

# Essential film maker baz luhrmann

Sociology, Identity



“ Baz Luhrmann is a divisive director” says the Film Inquiry. You either love or hate Luhrmann’s unique cinematographic style. While most appreciate his use of colour, contrast of heightened bliss versus high tragedy others seem to deem his artistry as “ over the top”, “ unnecessary”. I on the other hand believe his “ over the top” style is not only necessary but is important to the film industry as it acts as a form of satire, where Luhrmann uses his cinematographic style to mock characters in his movies (which are typically stereotyped members of society) which in turn mocks members of the audience who identify with these characters.

Luhrmann’s distinctive combination of pop culture references paired with highly choreographed, hyperbolic sequences can, for some, prove distracting. These criticisms are understandable, if not valid, however to focus on this aspect of Luhrmann’s cinematographic style is to completely ignore the underlying message he is trying to convey and misunderstanding his artistic intent. Baz uses Mise en scene, the composition of the setting and subject like properties, acting and lighting is used to great effect, an example of this is from the movie Moulin Rouge! When Satine studies herself in the mirror, the theme of a green undertone is shown here to symbolize her being sick. It really pushes the idea that she is not herself, for now she looks ugly, he further foreshadows her life slipping away by the blurriness of the mirror. Scenes like this could be misinterpreted by critics.

“ You can cut and paste the negative criticisms of all my films, because it all says the same thing” – Baz Luhrmann. This quote by Luhrmann is directed to those who believe that Baz Luhrmann’s objective is to solely be “ over the top”. He is simply pointing out how his critics are narrow minded as they all

are pointing out the same things, while none of them look beyond the surface of his films to see the significance of the films. In making the films *Strictly Ballroom* (1992), *Romeo and Juliet* (1996) and *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), Luhrmann's intent was clear, he wanted the audience to connect with the film on an emotional level rather than on a cerebral one. Those that criticize Luhrmann's love of explosive plots and/or fast moving camera shots, are misreading his aim. He is not aiming to create restraint, but rather, is hoping to entertain his audience.

“ Theatre, circus, film – to me is one”, Baz Luhrmann, this statement alone explains his reasoning behind his “ over the top” cinematic style. He integrates all spheres of the entertainment industry to create the dazzlingly energetic, kaleidoscopically-colorful music and dance extravaganza that is *Moulin Rouge!* , *Romeo and Juliet*, or his latest-the 2013 remake of *The Great Gatsby*. Theoretical and chaotic, yet unexpectedly insightful and perspective, the Australian director has created some truly spectacular filmic works now addressed as cinematic classics. Leonardo DiCaprio said, “ Look I've known Baz for 20 years. What is so fantastic about Baz is many things, but one of them is that he inspires you every day in the workplace to dream big. You cannot get in a room with this man and not feel inspired. It's infectious. He's also not afraid to take on very classic stories, very risky undertakings. He's always vigilant about getting to the essence of the drama and getting to the truth.”

Hilarious and iconic, however, heartfelt and genuine, Luhrmann's movie debut- through its marvelously vivid and rather loud costumes, remarkable

sets and boisterous choreography, blasted into movie theatres in 1992, to countless commercial and critical approval. Strictly Ballroom summarized Baz Luhrmann's one of a kind, charmingly chaotic flair and foretold all that the young director would pass to the silver screen in years to come. Though unrelated in plot, his next two movies Romeo and Juliet and Moulin Rouge! all embody this distinctive, ostentatious style.

Baz Luhrmann's adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's book *The Great Gatsby* is proof of Baz Luhrmann's evolution as a director. *The Great Gatsby* seems to be a come back to the heavily saturated colours, large ensemble scenes, nightclub and parties paired with the music style of using music from popular contemporary artists, either re-purposing their existing music or getting them to do classics as a high end cover. Baz Luhrmann's own genre Red Curtain Cinema is undoubtedly a genre that is contrasting to the standard Hollywood Style and breaks with traditions and rules. The colour sets, the contemporary music and the fast-paced cutting are overstated and do not act in accordance with reality as we know it, Pam cook says "Luhrmann exploits the exhibitionist nature of cinema, putting all the elements of the medium on display" thus drawing spectators to call his style "flashy".

"Baz Luhrmann is An Essential film maker" according to a film blogger, Darren Ruecker and I agree. The reason why he's cinematographic style is essential is because it's a breath of fresh air in the film industry, Baz's style differs from the norm which offers diversity in the film industry, with visuals you have never seen before, his combination of colour and light grabs your eyes. His attitude towards his subject matter differs from other directors for

example in Romeo & Juliet when he uses bizarre juxtaposition of old language and new technological surroundings. Baz uses the love cliché to undercut the love cliché forcing his audience to reflect on the absurdity in movies while celebrating it is elusive.