

Review of thesis

“BLACK AND WHITE CINEMATOGRAPHY IN THE DIGITAL ERA.” **“Aspects of monochrome cinema in the contemporaneity.”**

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This thesis tempts to give an in-depth insight of aspects of contemporary monochrome movie making. Starting from origins and history, then covering technology including extensive camera tests the text leads to nowadays examples with skype interviews of authors of cinematography.

In the starting history chapter, Gui presents an overview of historical development of filming technologies. Starting from early examples of frame by frame hand painted colouring, he mentions the development of colour reproduction processes, the invention and evolution of technicolor, and finally a little too briefly the invention of colour negative. He points out not only the technical aspects, but also covers aesthetic considerations; the industry's hesitating of taking over colour, the perception of colour movies as something superficial, too close to reality. The fact that colour photography was initially considered rather a technological gimmick than a revolutionary event, is certainly a quite bizarre fact, which could have led into general thoughts about filmmaking as such.

In the technology chapters, principles of colour reproduction are explained. Gui introduces the basic possibilities of how to achieve a b/w final result: image capture on film or on digital, both on colour stock or b/w stock, respectively colour or b/w sensors. He explains the principles and functioning of digital sensors and briefly mentions necessary postproduction to achieve the final result. We also find some information of how scanners work. The differences of colour emulsions versus b/w emulsions are missing. I would have also like to see a more schematic description of different workflows, according to the various caption options.

Gui managed to rent a colour and a b/w Arri Alexa camera for shooting some tests. He then after compared them in postproduction, applying primary grading only. Of course it is difficult to do camera, lens tests etc without having a specific look in mind, so these tests offer relatively minor help, if one wanted to decide which workflow to use. Gui was unlucky with the weather, so it didn't make sense to test these cameras in exteriors to see how they'd perform in nature with natural sunlight.

It was a good decision to limit the tests only to a confrontation of a digital b/w and colour camera of the same manufacturer and leaving film stock or other camera makes out, otherwise these tests would have become too complex for this thesis. On the other hand I miss secondary grading of the tests, and subjective comparing of the tests on screen.

The use of b/w filters and their effect on the b/w capture medium versus a colour medium is covered and briefly discussed, but the image manipulation possibilities of this realm comes definitely too short, as exactly this might be a decision maker for DPs trying to decide which technology to use. Gui's lack of experience in this field was certainly a handicap in developing this further.

The thesis closes with a few interviews Gui managed to do with cinematographers, who shot internationally successful b/w movies. These talks quite nicely confirm considerations made throughout this work: it is mainly a subjective approach of the creatives behind the camera, why to make a b/w movie at all and what technology to use.

Gui concludes with general considerations about b/w movies: artistic, aesthetic, technical, financial and distribution questions influence the decision making even today, showing once more that there is nothing like the “one and only way”.

Generally speaking, Gui made a big effort to be able to shoot those tests and certainly spent quite some time and effort developing this thesis. Unfortunately, he kind of lost the momentum in analysing the tests and applying a more extensive postproduction. The finishing happened in a rather rushed time schedule, thus not allowing to develop some thoughts to a more generic, deeper level.

The text is sometimes confusing, and explains more complex contexts in a rather incomprehensive way. Weak english, grammar mistakes and typing mistakes could have certainly been corrected.

I suggest to accept this thesis for the graduation commission's consideration and would suggest to it evaluate it with grade "C".

MgA. Klaus Fuxjager

27.5. 2017

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Klaus Fuxjager', written in a cursive style.