

Singin' in the rain musical essay sample

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Singin' in the Rain is a musical regarding the evolution of the Hollywood film industry; from silent movies to talkies, with the introduction of sound in film. With the premier of *The Jazz Singer*, film industries had begun experimenting film making with sounds, causing two silent movie stars and film industries struggling to adjust into the new talking film.

Analysis questions:

Pick a musical sequence from *Singin' in the Rain*. Analyse how the four elements of film (cinematography, mise-en-scene, sound and editing) were used in this sequence. Analytical Comments:

Singin' in the Rain is a humorous musical film introducing a new era in filmmaking where actors and film industries are facing a difficult transition from the silent film to talking film. With the decision of turning ' *The Duelling Cavalier*' into a talking film, silent film stars, Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly) and Lina Lamont (Jean Hagen) struggle to adjust themselves in the new film making environment, however their attempt in talking film had not turn out great due to the disastrous premier of ' *The Duelling Cavalier*'. In order to combat the growing request of talking film and to save their job, Don Lockwood and his friend, Cosmo Brown (Donald O'Connor) pitched their idea of turning ' *The Duelling Cavalier*' into ' *The Dancing Cavalier*' to their producer, R. F. Simpson (Millard Mitchell). However, due to the negative respond received from audiences on Lina Lamont's voice as heard in the premier of ' *The Duelling Cavalier*', R. F. Simpson became reluctant in casting Lina in a musical production, which Don and Cosmo then thought of casting Kathy Selden (Debbie Reynolds) as the voice of Lina Lamont, which she was not credited for after Lina had found out what was done to her in the

production of 'The Dancing Cavalier', which turn the film, Singin' in the Rain into a combination of drama, comedy and romance; the romance being the love story told between Don Lockwood and Kathy Selden.

The four elements of sequence, cinematography, mise-en-scene, sound and editing are present in the 'Moses supposes' sequence. The musical consists of wide shots mid shots and over the shoulder shots. The wide shot of the sequence assisted in establishing the details of the room, including furniture and character placement; it also shows audiences the musical sequence, of the characters dancing around the room. The mid shot available in the sequence shows the audiences the mocking actions made by both Don and Cosmo when the both of them had snatched the book out of the diction coach's hands and begun reciting the sentence simultaneously before bursting into music and dancing. The over the shoulder shot is taken during the sitting of the diction coach on a chair while watching Don and Cosmo tap dancing both on the floor and on the table. Aside from the shots, the room is brightly lit, with shadows thrown on the wall, suggesting that it is a sunny day, probably either midday or afternoon. With the room brightly lit, the shot itself shows a kind of lightness to it; where the characters are jolly, making audiences feel happy while watching the sequence.

The musical sequence mainly consist of panning and tilting while the camera shadows the movement of the characters jumping on furniture and dancing around the room, whereas a dolly shot is also present while the camera turns alongside the characters without a cut. As a musical film, most of the acting in Singin' in the Rain consists of dancing and singing; which act as the

setting and expression of the film. The mood expressed by Don and Cosmo during the musical sequence of 'Moses supposes' can be seen not only through their facial expression, but also from their actions, in this case, their dance movement and the musical number; where their dance movement consists of a slight bounce with joy which is visible through their routine as well as the joyful musical number with a mocking tune present in its lyrics. The costume worn by both Don and Cosmo also has a comical side, with both characters wearing similar outfit but with a different colour, which synchronizes with both characters carrying out similar actions in their dance footsteps as well as the comedic yet youthful side of them.

The sequence is added wittiness with the dressing of the diction coach in rather formal attire compared to the casual styles of Don and Cosmo, and with both Don and Cosmo dancing around the diction coach making him seem foolish. The setting of the furniture suggests that the room is in fact the workplace of a professional, which has quite a serious touch to it, where audiences does not expect a comedic outcome from the scene. Both the seriousness touch of the room and the comedic actions of Don and Cosmo, audiences will definitely be surprised with the mocking tune and the humorous actions of the actors and the sudden musical outcome. With it being a musical sequence, the scene is supported by background music (non-diegetic sound) as well as diegetic sounds. During their performance of 'Moses supposes', Don and Cosmo presented their act through cheerful tunes and rhythmic lyrics while teasing both the diction coach and the sentences Don was reiterating on order to improve his pronunciation in preparation of a talking film, 'The Duelling Cavalier'.

After their musical outburst, Don and Cosmo manage to enlighten the mood of the diction coach as well, which turns the initial seriousness of a learning environment into a more relaxed environment. Throughout the sequence, there seem to be minimal editing, where most of the shots mainly consist of long takes, which lasts up to half a second before a cut is made to the shot. Aside from that, there is the evidence of clean panning, tilting and dolly movement which requires less editing to be made; in the sense of clean panning, tilting and dolly shot, the camera movement is in fact well synchronise with the dance movement of Don and Cosmo, resulting in clean shots throughout the sequence with up to about four cuts made (as counted) through the three minute musical sequence. Synopsis:

Steven Cohan suggested that Singin' in the Rain could be analysed through a range of interpretations where a few critical theory is applied to help in better understanding of the film itself. These theories assist readers and audiences in interpreting their own thoughts on the film.

Reading questions:

The Cohan reading offers many differing interpretations of Singin' in the Rain. Discuss which critical theory appeals the most to you and explain why. How is this reading of the film similar to your own interpretation of the film? How is it different? Has this interpretation changed your mind about the film in any way?

Analytical reading comment:

According to the Cohan reading on ' Interpreting Singin' in the Rain', the critical theory on spectatorship and sexual differences appeals to me the

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most as this theory discuss on the matter of gender inequality in film industry as well as an imagination of a sequence or scene without the help of moving pictures. Gender inequality is present in Singin' in the Rain with Don Lockwood pitching the end scene of their musical to R. F. Simpson, where he painted a picture with what he thinks would be a splendid end to a musical (Cohen, 2000). In this scene it includes Don Lockwood portraying as a masculine young actor who yearns to make it into the filmmaking production where his success was constructed quickly within a few minutes. It begins with Don knocking on doors of filmmaking producers, while demonstrating his ability to dance, where after a few turn downs; he was finally accepted by a producer to help him succeed in the filmmaking industry; with his new found stardom, he finds himself walking into a bar, when he saw an attractive young lady, who was neither Lina Lamont not Kathy Seldon, the young lady finds Don attractive, with his masculinity and remarkable dance moves.

However, the young lady seem to be more interested with materialistic article rather than Don, who seem to have a growing affection toward this young lady. From this particular scene, it is recognisable that there is a portrayal of gender inequality toward women, where women is shown to be very sexual, as seen with the young lady who was wearing a green dress with slits up to her thighs. Aside from that, women are also portrayed to be more attracted to materialistic objects such as money and jewellery rather than the feeling of the opposite sex, in a sense that women would rather date men who have many materialistic objects to show for rather than men who do not show off his materialistic things. After Don had pitched the idea

to R. F. Simpson, he had trouble picturing the scene, which is when Cosmo had suggested that it would turn out great once the movie had been produced. Which as suggested by the theory of spectatorship, that the discussion between Simpson and Cosmo on the matter of visualising the pitch presented by Don is condensed in joke which as clarified by psychoanalytic film theory as cinematic spectatorship source of pleasure; whereby through the image projected on screen, audiences are able to unconsciously identify the picture with the camera (Cohen, 2000).

Through the reading of interpreting Singin' in the Rain, I find that the reading itself is in fact similar to my interpretation of the film itself, especially with the scene described above, alongside with the theory, spectatorship and sexual differences. From my interpretation of the film, most of the scene included is related to sexual inequalities where the men in the film are portrayed to be masculine, where they have the ability to be in the position of taking charge a decision whether if it is a decision which causes the opposite sex to feel uncomfortable with, for instance in the sequence where Don, Cosmo and Simpson had a plan of revealing the truth about Lina's talent, Don had told Kathy to sing in behalf of Lina although Kathy had protested and even told Don that after the song, she would not want anything to do with Don. Yet Don shrugged her suggestions away and proceeded with his plan, in the end, Don had also shown his masculinity with the audiences as he ordered them to stop Kathy from getting away.

The narrative, dance and dubbing of sound in Singin' in the Rain is both entertaining and similar to my view of the film as well, where the voice of

Lina Lamont when she had first spoken, which turns out that her voice is pitchy and nasally, made audiences feel as though she should not be in a talking movie, together with her stiffness while acting; causing dubbing of her voice by Kathy a brilliant decision by the producers in the film itself. However being as famous as Lina is in the film set, she thought of herself as being in control over a normal person such as Kathy, where she could get Kathy to do as she please. Nonetheless, the interpretation of this film has helped me understand and view the film in a more in depth manner, where every action and narration is in fact a hidden meaning to which the era of the film release could bring, in this case, where the population still faces gender and class discrimination, especially in the filmmaking business.

Reference:

1. IMDB. 1952. Singin' in the Rain. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0045152/>. (Accessed 12 August 2012).
2. Cohan, S. 2000. Case Study: Interpreting Singin' in the Rain. Curtin University E-Reserve. http://edocs.library.curtin.edu.au/eres_display.cgi?url=dc6012512x.pdf&right=1.