**Film title**
King of Kong: Fistful of Quarters

**Director / Year**
Seth Gordon, 2007

**APPARENT SUBJECT and DEEPER SUBJECT:** In two sentences, state what you believe to be the overall theme (implicit meaning) or point of the film. What is its purpose on both levels?

The apparent subject is old-school arcade gaming and the rivalries that exist among various gamers, specifically regarding the coveted Donkey Kong world record attempts of Billy Mitchell and Steve Wiebe. Deeper subjects focus on overcoming adversity, dealing with countless let-downs, and on a much broader level: good vs. evil.

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**VISUALS (CINEMATOGRAPHY / MISE EN SCENE):** Note composition, camera movement, off-screen space, color, types of shots, etc. Also pay attention to locations, lighting, costumes, props. Please be very specific about the types of shots and visual look of film.

- Camera is largely handheld in arcades and in tournaments, while most formal interviews are MCUs, CUs, or MSs, with the camera off-axis.
- Many interviews are in locations familiar to characters: Steve’s house, garage, car, school, and his parents’ house; Billy’s restaurant kitchen & , his warehouse, his office, his house; Steve Sanders’ house, law firm, and his playground; Walter’s house, his car; Brian Kuh’s cabin, Funspot, the Florida Tournament, Florida airport, grocery store; Florida hotels, beach, and highways.
- There are tons of XCUs of game consoles and gameplay (Mario jumping, Donkey Kong throwing barrels, etc. There are also some shots from the POV within the machine (13:45).
- Arcades are dark as are many of Billy’s locations. Steve’s locations are largely brighter.
- Gamers have game-themed t-shirts, Billy has American flag ties, Walter is mostly in his referee gear or winter coat, and Steve is usually in casual or sportswear.
- Home video footage—Steve’s records, calling Billy on phone, etc.

**ANALYSIS:** Note the ways in which the technical elements contribute to our understanding of the theme you’ve identified.

Since much of the film is shot with a handheld camera the viewer gets a sense of the chaos and informality of the gaming world. There is also a great amount of variety in the shots and shot techniques—including many different locations and interview setups, which helps keep the pacing of the movie quick and interesting. It is hard to lose your attention while watching because there is always something interesting going on. There seems to be a variety of ways to draw the distinction between Billy and Steve with choices as simple as location selection and lighting—Steve is usually in more home-based locations, while Billy is in darker, grungier locations.
### VISUALS

(Storytelling Techniques / Information): how is the information conveyed and “story” told other than cinematography? Archive footage, photos, documents, newspapers, text on screen, voiceover narration, interviews, reenactments?

- Multiple interviews—at least 10—15.
- Pictures of the past (1982 Time Mag, etc.), archive videos, “Rickey’s” commercial, news reports.
- Folk singer singing about singing Billy
- Titles showing where characters are (Hollywood, FL; Lake Winnipesaukee, NH; Redmond, WA, etc.)
- Old montage of Steve’s history with sports, music (“Pictures of You”)
- Graphs and animations showing scores being beaten, flowcharts showing the breakdown of Twin Galaxies head referees and judges.

### ANALYSIS:

The filmmakers keep the action and visuals interesting to keep the story moving. The variety and continual switching from different people, locations, and using archive and older footage keeps us focused and entertained.

### EDITING

Pacing, rhythm, cross-cutting, L-cutting, continuity, montages, transitions, jumpcutting, etc.

- Much of the film relies on chronology for its editing structure, though some items are grouped by themes. There are also several montages throughout:
  - Opening montage (2:40)
  - Life Magazine montage (5:00)—In the Hall of the Mountain King.
  - Folk singer montage (8:30) about Billy
  - Intro montage to Steve’s life (9:00)—starts with “poor bastard”
  - (16:00) montage about Steve’s hand-eye coordination and music and Donkey Kong, etc
  - (20:00) Walter montage and referee responsibilities.
  - (32:25) Funspot montage with “You’re the Best Around”
  - (1:06:00) Montage of 1st day of Florida tournament—“Everybody Knows.”
  - (1:14:00) —last day of tournament montage with Steve’s piano song

### ANALYSIS:

The montages stick out to me the most. There are several of them, and I think they ultimately help to reinforce the themes and character traits established in the early stages of the film. They also give the documentary a more narrative feel, and are clever in the way they condense time. I do think there are several items that are edited out of sequence based on what characters are wearing and what locations are being shown (Billy’s quotes in the beginning mirror some at the end), which can be a bit deceiving, but is clever in the way that it groups interview snippets by theme.

### AUDIO

Music, sound effects, dialogue, intensity, themes, songs, etc.

- Electronic music for montages (2:50)
- Serious / ironic sports-themed music for training montages (“You’re the Best Around” and “Eye of the Tiger”)
- Classical music to stress the seriousness that the players treat this subject—In the Hall of the Mountain King and Ride of Valkyries (5:00)
- Steve’s piano songs and drum solos.

### ANALYSIS:

Continuing with much of the movie, there is great variety in the types of music used. The genre that sticks out to me the most is the classical music. It is a great contrast from the seemingly silly subject matter and it seems to explain the seriousness with which the gamers take their records and games.
STORY STRUCTURE: briefly summarize the main points of how the Beginning, Middle, and End of the documentary “story” is structured:

◊ BEGINNING (background, central question, inciting incident, etc):
The film starts abruptly with Billy & Steve’s introductions and a quote by William S. Burroughs about the nature of war and games. There are several montages that establish the characters, Twin Galaxies, the seriousness of gaming to the players.

◊ MIDDLE (conflicts, reversals, act II climax):
The middle sets up and explores the conflict and competition between Billy & Steve, the power of Twin Galaxies, and continues to develop the obsession with video games and the mistreatment of Steve Wiebe. The first competition occurs at Fun Spot, where Steve breaks the current world record, but is subsequently beaten by Billy’s taped score. Steve’s redemption attempt occurs in Florida for a Guinness Book event, where the two main characters finally meet.

◊ END (resolution, etc.):
After Steve loses & Walter applauds his character. Steve returns home, ultimately defeated but admired for his overall good character and sportsmanship. An epilogue to the film is Steve’s world record attempt several months after the initial filming.

YOUR OPINIONS. What techniques or elements did you like or dislike the most? Discuss in depth what you thought were the strengths and/or weaknesses of this documentary. Was there any bias present? Please explain why / how. Which techniques could you use for your own production?

◊ Additionally, please be ready to present a 2—4 minute scene from your documentary along with a synopsis of the documentary’s story, a discussion of the storytelling techniques, visuals, and editing, with specifics! Make sure you know the exact times of the scenes you’d like to show (and make sure they are school appropriate). This presentation will be worth an additional 25 points.