

The well created drama in Saints and Soldiers

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September 15, 2009

Saints and Soldiers, directed by Ryan Little, is a dramatic war movie based on WWII which puts the viewer right into a war zone. It takes place on French grounds and it tells the story about five American soldiers; three ground soldiers, one medic and one pilot. The fights that are being displayed are taking place during a severe winter and only involve Germans and Americans. The base where the five soldiers are stationed is being attacked and they are the only that managed to escape. They are basically stuck on enemy grounds and have to walk for days to find another home base. During their journey, they have many obstacles to overcome and have to make many sacrifices. The movie includes many specific production elements which makes the movie very dramatic and makes the viewer having compassion with the main actors. By analyzing the production elements in Saints and Soldiers it creates a better understanding in how the filmmaker used these kinds of elements to create an atmosphere he wants to convey with its audience.

First of all, the point of view that is used in Saints and Soldiers is omniscient, which is one of the production elements to start with. Omniscient means that it is possible to look from the perspectives of all the main actors in the show (Silverblatt, 2008 p.185-186). It is possible to feel compassionated with all the main characters because of this point of view. There are also a lot of shifts in camera proximity like close-ups. The main characters are mostly talking to each other during the movie, so the viewer can get to know them very well. Close-ups give the audience a better look upon the main characters faces and their expressions, which contributes to the level of emotions of the stories that are told. Also, almost every shot was taken at their eye-level and almost everything was filmed from their perspective. This makes the

movie look like the audience is a part of their group, supporting and empathizing the main characters. There were some wide-angle shots to show the public where they were located and how endless their prospect looked like; the only things that were visible were snow, trees and rocks.

Secondly, the colors and lightning that are used in *Saints and Soldiers* play a very big role when discussing production elements. As aforementioned, the only things in the environment that were mainly visible were snow, trees and rocks. This made the scene to a complete white battlefield with objects that could be used for camouflage. The white snow really expresses the cold very well and makes the audience sympathize the main characters more because they have to endure the extreme cold. Furthermore, in snow, blood is extra clear when an actor got shot and makes it extra clear how much blood the actors lost and thus, seems extra painful. As far as the lightning; really none of the days are filled with sunshine. There seem to be only three weather circumstances; it is cloudy, foggy or snowing. This contributes to the cruel weather circumstances, but also makes the movie more dark, sad and very uncomfortable.

Finally, the production element that took another very big role in *Saints and Soldiers* were the sound effects. The music is played by an orchestra and includes a lot of 'sad' tones like A-minors. Actually, the music arranges the constant tension of danger that could occur any second. There are only two times in the movie when the music starts more upbeat and that is when a new day begins. There is, in a way, some sort of celebration when a new day starts because they have survived the night. However, the happiness that is projected shifts very quickly to a feeling of possible danger and the music keeps the audience in tension for about the entire movie. What not to forget is that this movie also uses the absence of sounds. The shift from having

music to not having music at all creates more tension and sets the audience sharp. In these moments it got really thrilling whether the enemy was going to attack the main characters or not. The thrill was so intense because the main actors were a minority compared to the Germans. If the enemy would see them, they had a big chance on getting killed. At those times, natural sounds were added like branches that broke or guns or pins pulled out of a grenade.

In conclusion, it must be sad that the director has added a lot of production elements to create a dramatic atmosphere in *Saints and Soldiers*. He reached its goal by using the right camera shots so that the audience gets to know the characters very well and could sympathize with them. Also the colors and lightning is used to its full potential to create dramatic scenes with severe weather circumstances like snow storms. Moreover, the sound effects really added to the emotional effect on the audience. It kept the audience in tension and kept the audience sharp.

References

- Silverblatt, A. (2008). Media Literacy, keys to interpreting Media Messages. 3rd edition. Praeger Publishers.