

## 2c- The Subway scene, *The Joker* a movie by Todd Phillips, 2019



Within the film's two-hour running time, there are a couple of standout moments that are particularly confrontational. One of those is the subway shooting scene, where we first witness Joaquin Phoenix's wretched [Arthur Fleck](#) snap, and begin his transformation into the character of the Joker. In the scene, he is taunted and then attacked by three men harassing a woman on a subway train. As he is being kicked on the floor, Arthur pulls out a gun and shoots and kills two of the men before persuading the fleeing third man off the train and shooting him dead as he attempts to run for his life.

"At the beginning of the scene, you find [Arthur] at his lowest point so far," says American *The Joker* editor Jess Groth. "You kind of see where his life is, and the one thing he was hanging onto was his job. And he's lost his job. The course of the scene [is that] he goes from being the hunted into being the hunter, and you begin to see the emergence of where you're going, with the Joker. So where the whole movie is this long slow tipping point from turning from Arthur into the Joker, this scene is definitely one of the axes on which it turns (...) you can see where he goes from not being able to do anything to ultimately fighting back."

For Ledermann, that fight scene presented a challenge of a different kind – keeping Arthur's clown make up intact. Ledermann points out that the idea that Arthur is dressed as a clown at this moment is critical to the way the audience feels about the scene, about Arthur, and about the three men who taunt and then physically attack him. And so for the make-up to smear at this point would ruin the effect they were going for.

Make up designer Nicki Ledermann explains that they wanted to create a makeup look that conveyed the impression that Arthur is "a man — a working clown — that is relatable; that is not threatening; that is also reflecting the ridiculousness of the situation in itself. Guys really attacking a clown, making fun of a clown, harassing a clown? How pathetic is that? So to have the image of that clown, it was really important to convey [him] as almost like a victim – as a metaphor, really. You have a clown – a clown is funny, happy, and wants to make people happy. So, to have the contrast of Arthur Fleck, who is deeply depressed, mentally ill, neglected, and who is working as a clown because he wants to make people happy, that in itself is [inherently] an inkling of hope," "