Analysis on the Effect of Meta-cinema Factors on Audience
一Taking *ONE CUT OF THE DEAD* as an Example

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ABSTRACT

Metacinema is a kind of film tells story about film and things correlated to films, which can include pre-planning, shooting process, and editing process. This article will take *One Cut of the Dead* as an example and analyses its structure and how it controls the audience's emotions. Then the author will compare it with several well-known metacinema movies that contain metacinema elements to explain why it has been so successful in Japan. Ultimately, the author will discuss how metacinema can attract audiences in the future and its development trends.

Keywords: Metacinema, One Cut of the Dead, Audience psychology

1. INTRODUCTION

One Cut of the Dead, a movie presented in 2017 from Japan, has a very low production cost, which is 25,700 dollars; while after it was shown in cinema, it achieved great success and won many awards in Japan. However, it is a pity that it did not make a name worldwide. As for most audience, including the author, they did not consider this film as a good movie when first seeing the beginning of it, but then became really interested in the type of this film and hoped to dig more information after watching it completely.

The earliest metacinema film was a documentary film *Man with a Movie Camera* from Russia in 1929. "It presents a rigorous layered structure. On the surface is an urban symphony that disciplines the ordinary life of the Soviet people. The inner layer describes how the camera disciplines life, and how the photographer records real life through 'the movie eye', that is, the camera" [1]. Time slowly moved on, in order to attract the attention of audiences, the forms of metacinema film have become more and more diverse. The metacinema contains not just the single boring filming behind the scenes, but has become an element of all variety of movies. Now there is a good metacinema movie combining special movie characteristics and its storytelling, which named *One Cut of the Dead*.

2. ANALYSIS

2.1. Plot and Structure of One Cut of the Dead

This movie is classified as a zombie comedy on the Internet. At the beginning of the film, a crew is filming a zombie movie in an abandoned factory, but they encounter real zombies, this part takes up 37 minutes of the movie and is presented in a one take. After the credits finished, "cut" was heard by audiences and title "back to a month ago" appears. The first 37 minutes of the film, the zombie movie, is actually a one-to-one broadcast project and the male lead is invited to be the director of it which process is shown in the following story. "The first 37 minute itself involves two layers of narrative: the outer layer is the shooting process of the zombie film crew, and the other layer is the film produced by the outer layer-the girl was killed by her boyfriend who turned into a zombie. However, when these two sets of layers ended, the cast and crew list appeared on the screen. When the audience thought that this clichéd and difficult movie was over, they realized that only half an hour had passed. At this time, the word "one month ago" appeared. The movie proceeds to the next layer, which is the outer layer of the previous two texts" [2].

2.2. Reflexivity

Reflexivity, which means "consciousness turning back on itself," appears in aesthetic media in two ways, in the artist reflecting upon his medium of expression; and in the artist as creator reflecting upon himself" [3]. An example is *Mulholland Dr*, as the reflexivity was shown not within film and reality but in dream and reality. In this movie, Diane knows that Camilla has been killed by the killer in reality. In Diane's dream, this anxiety is transformed into the killer's various mistakes in the killing. In this movie, there are many mappings between the filming and the subsequent shooting process. It is often presented in planting and payoff. For example, due to a temporary accident of the man who was planned to play the crazy director role in the zombie movie, since there was no time

for the director to find another actor, he determined to play the role himself. In the outer layer, the director himself is afraid of things and obeys the opinions of others too much, but in the end before shooting, vents all the anger that he accumulated before towards the troublesome hero and heroine, forming a reflection of his heart in reality. The scene back the camera also reflects the current state of the film industry. For example, the heroine of the zombie movie acts as a pitiful person and pushes the responsibility to the company, saying that she cannot be vomited, making the director unable to refuse. The hero who does not cooperate with the shooting when on the set and always entangled in the details, and also the actor and actress failed to catch up with the filming because of an affair, causing the whole crew into panic.

2.3. The Psychology of Audience

Many netizens turned it off after a few minutes of opening, which is understandable, because when the screen is turned on it does look very cheap, and the camera move is strange, then there are several inexplicable plots that seem embarrassing. Although the impression is bad, the audience who insists on watching it will know that cheap pictures, strange camera movement and inexplicable plots are all due to insufficient production funds and all different kinds of accidents happened on the set. Due to the setting of demanded one take and live TV, there is only one opportunity for shooting, and the shot cannot cut in the middle, which causes all the scenes to appear in front of the audience. When the audience saw the first half of the zombie film, their expressions will not be good, and maybe even frowned and said "I could definitely do better than this". However, when they saw the second half, the film explains the previous confusing plots and scenes. In this way, the audience has a sense of sudden realization, and the negative thoughts they have in their mind disappear. For instance, in the first half hour of the zombie movie, there is a scene where the heroine is yelling at her opposite, which lasts for about forty seconds. Even the audience on the outer layer of the movie feels strange when watching it, but when coming to the shooting process in the second half, it can be seen that the protagonist's long yelling is to buy more time for the makeup artist behind the camera. With the advancement of the film, the depiction of filmmaker's love and passion of the film as well as the scene of their wholeheartedness made the audience feel admired and moved.

This kind of movie structure actually uses a way to reduce expectations, so as to maximize audience satisfaction under limited conditions. For example, if you go to a place to travel, your friend tells you that the environment of the hotel is bad, but after you go there, you find out that it is actually good, and your mood will improve. However, in fact, the hotel may be just a normal hotel, but your satisfaction with it may be higher than that of going to an ordinary hotel. Applying it to ordinary movies is that you do not know anything about this movie before you enter the cinema, and then you sit down and start watching it.

The mood is flat and there is no expectation for it. As for *One Cut of the Dead*, after you watch the first ten minutes later, there was a certain degree of contempt emotion for this movie, and the expectation of the later plot was lowered, but after the later plot became more interesting, the audience would highly rate this movie. This is also the cleverness of the screenwriter and director. The budget for the entire film is extremely low, but with limited resources, these methods have been used to achieve the greatest success.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1. Comparison with Common Metacinema Film

There are many kinds of metacinema movie and the author divides them into three types, which are basically shooting all shooting process, shooting stories about movies, and movies with metacinema elements. For example, *Living in Oblivion*, *Woody Allen*, and *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. The three of them all have the same feature that they did not show the finished film in the movie to the audience, which is also a characteristic of most meta-movies. They emphasize the process and story behind the film instead of the film they shot. *One Cut of the Dead* does not go the old way here. It chose to put finished zombie movie at the beginning of the film and make good use of this structure. Imagine, if the screenwriter and director did not determine to show audiences the finished film, but only to show the second half of the shooting process behind the scenes, will it be that special and surprising? The answer is obvious that it will be very boring, without the freshness, and become one of the ordinary metacinema movies, lacking the audience's sense of demystification that the author said before. The audience will not be surprised, and certainly the film will not be successful as it is now.

3.2. The Fourth Wall

This movie can be said to have broken the fourth wall to a certain extent, but it is not quite similar to the concept of breaking the fourth wall. "Viewing television follows the conventions established by live theater and film. The viewer actually is eavesdropping on characters who function within a "three-walled" environment. The "fourth wall" is a transparent one through which the audience voyeuristically looks" [4]. In *One Cut of the Dead*, the audience can participate in the movie to some degree. When playing the zombie movie in the first thirty-seven minutes, the director shouted to the camera that the camera would not stop, which proved that he knew that there was audience, but the audience at this time refers to people who were watching the live TV in the movie, and we become the audience watching the live broadcast, so the characters

in the movie do not know our existence, and what they know is the audience they think. It can be said that they broke the fourth wall in the story of the movie and enhanced interaction with the audience.

3.3. Expectation Effect

"A phenomenon in which perception and behavior changes as a result of personal expectations or the expectations of others" [5]. This is a concept in psychology which is often corelate to economics but this time the director actually used this concept in *One Cut of the Dead*. He used the zombie movie to make the audience "expect" that this film ended with awkward and flaws so that when the audience see that the film does not end, they would be surprised.

4. FUTURE STUDY

Metacinema movies are rarely promoted in the current market. In order to make metacinema films spread more widely, it is necessary to first consider it from the perspective of the audience. As people in the film industry or people who love movies, they themselves will be more interested in this kind of movies since it is related to their life and work; but for the public, they themselves are not attracted. Only when they find it interesting and fun, will they be willing to watch. Therefore, the metacinema film must not be the same as before. In order to produce pure metacinema film, shooting process should be combined with interesting stories, and the combined story should not be separated from the movie, otherwise the metacinema will become a small element of the story again. However, film like *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* has absolutely a good approach to bring metacinema concept to more people as is of great importance to catch the audience's eye every minute and every second rather than distracting the audience. This point of *One Cut of the Dead* did not do well in the beginning of the film. The first ten-minute story is still novel, but later, the character becomes chased by zombies all the time, the plot is clichéd and boring. There are also a bunch of strange plots, the audience may simply withdraw and miss the wonderful plot that follows.

If a movie wants to be well received, the audience's psychology and construct the film structure in conjunction with the audience's psychology must be understood. As the author said earlier, *One Cut of the Dead* is a good example. When you fully understand the audience's psychology, then you can design the film structure to get the most benefits under limited conditions.

5. CONCLUSION

In light of these analysis, it is obvious that the success of *One Cut of the Dead* is due to the fact that they take good use of emotion of audiences. The film maker, especially people filming metacinema movie, should utilize psychology or find psychologists and sociologists to be consultants, in order to know more about what feedback the audience might give of their movie, therefore reaching the best result with lowest cost. Nevertheless, the author also needs to do more research and check document about psychology and cinema and try to combine them together in more aspects in the future study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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