

# Research on the filming techniques and promotion strategies of Youtube's popular horror short movies

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**Abstract.** In terms of film genres, horror is a very specific one that requires some very specific lighting techniques. This paper analyzed some determining elements in some successful horror short videos that helped to win ideal number of views, and proposed a promotion strategy that could be used to boost the wide spread of YouTube horror short films. The research can contribute to discussions on how to integrate shooting techniques and desired promotion strategies in terms of online short horror videos.

**Keywords:** YouTube Videos; Horror Short Films; Video Promotion Strategy.

## 1. Introduction

There can be little doubt that film is one of the best entertainment tools we can have in our lifetime. With some people becoming bored of comic book movies and romantic movies, they are turning to horror short movies in order to find more excitement. As the audience becomes fearful when watching the scenes in the short movie, it will be a beautiful experience for the audience to go through (Costanzo, 2012). The technological advancements of today have allowed horror short movies to gradually develop into an increasingly mature and sophisticated genre of movies. There is an element of sense-perception and art that is integral to this genre.

This paper aims to analyze some filming techniques contained in the popular horror short movies on YouTube, and the characteristics of their promotion strategy. I argue that the determining factor to create the horror atmosphere is the use of sound and horror editing approaches, which is integrated with the purpose of the promotion strategy: to win more viewers.

## 2. Filming Technique - Sound

Sound has an indispensable role in making this sensory art come to life. It is one of the main carriers of expression in this art. Horror short movie soundtracks are designed based on the psychology of fear and anxiety (Gong & Zhang, 2021). In a similar way, both horror and sound design work to create a new environment in which anxiety, dread, and terror fill the air. Having an element of uncertainty is necessary so that one can open up to the unconscious and primitive terrors within. In fact, people have an innate fear of death, strange objects, and places that are unknown to them. Most of the things and scenes that are presented in horror films are either nonexistent or undiscovered. A characteristic of them is the fact that they are beyond the normal mental abilities of humans, thus possessing an intense mystery; similarly, sound also possesses an intense strangeness. In horror short movies, when the viewers are exposed to these scenes and things beyond the range of normal human experience and hear these unusual sounds, their perception of reality is challenged. When this happens, their perception of reality begins to become clouded and they begin to suspect that nothing is as it seems.

There is no doubt that music is a key factor in influencing the audience on a psychological level, so choosing the right horror soundtrack is very important in creating a perfect scene in a horror film. There are many scenes in horror short movies, such as murders, vampires and ghosts, locked doors, gales and storms, etc. The background music needs to be coordinated with the scene in order to provide a complete picture. Different situations require different types of music, and the coordination between the music and the scene should be a priority. To achieve this effect it is possible to also use

elements of heavy metal sound effects in order to create this sound. This music is characterized by the juxtaposition of punk rock and gothic acoustics with explicit melancholic metaphors creating an astonishing sense of horror that is hard to describe. Sound effects like these have a tremendous impact on the viewer and can add more horror effects to a short movie. They are very frightening and have a huge impact on the viewer.

In addition to being one of the most critical components of film production, film music can also help convey the emotions that can be expressed in horror short movies. Different soundtrack styles contribute to the expression of different emotions. The music in horror short movies is a huge part of the production and is one of the most significant features. It creates an awareness of the psychological space of the character through drawing and can expand the audience's perception of time and space. A specific emotion of horror is sometimes inaccessible through language or sound effects, so the nature of music plays a significant role in such an instance. There are many elements that compose a horror short movie's musical language: melody, timbre, tonality, orchestration, rhythm, harmony, etc. Each of these factors can influence a horror short movie's development.

For example, in the “Siren Head- Horror Short Film” uploaded by Youtuber Shutter Authority (2020), the determining horror element is the background music with a sense of horror atmosphere. It is no exaggeration to say that without the background sound effects, the entire short film would also lose almost all of its sense of horror. In this short film, there are many clips of the hero being chased by the monster. The element of chasing is quite common in many film genres, but in a short horror film, only with effective sound effects can reflect the sense of terror and tension.

### **3. Filming Technique – Horror Editing**

Horror editing is a method of editing in which the horror element appears suddenly and when there is no ambiguity or indication in the plot, and the characters are unprepared or unprepared, and thus, the characters and audience are frightened. The sudden occurrence of horror events will often be accompanied by a loud horror sound effect, combined with a climactic visual image to further scare the audience. In recent years, this simple and straightforward creative technique has become synonymous with programmed horror films, but horror editing has also been found in highly acclaimed and high-quality horror films. The sudden appearance of monstrous ghosts around corners or against dim backgrounds often frightens and entertains both characters and audiences alike (Kroll, 2015).

The editing of a horror clip follows a three-shot approach: the first is an emotional shot of the character, the second shows the scary object, and the third shows the character's reaction to the scare. The first shot should not show the character's expression and eye cues after he or she has encountered something frightening in order to create the best scare effect possible. When the camera is too far extended in the editing, the audience may infer what the character is seeing from his or her expression, and the scare effect will be greatly reduced. During the second shot, the scary thing in the scene must be adequately demonstrated within a short period of time. Furthermore, the character's emotional response to the scare in the shot should be intense.

The technique of editing and pacing a horror film will be successful if it can maintain the right atmosphere and pacing. In the following short film, for instance, the hero feels that there is something unusual going on, and as he is looking and waiting, the horror factor suddenly pops into view. As soon as he thinks that the horror factor no longer exists, he lets down his psychological defences, tension and anxiety gradually begin to fade away, and then the horror factor suddenly appears. With the second type of instant fright, the audience has psychological expectations from the beginning, and the audience is dedicated to searching for the scary thing. As a result, emotions are fully mobilized, and the elements of fear are longer lasting and stronger than with the first type of instant fright.

#### 4. Distribution Strategy

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the popularity of various social media platforms, as well as short video platforms, such as YouTube, that are used to upload short horror films in order to draw viewers. Unlike traditional filmmaking, these creators may not be equipped with the same level of professional equipment and do not have enormous amounts of money to produce works like screen movies. Their goal is to make a video that grabs the attention of viewers and drives traffic within the constraints of the budget at their disposal. Youtubers therefore need to adapt a particular distribution strategy if they want their videos to be seen by as many viewers as possible. It differs from the general sense of promoting movies, but should be developed due to the characteristics of online videos, such as their short distribution cycles and short durations, and not for the general sense of promoting movies.

Some horror short movies have won success through their high-quality contents, innovative editing techniques, and most importantly, effective distribution strategies. The following table shows some of the examples of successful Youtubers on horror short films.

**Table 1.** Data of some successful horror short films on YouTube

Title	Youtuber	Duration	Video views
Siren Head- Horror Short Film	Shutter Authority	4 min. 42 sec.	150,695,857
The Haunting Hour Season 1 Full Episode Compilation #1 - The Haunting Hour	The Haunting Hour	1 hr. 2 min. 13 sec.	71,842,682
Siren Head Returns- Horror Short Film	Shutter Authority	5 min. 29 sec.	64,133,364
Bloody Mary   Horror Shorts   IRIS	Iris	2 min. 43 sec.	59,024,892
Siren Head Strikes Again - Horror Short Film	Shutter Authority	5 min. 8 sec.	45,423,282

It could be seen from the above table that normally the duration of a popular video should be short. Nowadays, people's lives have gotten much busier than they used to be, so they aren't always able to spare the time to watch these long videos. Moreover, with the popularity of short video platforms, short but high quality videos are more likely to be preferred by both platforms and viewers. In order to increase the number of plays for short horror videos, it is recommended to use the shortest amount of time to convey the effects of horror (Cucu, 2021). For this to occur, the film should utilize impactful shots in the filming technique and minimize the hidden expressions of horror. The music chosen should also create a strong sense of horror atmosphere, ideally within a minute of appearing the first experience of horror.

All of the short horror videos listed above, for example, have one characteristic in common, which is to create the strongest possible atmosphere of terror within the shortest amount of time. While they may have compromised a level of narrative depth, they have achieved good results in creating a video with wide dissemination.

#### 5. Conclusion

The essence of horror short films lies in their tone, texture, and mood. Great horror short films rely heavily on style rather than other elements such as dialogue or plot points (Kroll, 2015). Having excellent dialogue and a compelling plot might not be enough to be incompatible with a great short horror film, but those elements often lead to the immersive mood and experience of a good horror film.

On the basis of the statements that have been presented above, sound design and cinematography are the elements that contribute most to creating that mood. When horror short films are edited in an appropriate manner and use appropriate background music, the results can be just what the creators had in mind. Furthermore, if the creators want to get more plays on YouTube, they should choose

impactful editing shots and music that will accomplish the scary experience in the shortest time possible.

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