The Use of Special Effects in Indonesian Movies
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Abstract
The use of special effect in Indonesian movies has served its purpose, to enhance the scenes and convince the audience. However, the kinds and application differ according to the theme of the films. While in the past special effect were used more to show magic, supernatural power, and inner power in a legend based movie, at present, some are used to enhance violent sadistic scenes.

1. Introduction
In a student film festival in an Indonesian university, a speaker showed a piece of film thriller. By chance, he pressed the pause button since he wanted to show another film clip. When he pressed the button the picture showed a close up of a man being slaughtered explicitly and clearly, the thick dark red blood running down his neck. Around 300 audiences shouted in amazement and gave applause to it. Some were quite shocked looking at the picture on the screen as well as knowing the audiences’ reaction. The reaction indicates the excellent special effect in the film that could picture a very natural action of an unusual sadistic visual that they never watched before. In other words, the filmmaker could use special effect successfully to visualize what’s in his mind and transfer it to the audiences’ mind.

2. Description
Special effects are generally described as effects made during the production or the shooting of a film. While visual effects are any imagery created, altered, or enhanced during the post-production since they cannot be done during the shooting. Special effects go hand in hand with visual effects so it is often difficult to notice which one is special effect and visual effect. This collaboration has been enhanced by digital technology (Okun & Zwerman, 2010).

Mark Sawicki (2007) clearly stated that the main purpose of special effects is to help putting forward a story. Therefore, special effect cannot be added just for the sake of sensation or experiment. It has to move the story forward.

3. Reasons to use
There are three reasons to use special effect in a movie. First is when there is no way to visualize the scene in the script. For example, the bullet time in The Matrix. It is a special effect where time is slowed so that you can actually watch bullets move through space and see the characters dodge them (Henning, 2010).

Second is when the scene is risking someone’s life. For example, in scene of victims trapped in a house on fire. The third is when it is more cost effective to use special effect than to film the scene for real. For example, a scene involving many people (Okun & Zwerman, 2010).

Special effect will be very effective when it is done naturally; it enhances the visualization of the story. Therefore, quality of special effect is judged on those two criteria.

4. Special Effect in Indonesian past movies
Special effect has been used in some early Indonesian
movies. One of the significant milestones of Indonesian special effect was *Saur Sepuh*, a colossal movie produced in 1987. It talks about the life of the royal family of Majapahit kingdom in Central Java, led by King Hayam Wuruk. *Saur Sepuh*, written by Niki Kosasih, was originally for radio drama program in the early 80s. Because of its popularity, five episodes of the series were made into feature-length movies and people liked them very much.

![Figure 1: Saur Sepuh poster](http://cinatsu.blogspot.com/2011/11/saur-sepuh.html)

The effects, mostly used to enhance the fighting scenes, were quite bombastic in that era. Many of them are the flash of lightning, visualization of inner power in the form of laser beams coming from the palms, and flying. The technique applied in *Saur Sepuh* was still simple. The flying scene was done using slings placed at the actor’s body, to make it more natural. However, the effects enhance the scenes a lot and of course, in that era, were very impressive. This spectacular effect was the result the wonderful artistic work of El Badrun, the Art Director of the movie (Rahman, 2011).

Special effect has been continuously applied in Indonesian movies and television series. In the early 80s, some TV production houses produced TV series which applied special effect such as *Bayangan Adinda*, *Kolor Sakti*, *Kafir* etcetera. Special effect in the last two series were used to visualize ghost, magic, and inner power. While in *Bayangan Adinda*, since it is a children movie, special effect was used to visualize imagination and dream.

The technique of physical special effect hasn’t change much. Green-screen is widely used since it is quite simple. Some popular special effect softwares used were Adobe After Effect, Illusion and lightwave.

3. Special Effect in Indonesian recent movies

In line with the development of computer technology, special effect softwares are more various. However, the most commonly used one is still Adobe After Effect, of course the later versions.

Special effect is still applied in movies to visualize ghost and magic but less for inner power. Recently, the common genre of Indonesian films has moved into action, crime and violence, therefore, special effect is used to visualize those themes. In this case, Indonesian filmmakers use both traditional (physical) special effect and digital special effect.

*Rumah Dara* is always mentioned as the turning point toward violent Indonesian movies. A film directed by Timo Tjahjanto dan Kimo Stamboel (Mo Brothers) has become the role model of Indonesian young filmmakers. Therefore, after the release of this film, similar violent movies were produced. (“Rumah Dara”, 2010)

![Figure 2: Rumah Dara poster](copied from [7])

Violence in Indonesian movies is getting more popular after *The Raid*, an Indonesian movie, directed by Gareth Evans and shot in Jakarta, was highly recognized in some International Film Festivals. This film was also remade and gains financial success in the international and national distribution (Irwansyah, March 24, 2012). Those two movies were widely discussed in some media and websites for the use of effect to show violence. In fact, this “fever” also infected independent student films. In festivals in Indonesia, people submit violent and sadistic movies.

*Rumah Dara* and *The Raid* use traditional special effect like blood. The blood was made and some used animal blood. In post-production then it is processed mostly in Adobe After Effect.

2.6. Conclusion

In short, special effect is widely used in Indonesian movies, in the past and present time. The kinds of effects develop according to the need or the genre of the movies. However, the technique hasn’t changed much. Filmmakers still use traditional or physical effect such as the use of fake
blood and the result is processed digitally in the post production and digital effect. The software used is still latest version of Adobe After Effect mostly. Since good special effect is proven to be a very powerful tools to make almost real scene, filmmakers have to be wise in applying them.

REFERENCES


Biodata

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