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Trammell

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C—Film Review #1

Title: Scott Pilgrim vs. the World

Director: Edgar Wright

Plot Summary, based on the Hero's Journey:

- Status Quo: Establishment of Scott, his band, his relationship with Knives, and his living situation with Wallace.
- Call to Adventure: Scott dreams of Ramona Flowers for the first time.
- Refusal: Scott ignores the fact that he dreamt of Ramona and continues to hang out with Knives, until he sees her in the Library, confirming that she is real.
- Helper/ Mentor: Scott officially meets Ramona at a party, initiating their relationship.
- Cross the Threshold: At the first round of the Battle of the Bands, Scott is introduced to the League of Evil Exes when he fights Matthew Patel.
- Test, Trials, Allies, Enemies: Scott fighting Lucas Lee, dealing with Envy, fighting Todd, fighting with Roxy, and navigating his relationship with Ramona.
- Approaches the Cave: Scott and his band, Sex Bob-Omb, play the second round of Battle of the Bands, defeating the Katanayagi twin, which is also the last two evil exes before the infamous, Gideon.

- Ordeal: Scott loses Ramona to Gideon. He loses his band to a record deal. Wallace tells him that he has to move out. He has nothing.
- Seizes the Sword: After he loses everything, Gideon calls him to “apologize”. Wallace listened in to the conversation and tells him to “Finish Him.”
- The Road Back: Scott decides to battle Gideon, attempts to and dies. He then learns that he needs to do this for himself and makes his way to attempt the battle again after “gaining a life.”
- Resurrection: Scott defeats Gideon in battle, confesses to cheating on Knives and Ramona, and somehow finds a way into talking his way through his battle with Nega Scott.
- Return w/ Elixir: After Knives encourages Scott to go after Ramona, he runs after her stating that he wants to go wherever she goes, finally getting his girl.

Three recurring themes or aesthetic choices, with evidence of how they are communicated on screen.

- THEME ONE: Video Game Aesthetic
    - The Pee Bar, The introductions of each character, The “getting a life”, The battles against the exes themselves, the Universal logo and theme song in the beginning
- THEME TWO: Ninja Ninja Revolution
    - The initial scene with Knives and NNR, the (almost) breakup scene with Knives and NNR, the Nega Scott scene, the ending scene with the “Continue?” line
- THEME THREE: The “E” Word – Envy Adams and their breakup

- The scene when Wallace's boyfriend mentions Envy, the scene when Scott explains his haircut to Ramona, the phone call with Envy and Wallace consoling him afterwards, the scene where Julie brings up his breakup and Stephen tries to explain that Scott is "over his mourning period"

The grand, dominant thread- "This is a movie about MATURING."

Excerpts from two helpful reviews that help articulate the film's themes or motifs.

- "But underneath is a disarming sincerity and a remarkable willingness to acknowledge ambivalence, self-doubt, hurt feelings and all the other complications of youth. At the end, the movie comes home to the well-known territory of the coming-of-age story, with an account of lessons learned and conflicts resolved. But you'll swear you've never seen anything like it before." – A.O. Scott of the NY Times (Aug, 12th, 2010)
- "Scott's greatest flaws are his self-centeredness and his obliviousness. At his worst, he's capable of great cruelty that he downplays or denies. But to his immense credit, Scott matures to the point of realizing and accepting the harm he's done, and he ultimately vows to change himself for the better. By the series' end, Scott has reconciled with two of the people he hurt and, alongside Ramona, struck down the creep who's been preying on them amongst many others." – Justin Harrison of The Spool (Aug. 13th, 2020)

Summary of two films with similar motifs or themes that can help us better understand this film.

- Legally Blonde (2001)

- After Elle is broken up with by her college boyfriend, she comes up with the perfect plan to get him back: getting into Harvard Law School, his school, and proving that she can do it too. Elle approaches her trials and tasks with this "blonde" mentality of not knowing things, once she gets into Harvard Law. Elle meets fellow sorority sisters, students at Harvard, and staff members that take a liking to Elle and help her through her "plan." As time goes on, Elle realizes that she is actually a really good law student and her plan to get her ex-boyfriend back starts to dissolve. It also helps that she meets one of her professors junior partners, who sees Elle's potential and helps her realize that she isn't this blonde bimbo that everyone sees on the outside. In the end, Elle helps solve the trial case that she was assigned to, graduates from Harvard Law, exposes her ex-boyfriend for being an asshole, and falls in love with the junior partner, Emmett. She learns how to use her confidence and natural abilities to become a more mature and successful version of her already amazing self.

- Superbad (2007)
    - Seth and Evan are high school best friends. Approaching their graduation, they realize that they are, for lack of a better term, losers. They want to attend what could be their last high school party, in attempts to "get some action." Shenanigans occur when planning and gathering the material for the party including Seth dancing with a woman and getting menstrual blood on his pants, Evan finding himself in a room with men high on cocaine, and Fogell (their other, less important friend) attempting to buy alcohol with his fake ID that names him

as “Mclovin.” After finally getting to the party, Seth experiences a rise and fall of popularity, Evan turns down an opportunity to have sex with his drunk crush out of respect, and Fogell is the only one to actually get some. Returning to Evan’s house, Seth and Evan talk about their experiences and eventually talk about the fact that college will most likely separate them. In the end, they go their separate ways, realizing that they need to move on to the next chapter in their lives.

Formal Review

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World is ultimately a movie about maturity. Throughout the film, Scott can be described as childish in a plethora of ways. He doesn’t have a job. He never takes responsibilities for his own actions. He even dates a 17-year-old Chinese schoolgirl. Throughout the movie, Scott’s actions are reinforced by this notion of being juvenile. This can also be represented through the video game structure of the movie. Video games are typically seen as something immature or kiddish. Scott’s story of this point of his life is told in a video game format, proving that at this point in his life, he acts like a child. However, this starts to change over time, as he meets Ramona, defeats her evil exes, and finds out who he really is and what he believes in.

One example of this growth can be seen toward the beginning of the film when Scott decides to break up with Knives, aka his “fake high school girlfriend.” When Scott meets Ramona, he realizes that he wants to date her instead of Knives. Instead of realizing that and breaking up with her right away, he procrastinates breaking up with her, and eventually cheats on them both. This fact is unknown by both of the girls, until the end of the movie. After earning the

“power of self-respect,” Scott decides to tell both of the girls and admitting his mistake by doing so. Not only does he tell the both of them, but he also apologizes and explains why what he did was wrong.

Another example of this growth can be seen through his relationship with Envy Adams. Envy is Scott’s ex-girlfriend. She is constantly brought up in the first act of the movie as “she who shall not be named” and “the E word.” Once she comes back to Toronto and contacts Scott, he realizes that he can’t avoid her because it’s not the “grown up thing to do.” Once he confronts the issue that is Envy, through the battle with Todd, there’s no more mention of her or their breakup in the movie.

The last example of this growth is the constant set up and the initial pay off of the “lesbians” line. In the movie, Wallace, Scott’s roommate, encourages Scott to “bring out the big guns” after a night with Ramona goes wrong. He mentions saying the “L” word to Ramona, in which, Scott replies “Lesbian?” Later on in the movie, Scott tries to confess his feelings to Ramona to win her back, stating, “I’m in lesbians with you.” He does this because, like a child, he can’t grasp the idea of love in his head. Love is something he experiences; however, his naïve train of thought prevents him from acknowledging the concept and saying the word “love” out loud. When Scott goes to battle Gideon in the “final battle” scene, Scott says that he is in love with Ramona, finally saying the word, and therefore, understanding the concept.

In conclusion, Scott Pilgrim is a naïve, ignorant child who learns, through the help of a manic pixie dream girl and a bunch of battles with her evil exes, how to become the young adult that he was meant to be.