

*No Country for Old Men* is a 2007 western/thriller, written and directed by Joel and Ethan Coen. Although this movie was adopted from Cormac McCarthy's novel, it is nothing you can simply read and imagine in your head. You would literally have to 'see it to believe it'.

The first thing to catch the viewer's attention is how violent the movie seems. The violence in the movie only kicks off in the second scene when the story's killer escapes from incarceration. Since his hands were handcuffed, his only chance of killing his captor was by choking him to death. Anton, the assassin, certainly succeeded as he took down the officer and let his blood splatter everywhere. This scene was dramatically graphic. However, as the movie continues on, both the violence and graphicness dies down. It's almost as if the first murder scene was a desperate (yet very successful) attempt to catch viewer's attention right away. It was the perfect drag, and the violence mixed in perfectly with the tone of each ongoing scene. There was no outrageous killing all of a sudden while the tone was calm and building mystery. Sometimes, video games, shows and films tend to up the violence just to get a satisfactory reaction out of their viewers, most of them inconsiderate of the effect it may have on some people. However, in this film, the violence fit only the mood of the scene, which was a genius effect.

What the Coen brothers definitely succeed in while directing and writing this American thriller, is engaging deeply in the auditory and visual thematic elements. The four things that definitely caught most viewers attention was the narration/dialect, the music, and the specific editing of the film. On a scale 0-10, narration and dialect definitely deserve a 10. Since the movie had more of a deeper meaning to it considering the beginning and ending narration of the film, it was most effective and definitely something analyzers like myself will tend to revisit. Music would come in second with a 9, then the editing which I'd personally rate at an 8.

Narration definitely played a huge role in the movie, as it opens the film with nothing but wide, open lands as the narrator takes you on his auditory journey of 'once upon a time'. He mentions that "you have to be willing to die in order to do this job", referring to being a sheriff, but that he doesn't want to push his limit for something he "doesn't understand". The title of the movie definitely plays out when it ends, as the sheriff is telling his wife of his dream that in his life of a sheriff, he is on the mountains and a man goes ahead of him and waits (indicating that

the killer still awaits him). He knows in real life that he's found the killer, yet, he's realized he was actually acting out of his dream, so he'd rather choose the safer life being retired. He's realized this country he dedicated his life to is truly 'no country for old men'. Here, it is assumed that he retired because he fears confronting what confuses him or he fears losing his life. However, not only does the sheriff seem to fear for his life, but all of the men in the movie who have come to face the assassin. Only one woman, Carla Jean, wife of the second main character, Lewellen, had the only guts to not run, to not fear, and to confront the man when he awaited her in her home. This is one of the most important scenes in the film. Finally, Anton is confronted by someone who was totally fearless. He uses his coin toss as his excuse for a fate determiner. Carla Jean pointed out an important fact, that the coin may have the choices but he is the one that makes them. The coin does not have control over the situation, he does. While Carla Jean is viewed with sunlight beaming directly on her, Anton remains in the dark and is shown having a silent moment of half shock-half intimidation by Carla Jean's incredible remark. It is almost as if her words take a toll on him, or maybe he's not use to confrontation and Carla Jean may be the first person to stand up to him. This is what made their short, three-minute relationship the most important in the story. Could this film have done something unique, and shown the killer's ultimate weakness? Afterall, when the Sheriff returned to the hotel massacre scene, Anton runs from him. Even at the end of the movie, Anton is scared greatly from a sudden car crash, paying two children for them to keep their word that they did not see him. Or does this film have some true feminist intentions, that one woman could have more 'balls' to confront the feared than several men put together? All of these scenes are consequential to the essential idea that once the killer is confronted, the rest of the story had jagged edges which is pretty interesting. This is why I found Anton as the most compelling character. For someone with no emotion, nor care, there was definitely some sort of sudden change in him after his talk with Carla Jean.

Another thing noticed in the film, was music. In movies, typically in thriller/suspense movies, the music is what really sets the tone of a specific scene. If the director wants a spooked and suspicious audience at a specific moment, he'll add some low, deep, increasingly dramatic beat. What the Coens did instead with their music, was barely use it at all. Not too many movies do this, in fact I've found this quite rare. Throughout the film, there are multiple scenes, mainly

the most dramatic scenes, that are specifically missing music. Why would a director purposely take out one of the most important factors in a suspenseful scene? Surprisingly, the absence of music in the scenes actually draws the audience in more. Everyone knows that silence can be deadly. Therefore, a mysterious, slow pacing scene without music actually allows the audience to become just as suspicious as the character is. They automatically engage in the silence and listen out for any sudden sounds, becoming one with the character. This was a genius choice the directors made.

While the editing component may appear very controversial for people to agree upon, looking closer at the movie's specific edits are actually interesting. What the directors did near the end of the movie, was keep the audience on a string, letting them dangle in their dazes and imagine the worst, sadly only to have it end with no satisfactory conclusions. However, does this truly make the movie a let down? We as people who desire answers to all of our questions, were not expecting the ending that *No Country* gave us. Some were angry, some were disappointed, I for one was intrigued. Another important scene was when it was assumed that Lewellen had been killed, including the scene where the sheriff visited the morgue and stared down at assumed body of Lewellen's (although the camera never showed the face of the dead body). But had anyone noticed or even considered that not only was there a five second scene where a man was hurriedly pulling off in a car just as the sheriff was pulling up to the scene, but that the dead body laying on the ground had been wearing the exact clothing that Lewellen was? If so, this could have been other loose ends the audience was holding onto for dear life. The scenes are cut specifically all with good intentions to keep the viewer watching to the end. Initially, isn't that all director's intentions? The Coen brothers definitely knew what to do.

The major plot points in the movie, were the three scenes that had the most dramatic effect on the movie. In my opinion, the most important plot point is when Lewellen finds the deserted death/drug/money scene. Afterall, this is where the story lifts off. The second major plot point is when Anton shows up at the scene and discovers Lewellyn's car and the missing money. This is when Anton and Lewellyn's storylines are woven together. The sheriff's story line meets with the two when he is the last to find the scene, however his storyline is not woven in with the two because Anton and Lewellyn actually make contact with one another on many accounts. The

sheriff stays in back, until near the end of the movie when the last major plot point is shown: the hotel massacre. When the sheriff arrives at this scene, he is woven with Lewellyn's storyline when he believes the dead body on the ground is indeed Lewellyn's. His storyline becomes woven with Anton and Lewellyn's when he returns to the scene at night and the two of them (although both standing on the opposite side of the closed door) are aware of who is on the other side. This was an interesting way to introduce the sheriff. The way Joel and Ethan decided to bring these story lines together was nothing too exciting, although it was interesting enough to keep the watcher on the edge of their seat and wait to see how all three of these introduced characters would come to be with one another.

Overall, throughout all four of these marvelous characters, Lewellyn is the one I wonder about the most. Lewellyn is the man who started the hunt for the money, and all the while he refused to give it up and save his wife. His last words on screen before the beer conversation was that he's just "waiting for what's coming". The person driving the car wildly away from the hotel scene could have been Lewellyn and the man found dead could have been someone Lewellyn hired as a double. It is unclear to actually determine Lewellyn's death since his face is not shown in the morgue and since he never reappears in the movie. However, the fact that Carla Jean, Lewellen, and the accountant's unclarified murders is what makes the movie interesting. It keeps you thinking, so no matter whether the viewer is satisfied or not by the ending, the effect is that it will be talked about, thought about and revisited longer. Anyone who enjoys both a long movie and a movie that keeps you factoring out the possibilities even way after you've watched it, this is definitely your movie.