



Manifestation and Analysis of a 3 Point Lighting System in “The Wedding Party”

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Abstract. Having seen the film: “The Wedding Party”, one is challenged to analysis the creative deployment of a 3 point lighting technique in this narrative. In carrying out a critical examination on the film, the researcher employs the combined methods of a cinematic content/studio analytical approach and a library research method. This paper is launched with definitions of the key concepts while the synopsis introduces the story in this film. Findings reveals that the invocation of a 3 point lighting technique in this film is not only meant to guide and concentrate the attention of the viewers on the main characters/actions but deployed to highlight or show the texture of the costume or to distinguish the colours of objects/characters. It is also meant to reveal the physical actions or facial reactions of the characters in the selected scenes. The paper equally demonstrates how the key is used as a component of frontal lighting that creates flat looking image on screen; shows how the fill light is employed for mild shading or in modelling the actor’s face. The paper diagnoses how the backlight helps in revealing the volume rather than creating a flat looking image on screen. It further demonstrates how the key back light and the fill light are sometimes deployed to create partial silhouette of the images on screen, or used to reveal two levels/planes within a frame where two different actions are occurring concomitantly.

Keywords: A 3 point lighting technique, key light, fill light, backlight, and “The Wedding Party”

1. Introduction

Having watched Kemi Adetiba’s film: “The Wedding Party” the researcher is tempted to examine the creative deployment of the 3 point lighting technique in this narrative, consequently the writer do not only set out to define a 3 point lighting technique and examine the natures, features and characteristics of each component of a 3 point lighting system, but to diagnose the manifestations of the key light, the key

and the fill lights, the key-back light as well as to scrutinize the manifestation of the back light in this film.

2. Research Methodology

In carrying out this research exploration on “The Wedding Party”, the researcher employs the combined methods of a cinematic content/studio analytical approach and a library research method.

A Cinematic Content/Studio Analytical Approach and a Library Research Process

This cine content cum studio analytical approach or research method according to Ola-Koyi (2018) is based on the process in which a researcher watches a narrative film or video with the basic intention of diagnosing an aspect of the film or studying the manifestation of certain elements of the mise-en-cadre in the film.

In the case of this paper, the researcher watched the film: “The Wedding Party” and used a digital machine / computer editing machine to select some relevant frames of the film for critical analysis and to buttressing the issues raised for discussion in this paper. The library research process, is used on the other hand by the researcher while consulting related and relevant books and journals from both the conventional library and the e-Library.

3. Conceptual Framework

3.1 A 3 Point Lighting System

This 3-point lighting system is a standard requirement in motion picture production. In film study it is also required to understand better other aspects of the cinematography lighting system. Fundamentally, this three-point lighting system has to do with creative manipulation of the key-light, the fill-light and the backlight during the shooting stage or editing stage of a film project.

According to Detisch (2020):

The most basic lighting in film is the three-point lighting. Lighting from three directions shapes your subject and sets them apart from their background. To achieve this, your film lighting equipment needs to face your subject from three directions: front, back and side (generally).

On this three-point lighting, it could be reiterated that the manipulation which occurs in “...the lighting of the scene will start from the assumption that any subject normally requires two light sources: a key light and a fill light.” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004) However, in a standard Hollywood production the backlight is always added to complete the three-point lighting system.

3.2 Natures/Features/Characteristics of each Aspect of a 3 Point Lighting System

Key Light

A key light is a powerful light that often serves as a primary source in lighting a scene during the shooting process of film production. It is usually very bright, providing the dominant illumination and casting the strongest shadows behind a subject. In reaffirming this fact, Adorama (2018) declares that:

The key light is also known as the main light of a scene or subject. This means it’s normally the strongest light in each scene or photo. Even if your lighting crew is going for a complicated multi-light setup, the key light is usually the first to be set up.

The key light is the most directional light and it often diagonally hung/positioned in the front / above the subject. It usually corresponds to the motivational lighting source on set. It is on record that key light on a subject is often placed at a 45 degree angle to the camera-subject axis. The key light usually the strongest source of illumination during the recording of scene, it is the major source of the light in the scene.

Fill Light

This is a complimentary light source that is deployed during the shooting of an action in a scene. It has been established that a fill light, comes from less intense lamp placed at complementary angles. It is usually placed in a position near the camera to fill in and as a less intense illumination it helps to eliminate shadows cast by the ray of the key light. It is an auxiliary light, usually from the side of the subject that can soften shadows and illuminate areas not covered by the key light. According to Adorama (2018), a fill light “...is noticeably less intense and placed in the opposite direction of the key light, so

you can add more dimension to your scene.” He further reiterates that

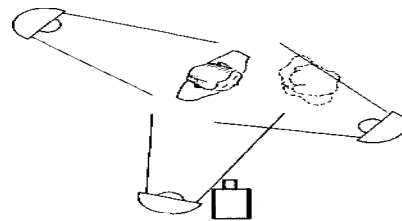
Because the aim of fill lighting is to eliminate shadows, it’s advisable to place it a little further and/or diffuse it with a reflector (placed around ¾ opposite to the key light) to create softer light that spreads out evenly. Many scenes do well with just the key and fill studio lighting as they are enough to add noticeable depth and dimension to any object.

Back Light

A back light is the main source of light placed behind the subject at the background of the frame. When used without either the key or the fill light, it results in total silhouette of the subject on screen. But when used with either the key or the fill light, it gives partial silhouette of the object on screen. Adorama (2018) is of the view that: “Backlighting is used to create a three-dimensional scene, which is why it is also the last to be added in a three-point lighting setup.” He equally reiterates that backlighting is usually placed “...a little higher from behind so as to separate your subject from the background.” A J Detisch’s (2020) believes, “The back light gives an edge light to the rear portion of your subject. Often, the backlight shoots down from a higher angle.”

In demonstrating and summarising the basic arrangement of a three - point lighting system, Bordwell and Thompson (2004) explicate thus:

Classical Hollywood filmmaking developed the custom of using at least three light sources per shot: key light, fill light, and backlight. The most basic arrangement of these lights on a single figure is shown in... [01]. The backlight comes from behind and above the figure, the key light comes diagonally from the front, and a fill light comes from a position near the camera. The key will usually be closer to the figure or brighter than the fill.



01. The arrangement of a three point lighting system

The Synopsis of “The Wedding Party”

This narrative film: “The Wedding Party” could be described as romantic comedy basically narrates the activities surrounding the rite of passage on modern marriage or wedding rite. According to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wedding_Party, the film takes place during the day and evening of the wedding between Dunny Coker (Adesua Etomi), a 24-year-old art gallery owner who is the only daughter of Engineer Bamidele (Alibaba Akporobome) and Mrs. Tinuade Coker (Sola Sobowale), and the IT entrepreneur Dozie Onwuka (Banky Wellington), who comes from a very wealthy family. His mother, Lady Obianuju Onwuka (Iretiola Doyle), considers her son to be marrying beneath himself.

During the morning before the wedding, the wedding party is prepared and the stressed wedding planner Wonu (Zainab Balogun) is trying to make everything perfect for her rich clients. Meanwhile, the bride's parents and female relatives are upset by the omission of Tinuade Coker's name in the announcement in the paper, and the groom's parents share an uncomfortable breakfast while the mother talks disparagingly about the Coker family to her friends and is very cold towards her husband, Chief Felix Onwuka (Richard Mofe Damijo). Dunny is taunted by her female friends about her lack of sexual experience, and Dozie's male friends tease him about the previous night's bachelor party. The best man has been in an accident after the bachelor party, and the irresponsible Sola (Ikechukwu Onunaku) is chosen as his replacement.

During the wedding ceremony, guests and family are cheerful, with the exception of Obianuju Onwuka who pointedly refuses to pay any attention, to the embarrassment of Felix. Afterwards, while the cars are going from the church ceremony to the wedding party at the reception hall, Dunny finds a pair of women's underpants in the pocket of Dozie's dress jacket, and is upset. He convinces her that they had been planted there, probably by one of his friends, and they belatedly arrive at the party. A disagreement arises between the two pairs of parents about which group should enter the dining room first; eventually, the Onwukas, being the richer family, get the first entrance.

The events at the reception hall had its share of embarrassing incidents, these include Tinuade Coker

having hired a local Yoruba chef - Iya Michael (Jumoke George) to cook an alternative to the fancy menu set by Obianuju Onwuka. When Sola gives his best man's speech, he accidentally shows video footage from the stag night instead of the video prepared by Dozie for the occasion, and the humiliated Dunny leaves the reception hall after having witnessed what looks like Dozie being unfaithful to her. She is met outside the hall by one of Dozie's old girlfriends, Rosie (Beverly Naya), who claims that she had sex with Dozie earlier that day - in reality, Rosie had tried to seduce him but failed. Dunny disappears from the reception premises in a taxi.

Dozie, the older brother of Nonso Onwuka (Enyinna Nwigwe), and the two sets of parents set out to look for Dunny but are held up at gunpoint by a thief who has managed to get into the room where the wedding gifts are kept. The tense situation causes the couples to open up to each other, with Dozie's mother confessing to her husband how unhappy she had been about his affairs with younger women, and Dunny's father admitting that his company had lost all its money. The couples reconcile, and Nonso manages to overpower the thief and take his gun. Dozie goes off in a car with Sola to find Dunny, and convinces her that he has in fact not broken their mutual promise of chastity. They return to the wedding party to dance the rest of the night away.

Analysis

Diagnosis of a 3 - Point Lighting System in Selected Frames

The frame in 02 is a manifestation of the combined use of the three point lighting system, in this frame both the key light and the fill light are serving as the frontal lights while the ray of light at the back of the couple is serving as a backlight. In diagnosing this 3 point lighting system in 02, one could say that the key light of this frame is not coming from its customary position of the right hand side of the camera but placed at the left side of the frame. Thus it radiates on the new couple, Mr. Dozie Onwuka (Banky Wellington) and Mrs Dunny Onwuka (Adesua Etomi), reflecting a mild shading or cast shadow of the label of Dozie's jacket on the chest/stomach region of Dunny's wedding gown.



02. This frame glorifies the combined use of the three point



03. The backlight in this frame separates the image of the party planner from

The fill light which is supposed to eliminate the cast shadow on Dumni's dress but fails is from the right side of this frame. The backlight which separated the couple from their decorated background of flowers and beautiful curtain is placed at the top side of the frame, radiating and glittering on Dozie's head.

The manifestation of a 3-point lighting system in 03 could be analysed from the position of the backlight in this frame that separates the entire image of Wonu, the party planner from her background. The yellowish incandescent ray of the key light from the left side of the frame highlights the facial feature of the Wonu (i.e. her eye-glasses, her eyes, her nose, her opened mouth and part of her chin) while establishing a form of attached shadow along the following parts of her body: cheek, chin, jaw, neck and the unlit part of the nape of her neck. The whitish ray of fill light in this frame on the other hand is from the right side of the frame. It highlights the hairs at the back of Wonu's head up to the highlighted area on the nape of her neck, while her ear is established with some elements of attached shadow, other highlighted parts of her body include her neck and her right shoulder.

The Manifestations of the Key Light in Selected Frames

In the first instance, one could identify some shots where the key light is deployed as frontal lighting in 04. The frontal lighting on this frame could be recognised through its tendency to eliminate any form of shadow. Thus the evidence of this frontal light in 04 is in the depiction of fairly flat looking images of Mrs. Tinuade Coker on the right side of the frame and that of her friend on the left side. This frame in 04 registers the ray of the key light coming on the character from top side of the frame, radiating on the forehead of Tinuade's friend along with her headgear. It also radiates on Tinuade's cheeks. At the same time, this top key/frontal light from behind the camera in 04 separates and distinguishes the two women established in this frame from their background wall.



04. The frontal light used in this frame is recognised by its tendency to eliminate shadows. Thus it is shown in its denigration of fairly flat looking



05. The key light in this frame is serving as dislight radiating on the

It is on record that the key lighting could also come on the figure in a frame from any of the other five points of the frame (i.e. back area, right or left side, top or under the frame side). For instance in 05, it could be established that the ray from the sun light that is serving as the key light in the frame comes on the figure from the top left side of the camera/frame to radiate on the left forehead of the crook character and casts attached shadow of his head on the unlit right side of his shoulder. This ray of key light from the sun in this frame further highlights the chest and other frontal parts of this uninvited guest whose interest to attend the wedding party is made manifest as a "narrative plant" with this frame.

This lighting arrangement of the frame in 06 reveals the bride, Dumni Coker, while the make-up-artist is apply the make up to her face. There is no repositioning key light in this frame. The key light in this shot come on the characters from its customary right side of the frame. but as it is established in this frame, the key light is serving as a *cross-light / a side light*. In the case of cross lighting, the *key light* could be stationed in either the right or the left side of the frame.

The manifestation of the key/cross-lighting in 06 does not only help in sculpting the image of Dumni Coker from her background but it also radiates on the right side of her head - forehead, on her right eyelid, her check and on the right side of her neck more than any other parts of her head. Moreover, the key cross light in this frame equally casts a slight attached shadow bellow her chin and a part/region of neck.



06. The key light on this frame where the bride is been made up come from the right side of the frame



07. The purplish ray of the key light in this frame comes from the right side highlighting the right side of Dunni's crown, forehead, eyelids, nose, cheek, chin, neck and shoulder through a cross-light radiation that separates her from the background darkness with

From all indications, one could point out that, the key light in each of these identified frames is deployed for different purposes in “The Wedding Party” film. In other words, it is employed for filmic and aesthetic purposes in 04 and 06 while it is used in establishing a narrative purpose/ dramatic technique of a plant in 05.

The Manifestation of the Key and the Fill Lights in Selected Frames

The first analysis on the manifestation of the key and the fill light on selected frames from “The Wedding Party” will be another frame of Dunni. Thus, the frame on 07 reveals the combined use of a *key side light/a key cross light* along with a *fill light*. In this frame one could see the fill light revealing the left side of Dunni's face, while the purplish ray of a key cross-lighting from the right side of the frame highlights the right side of her crown, forehead, eyelids, nose, cheek, chin, neck and the right of shoulder. Consequently, the radiation from this key cross-lighting eventually separates the image of Dunni from the background darkness with four/five pronounced spotlights.

The ray of the sunlight coming in through the window at the left side of this frame in 08 is the key light and it radiates at the back of the groom, Nonso Onwuka as it glitters on his head while highlighting the faces of his friends who are sitting down on the settee facing him. The ray of the fill light in this frame is from the central top of the frame serving as the backlight to those men sitting on the sofa. Separating them from the background wall as well as separating the settee from the wall and the photo-frame of the water fall hanging on the wall.

In summarising the functions and usages of both the key and the fill lights in narrative film based on the foregoing analyses, one could reiterate that key/fill light could be deployed as component of the frontal, top or cross/side lighting within any given mise-en-cadre in a narrative film. Moreover, either or both the key and the fill light could serve as motif or employed for filmic or aesthetic purposes. To be specific cross light or backlight could be used separates the character/image/object from the setting at the background. The combined usages of a key light and fill side light; or a key cross light along with a fill light as demonstrated above could be used to establish body expression or employed to follow action in a scene.



08. The ray of the sunlight coming through the window at the left side of this frame is the key light and it radiates at the back of Nonso Onwuka and glittering at his head while highlighting the faces of his friends. The ray of the fill light in this frame is from the



09. The manifestation of the back - key light on this frame is in combination with the frontal fill light. While the back key light highlights the centre and the back side of Chief Felix Onwuka's glittering head, the fill light exposes his facial and

The Manifestation of the Key-Back Light on Screen

Some samples of frames where the key light is serving as the back light are in 09 and 10. These frames thus display combined usages of both the back-key light and the front fill light. In other words, both the key and fill lights are deployed in establishing the Chief Felix Onwuka (Richard Mofe Damijo) in these frames. In 09, the back-key light in this frame highlights the centre and the back side of Chief Felix Onwuka's glittering head while the fill light exposes his facial features such as the eyes, the nose, the eyes etc. and the frontal parts of his body features – the texture of his costume and the chieftaincy beads he wears etc.

In 10, the key back light from the right side of the frame does not only radiate on the oiling cum glittering skin on Chief Felix Onwuka's head and highlight his chest but it also sculpts his entire image out from his background wall. The left side of his head is depicted with the aids of the fill light that results in a light attached shadow.



10. The key back light does not only radiate on the oiling cum glittering skin on Chief Felix Onwuka's head and highlight his chest but sculpts his entire image out from the background. The fill light on the other hand highlights the left side of his head



11. The midday sunlight at the background of this frame is the key back light and throwing the cast shadows of the two feet of the man standing at the middle of the road at the foreground of the

Other Manifestations and the Usages of the Back Light on Screen

It could be established that in the film under review, there is no single frame that reveals exclusive manifestation of the back light without the use of the fill light that result in total silhouette of the object on screen. However, there are some frames with the combination of the key back light and the fill light that result in partial silhouette of the images. For instance in 11, one could see that the midday sunlight at the background of this frame is the main source of light that doubles as a key back light which throws cast shadows of the two feet of the man standing at the middle of the road at the foreground of the frame. Moreover, the radiation from this midday sunlight equally serves as a fill light that prevent the reflection of these two legs from ending up as total silhouette image on screen by highlighting and showing the texture of the trousers and distinguishing the black and white colours of his shoes the two standing legs wear.

The shot on 12 is another frame from “The Wedding Party” that creatively used the backlight to depict two levels of plane rather than creating total silhouette of Dunny's image at the foreground of the frame. The key backlight in this frame comes from the left side of the shot, sculpting out the image of Mrs. Tinuade Coker from her background plane, highlighting the left side of her face while revealing at the same time her revolting and sordid expression towards the groom's mother, Mrs. Obianuju Onwuka who is by the other backdoor of the car that conveys the bride and groom to the reception hall.



12. The midday sunlight at the background of this frame is the key back light

The image of the bride facing her mother which supposed to be in silhouette is however mildly highlighted due to the radiation from the midday sunlight which is equally serving as fill light that infiltrates the interior of the car. From all indications, one could say that the manifestation of the midday sun-lighting set up in the frame plays significant impacts on the mise-en-cadre arrangement of the frame. First, the sunlight which is serving frontal light (i.e. as the key and as the fill light) is also serving as the backlight. Second the sunlight equally helps in revealing two different arenas/planes of actions/movements, (that is, the exterior/background and the interior of the car/the foreground of the frame) and third, it also helps in revealing within a single frame two planes where the two concurrent actions are taking place. That is, it reveals at the background of the frame, the expression and action of the bride's mother who is outside the car and at the foreground, the reaction of the daughter who is inside the car towards her mother.

4. Conclusion

From all indications, this paper has not only defined a 3 point lighting technique and examined the natures, features and characteristics of each aspect of this 3 point lighting system, but looked at the various manifestations of the key light, the key and the fill lights, the key-back light and the manifestation of the backlight on the screen of the film under review.

Based on the various analyses, it could be reiterated that aside from being used to concentrate the attention of the viewers on the main characters/actions in a narrative, a 3 point lighting technique is equally employed to highlight or show the texture of the costume or to distinguish the colours of screen objects. It has also been demonstrated how the 3 point lighting technique is used to reveal the physical actions or facial reactions of the characters in a scene.

As examined in this paper, the key is used as component of frontal light in creating flat looking image on screen. The fill light as revealed is employed in depicting mild shading or in modelling the actor's face while the backlight is employed in revealing the volume rather than flat looking image. It has also been demonstrated that, the key-back light and the fill light are sometimes deployed to create partial silhouette of the images on screen, or used to reveal two levels/ planes within a frame where two different actions are taking place concurrently.

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Film data

Film title - "The Wedding Party"
 Director - Kemi Adetiba
 Director of Photography - Akpe Ododoru
 Screenwriter - Tosin Orudeko and Kemi Adetiba
 Producers - Ieoma Agukoronye, Zulumoke Oyibo, Don Omope
 Story - Mo Abudu, Chiaza Onuzo, Tosin Otudeko, Kemi Adetiba and Don Omope
 Production companies - EbonyLife Films and FilmOne