hair, red lipstick)
- ◆ Wide shot pub iconography (pool table/Ed by fruit machine)
- ◆ Speeded up cutaway to friends develops already eccentric representation (David's geeky glasses and Dianne's hippie shirt)



# Opening sequence 2

- ◆ Stereotypical English swearing anchors cultural identity
- ◆ A series of fast paced CUs fully introduce characters
- ◆ The camera zooms in - fear on Shaun's face after he makes a commitment, linking with one of the film's themes
- ◆ Tracking shot introduces mundane 'modern living' linking with audience cultural competence in their understanding of body language and facial expressions, ending with the inevitability of standing at a bus stop/looking at phones

# Opening sequence 3

- ◆ Dissolves to wide shot – ‘shuffling class’ (disaffected youth)
- ◆ Dissolve to wide shot of stereotypical suburban street
- ◆ Dissolves to CU of feet (Zombie connotations), camera tilts up to reveal Shaun has just woken up
- ◆ Mise-en-scene reveals shambolic living conditions (empty bottles and glasses, PS, bongo drums, food plates...)
- ◆ Fast edits show Shaun getting ready for work but also reveal notions of inevitability (dead end jobs)