

# Lighting 2



**light, colour and  
other effects**

As must have become pretty obvious by now, light is not just light.

The **temperature** of the light will vary according to the time of day or the type of lighting used

though even then there can be great differences.



early morning



and early morning



evening



and evening



shot under tungsten light

and under fluorescent light

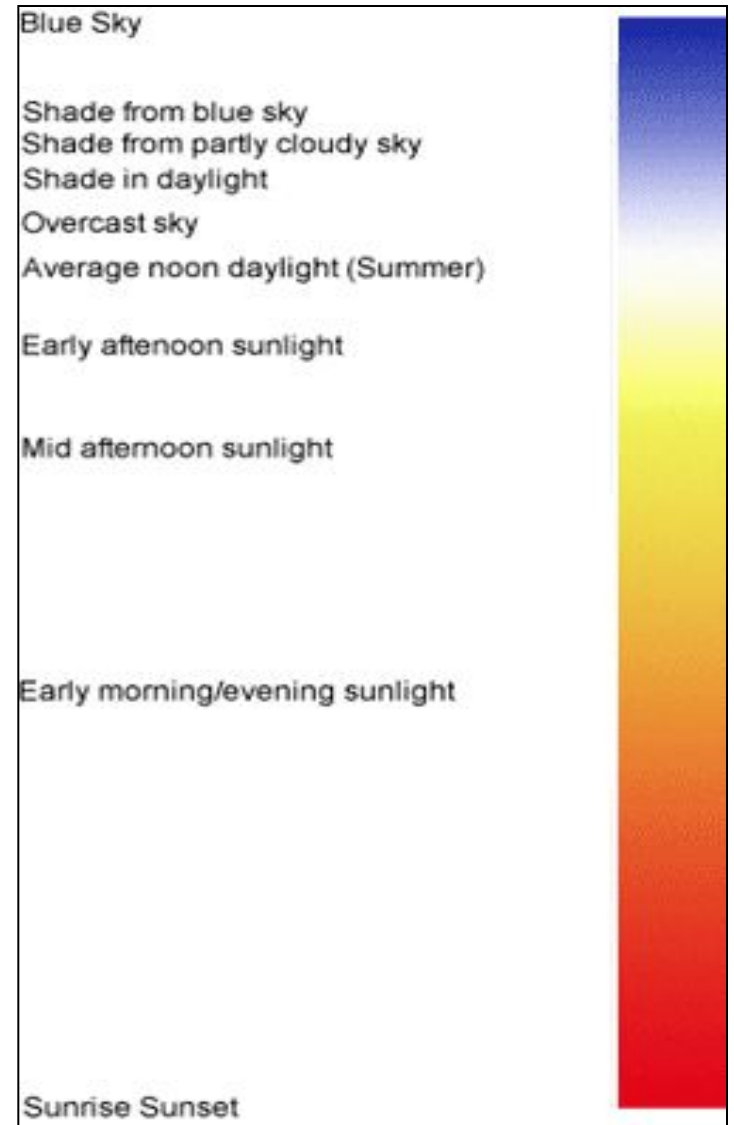
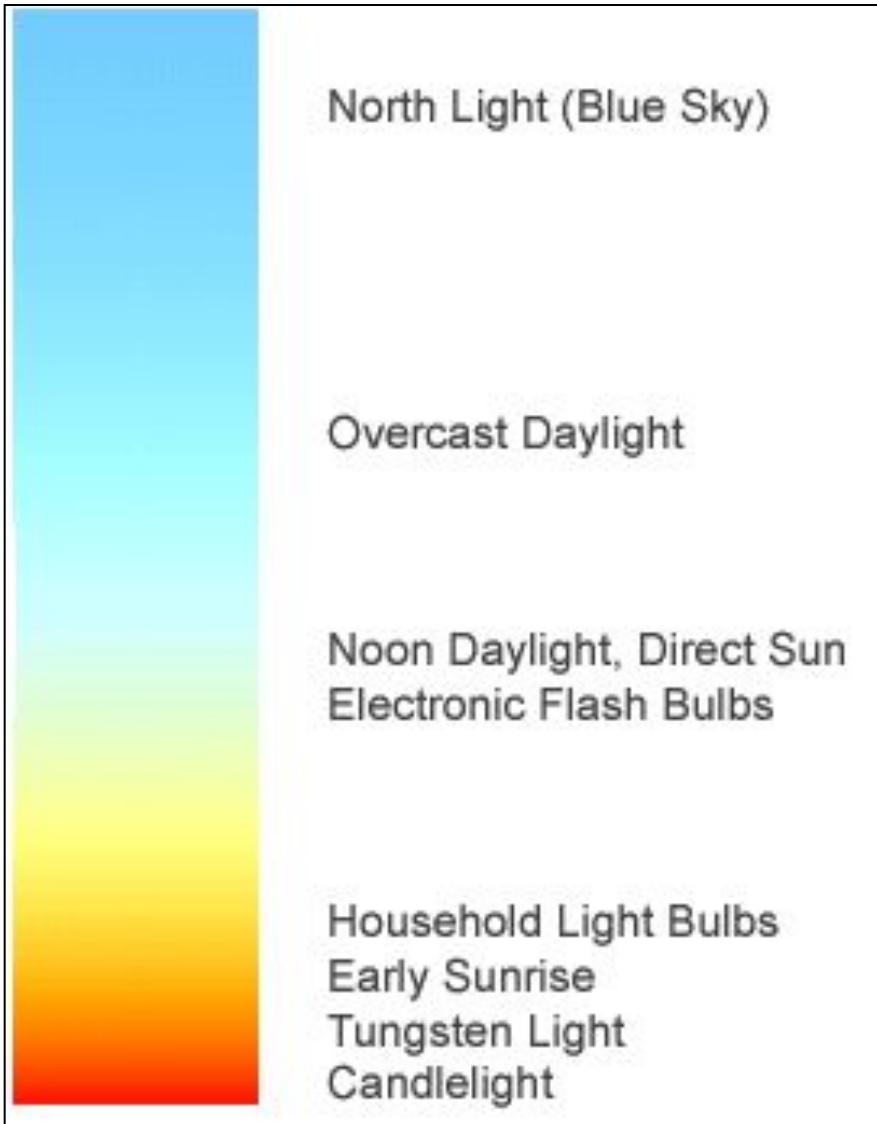


Under normal circumstances, our eyes adjust rapidly and we usually don't notice differences – unless we look for them – but cinematographers will often adjust for colour.

One important aspect of light is its **colour temperature**.

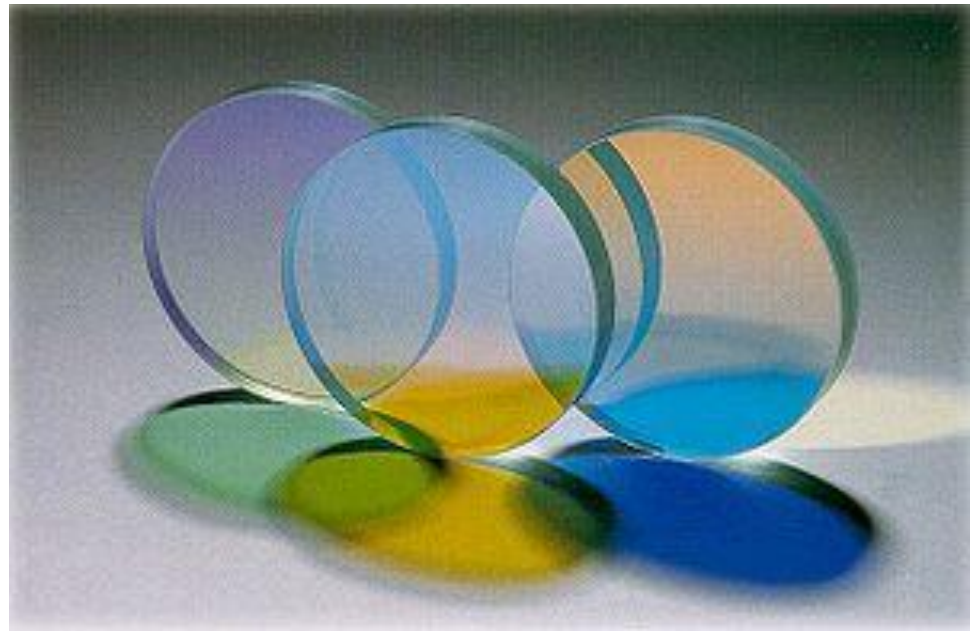
This is measured by professionals on the **Kelvin scale**.

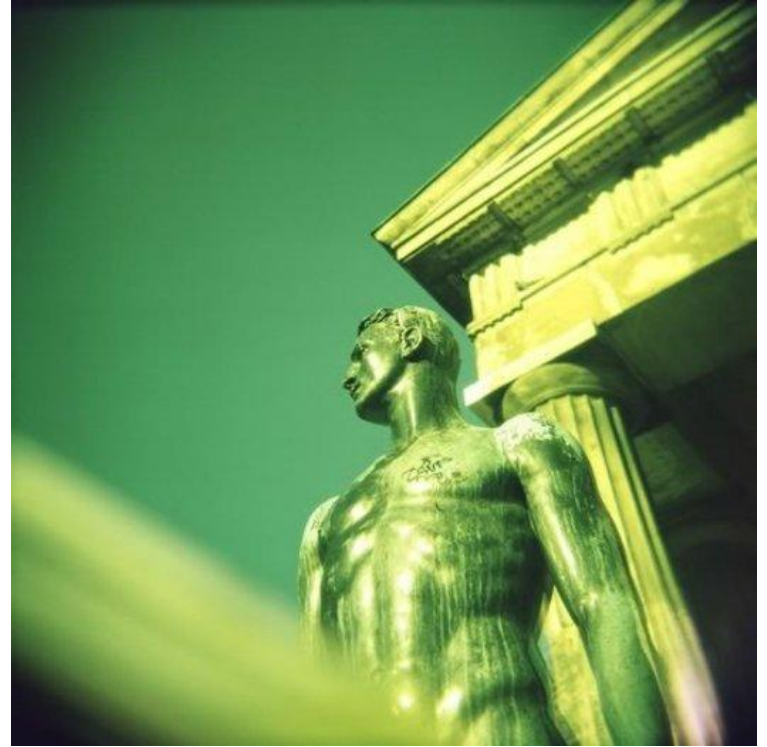
Here are two slightly different versions of the scale:



You will notice that 'noon daylight' is the closest to white light. The bluer the light, the 'cooler' it is; the redder the light, the 'warmer' it is.

Cinematographers can adjust the colour of the light by using filters.







Even grey can be warm or cold:



warmer



cooler

**warmer colours – pinks and golds – are more likely to be used to create romantic or pleasurable ambiance**

**cooler colours – blues and greys – are more appropriate for more sombre moods**

**red – a hot colour – tends to create a harsh effect**

**green – a cool colour – is more associated with the freshness of spring,**

**unless it is a sickly green**



Pink filters for a moment of great happiness for Jess who has helped win her football game and now dresses to return to her sister's wedding, in *Bend It Like Beckham*.

Latika (Freida Pinto) is photographed with a soft warm romantic light in *Slumdog Millionaire*



*The Dark Knight* (2008) was shot in predominately cold blues, greens and greys:





Cold colours dominate the prison world of  
*The Shawshank Redemption*

*V for Vendetta* opens with cold colours dominant:









Stephen Rea and Rupert Graves are police officers who begin to have suspicions about the government.

Flashbacks to happier times are bathed in golden light:



Natasha Wightman as Valerie



When the forces of oppression and repression arrive to destroy her home, she sits in a pool of warm – but not so warm – light while the invaders are frightening black shadows surrounding her.



When Evey (Natalie Portman) returns to the street having fully understood the truth about what is going on, the colour filters have been replaced with natural light.



the final showdown is in the blue-lit underground



The early scenes in *A Beautiful Mind* (2001) are suffused with the golden glow of nostalgia:



Russell Crowe as John Nash

Pink filters create an atmosphere of contentment after he marries:







A grey chill envelopes the scenes when Nash is working for the government.

The two worlds in *The Matrix* are differentiated by colour filters.

The world we think is real is tinged with a sickly green, suggesting decadence:



Keanu Reeves as Neo

The 'real world' is in a cold blue, underlining the discomfort and lack of luxury in pursuing freedom:



Carrie-Anne Moss as Trinity

**digital colour manipulation**

Modern digital effects allow the colours of a film to be adjusted in the laboratory.



the clown has been filmed in **saturated colour**



most of the colour has been leached out



only the blue at the centre of the flower remains



Colour manipulation is a normal part of film-making.

A sequence such as a chase scene might take many days to film, probably out of sequence and in all sorts of weather, and the colour will need to be adjusted to make it look as if it happened on the one day.

Whole films can be digitally manipulated in this way – though it is an expensive procedure and still really only available to big budget productions.

*O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000) was the first Hollywood live action feature to be treated like this (though it had been done in other countries before).



John Turturro, Tim Blake Nelson and George Clooney

The film was shot in the summer, but the Coen Brothers, who wrote and directed it, and cinematographer Roger Deakins wanted an overall dry, dusty look that evoked the dust-bowl era of the thirties, the feel of an old picture book.

instead of this look:



they wanted this



the whole film had its colour 'desaturated'



before



after

In the past, that might have been achieved by the use of sepia-coloured filters or flashing the negative (which leaches the colour).

Now it can all be done post-production in the lab.

Not content with just manipulating the overall look, there was also digital manipulation of colour within scenes.

the 'siren scene' before



and after



in the early part, where the boys are seduced by the sirens, the colours are rich and saturated







next morning when Ulysses (George Clooney) and Delmar wake to find Pete is missing, the colours are less rich



the film opens and closes with similar effects



the film opens with a chain gang, shown in washed-out, almost black and white

colour is gradually added



to its full intensity



the final shot starts in colour



which gradually seeps away





to almost black and white





A similar effect was achieved by Steven Soderbergh in *Traffic* (2000), but this was done in the camera, not the lab.

Soderbergh shot all of the sequences set in the Northern Mexico desert overexposed.

The resulting images give an impression of a barren, desolated land being mercilessly burnt by the sun, a no-man's land over which police and customs have no control.

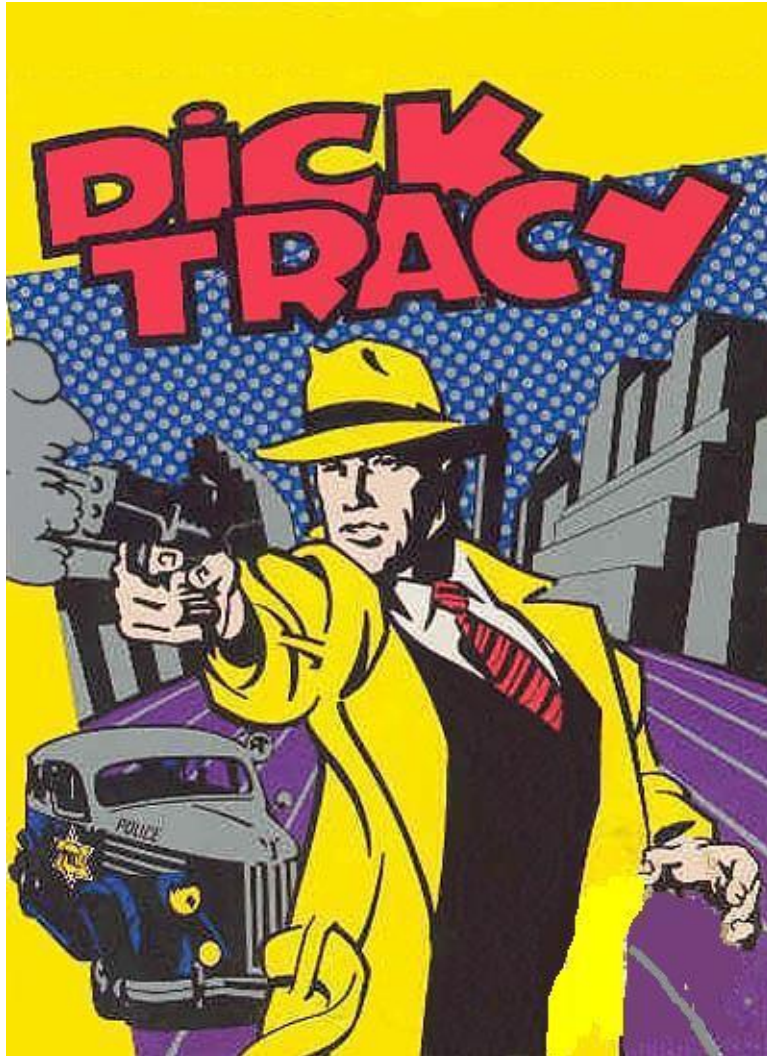


A strong contrast to this is Todd Hayne's *Far From Heaven* (2002)

His homage to the Douglas Sirk movies of the fifties is shot in rich, saturated colours, to recreate the Technicolor of the time.

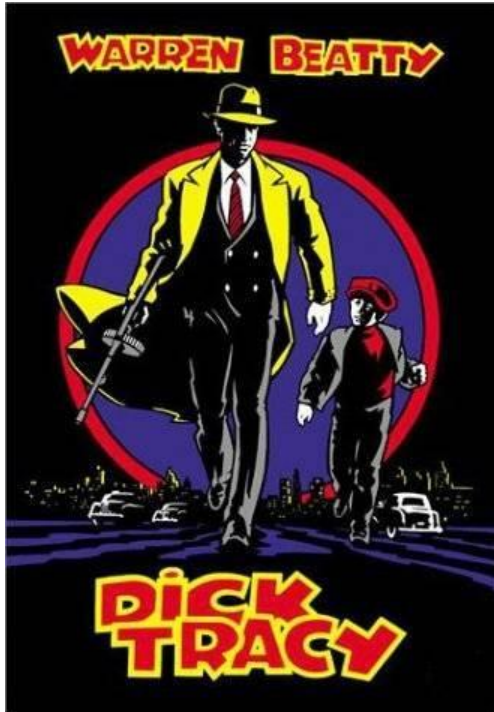


When Warren Beatty made *Dick Tracy* (1990), he decided to remain as true to the original comics as possible.



Because the comic was published in primary colours,

he shot the film in clear, vivid colours





**specific effects**

Cinematographers use all the variables available in differing combinations to get the effects they want.

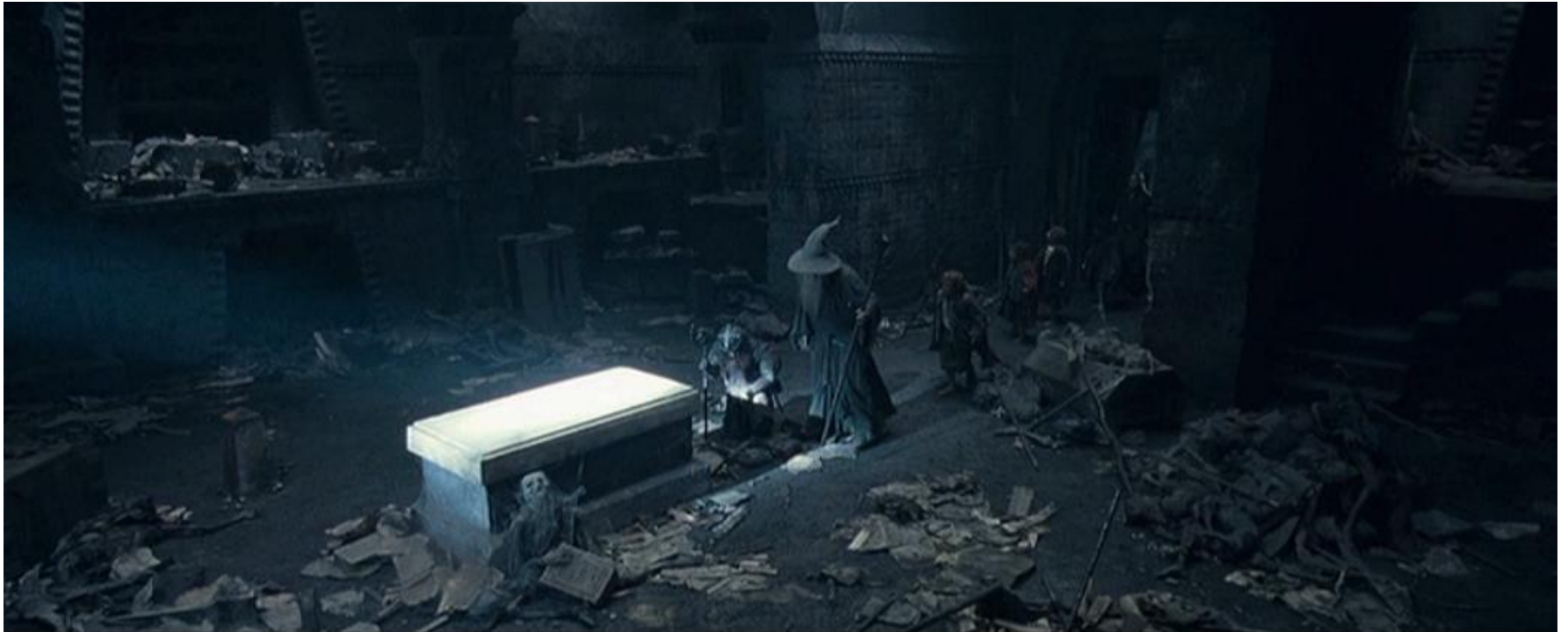
## **directional light**

can create more sombre moods





The dark tones and subdued light underline the starkness of the prison environment in *The Shawshank Redemption*.



An almost monochromatic scene lit by a shaft of light creates an eerie and threatening environment in Moria, in *The Fellowship of the Ring*



the overwhelming power of architecture to intimidate is enhanced by the careful use of light in Richard Loncraine's *Richard 3*

# backlighting

When the dominant lights for a shot come from the rear of the set or location, they throw the foreground figures into semi-darkness or silhouette.



Paul Mercurio and Tara Morice in *Strictly Ballroom*



Lawrence shows off his new clothes in *Lawrence of Arabia*.



Emile Hirsch in *Into the Wild*



James McAvoy, Tommy Nettle and Frank Mace in *Atonement*



It can be used to create stunning effects



Ian McKellen as Gandalf in *The Fellowship of the Ring*



Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron in *An American in Paris*



A romantic moment in *The Princess Bride*



Chris McCandless fixes himself a shower in *Into the Wild*



Keira Knightley in *Atonement*

Occasionally a film will include a shot of a **shadow**, like this one from *Little Miss Sunshine*.



There is usually no significance apart from the fact that it looks good...

unless it is a horror movie or the director wishes to create a similar sinister effect.



Salim returns with his gun, in *Slumdog Millionaire*

However, in this scene from *Lawrence of Arabia*, as Lawrence parades in his new clothes along the top of a train,



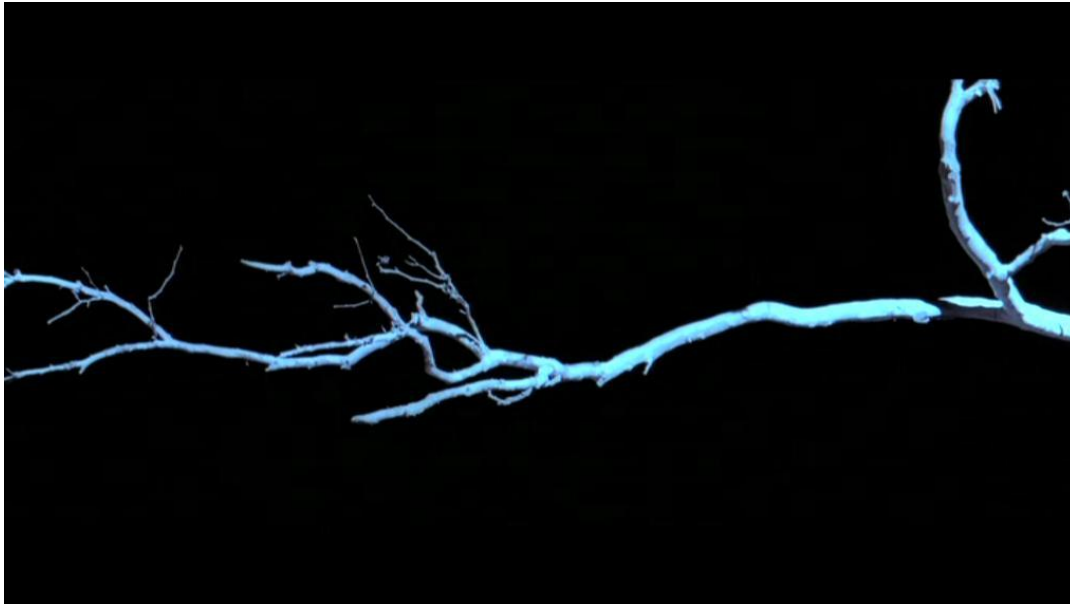
the Arabs show their respect for him by following him but not walking on his shadow.



**spot lighting** can be used to dramatic effect



The council members face their leader in *V for Vendetta*



an ominous branch

and noose  
in *O Brother, Where  
Art Thou?*



spot lighting does not have to be strong

here it gently lights the face of the wounded Robbie (James McAvoy) in *Atonement*





In *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, the surrounding darkness represents Joel's disappearing memories.

**other effects**



a shaft of sunlight illuminates Robbie's bath in *Atonement*



soft light on Cecilia as she gets ready for dinner – a stunningly glamorous image



a narrow shaft of light on Briony as she opens the library door and spies on her sister





Cecilia beautifully silhouetted in the light from the doorway as she waits for Robbie



ominous red from the car's tail lights when Robbie is arrested



backlighting from the fires of war-time destruction in France in 1940



the light of revelation in a flashback as the adult Briony at last remembers what she really saw all those years earlier



the sheriff silhouetted in the light of the burning barn  
in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*



the foundry in Auckland in *The Navigator*



horses backlit by bright sunlight in a shot suggesting freedom and the fulfilment of fantasy in *Into the Wild*



Chris McCandless (Emile Hirsch) runs with the horses.





Graham (Don Cheadle) is alone in the merciless light of city hall after he has sacrificed his integrity to save his brother, in *Crash*.

colour

v.

**black and white**

Since colour was first introduced to films in the late 1930s, it has been the norm for films to be made in colour.

Very occasionally, however, film-makers opt to film in black and white.

One of the greatest comedies ever made, *Some Like It Hot* (1959), was filmed in b&w because the heavy make-up Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis had to wear to make them credible disguised as women made their faces look green.

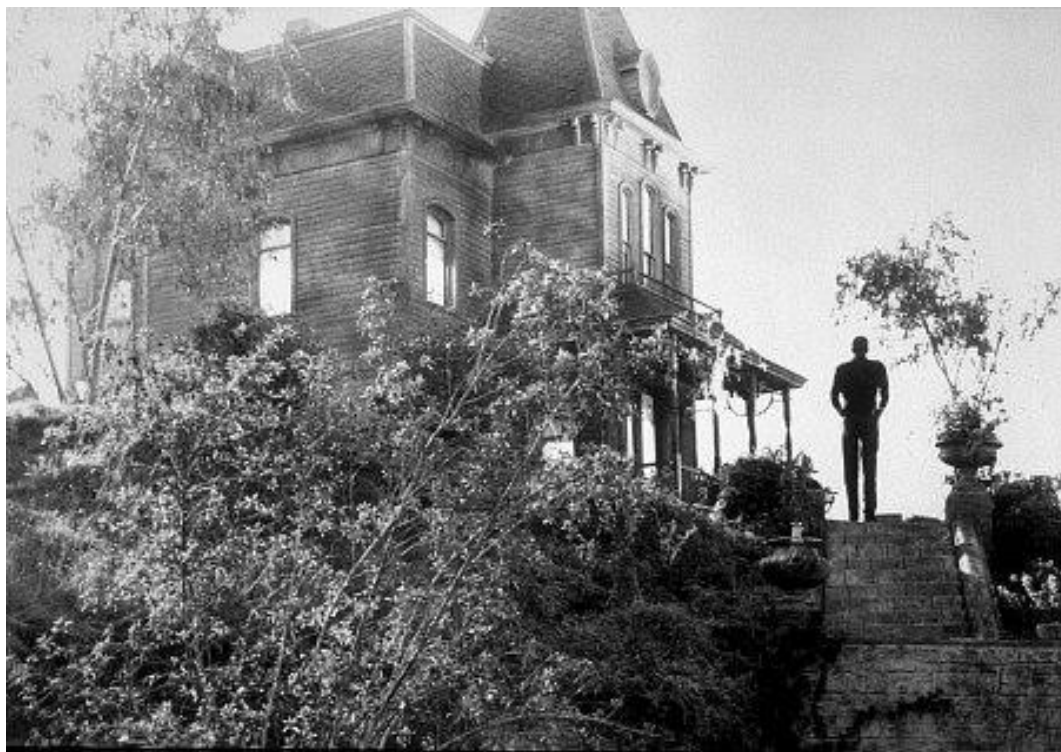


Curtis, Lemmon and Marilyn Monroe

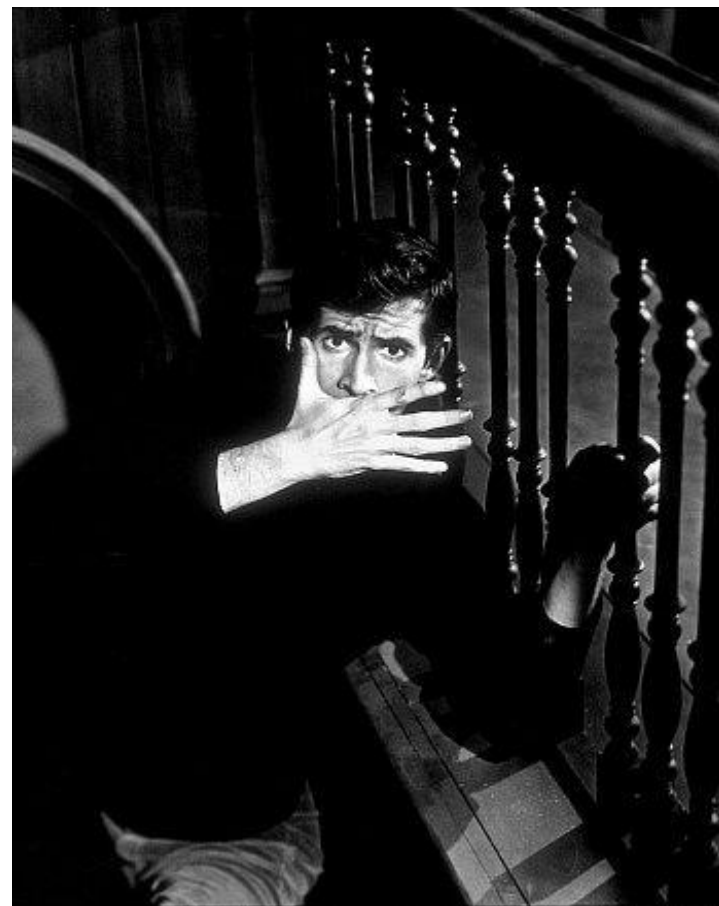


Joe E Brown and Jack Lemmon

Alfred Hitchcock famously said that he filmed *Psycho* (1960) in b&w because it would have been too gory in colour.



Anthony Perkins



Carl Reiner's *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (1982) is a spoof of the old *film noir* detective stories.

By using b&w, he was able to splice in excerpts of the old movies, so his detective, played by Steve Martin,



seems to be talking to Humphrey Bogart and others.



*The Man Who Wasn't There* and *The Good German* are recent films made in the style of 1940s *film noir*.



Cate Blanchette and George Clooney in *The Good German*



Vincent Ward's *The Navigator* (1988) makes brilliant use of both b&w and colour.

The narrative begins in 14<sup>th</sup> century Cumberland during the Black Death – recreated in dramatic b&w images – and shifts to 20<sup>th</sup> century Auckland, which is shown in colour.

it shows that b&w photography can be as expressive in its own way as colour





Hamish McFarlane



Their experiences in this new, frightening and coloured world are shown in cold light and colours,



apart from the warm colours of the flames and foundry.



Paul Livingston

Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* was shot in black and white.



It has only a touch a of colour – a little girl in a red coat.



It is a powerful image that vividly highlights the moment at which Schindler decides to work against the Nazis instead of with them.



*Pleasantville* opens in the colourful world of today...



... where Tobey Maguire and Reese Witherspoon fight over the TV remote control.

On the screen is the b&w world of 1950s television they find themselves transported into.

As they open the eyes and minds of the residents of Pleasantville to new experiences, their b&w world begins to colour itself in.



To get this effect, the film was shot in colour, which was then removed.



Even colour films can create dramatic effects largely in black and white



Although there are some touches of colour in this shot from *Moulin Rouge*, most of the impact is from the white shirts against the black suits and hats.