

Baz Luhrman film study: red curtain cinema essay sample

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



Baz Luhrman was made famous by his three films that come under the title of the 'Red curtain trilogy'. These three films are *Strictly Ballroom*, *Romeo + Juliet*, and *Moulin Rouge*. Red curtain cinema is a term made up by Luhrman. It is about breaking cinematic rules and boundaries. It is a refreshingly new and unique style of movie making that gets the audience to take part and enjoy the film. Luhrman has established a degree of adaptability in all his works. Luhrman devised the Red Curtain style of film making with these specifics in mind: 1) the audience knows how it will end right from the start; 2) the storyline is thin and simple; 3) the world formed in the film is one of heightened realism; and 4) there is to be a specific tool driving the story, whether it be dance, iambic pentameter or characters bursting out in song. Red curtain cinema is a technique of theatrical conventions that put new heart into film.

Strictly Ballroom is the first and probably lesser known of the three films. It is a typical story of the underdog. SB uses both the David and Goliath and the ugly duckling myths. And as the title would tell is set in the heightened world of ballroom dancing, where it is almost a crime to think outside the square. Ballroom dancing is incorporated beautifully into the film and all important scenes are danced.

The second of the trilogy is the remake of William Shakespeare's classic play *Romeo + Juliet*. This tells the tale of two star crossed lovers. This film is at another level than SB. It is more advanced in red curtain cinema and it manages to use more avant grade shots and mixing of a lot of scenes.

Luhrman has managed in this film to undoubtedly to adapt this story into the

modern day world, with a modern Verona without the audience wanting to question the 'loop holes'. The newscaster telling the prologue at the beginning of the film sets the scene straight away. The audience is pulled into the Shakespearian language straight away without noticing too much in the first scene. This goes on the age old saying 'actions speak louder than words' the actions and expressions in the first scene speak louder than the language. Someone who does not speak a word of English would have been able to understand what was going on. This scene sets the audience for the rest of the film; it introduces them to the language and lets them understand it. One example of this is how Luhrman managed to adapt by improvising with props, using guns with the brand sword instead of swords.

In R+J all of the important scenes are full of thick Shakespearian language. This intrigues the audience and gives the idea that the scene is important. An example of this is at Sycamore grove, just before the Montague boys leave for the party. Romeo and Mercurio talk about dreams and fate.

Moulin Rouge represents the rules of red curtain cinema at their most advanced; it is the third and final of the three films. MR is a musical based in Paris at the turn at the century. The story is about love. Like the other two films the story follows two young lovers. In MR one of them a prostitute and the other a penniless writer full of bohemian ideals. The young writer bewitches the prostitute and the result is chaos in the Moulin Rouge. MR is all about using over the top effects and beautiful imagery. MR highlights love and the feel of old time movies.

In MR in all important scenes the characters break out in song. An example of this is when Christian and Satine are on the top of the elephant. This is where they first make the decision to become lovers.

Moulin Rouge approaches the subject matter in an ironic way. It's almost as though there is unwillingness for the film to be taken seriously, this is shown in the deliberate use of old-fashioned songs, scenery and attitudes. Moulin Rouge isn't a musical or a straight film, it isn't a tragic or comic film, it mixes elements from both.

While watching Moulin Rouge the audience is never let forget that it is watching a film. Moulin Rouges superficiality is an essential element in its post-modern attitude.

Baz Lehrman has made the story or Romeo and Juliet have relevance to the new generation, who are more likely to understand it when they see modern things and scenes in the film. Baz has incorporated into the film new modern props and scenery. By making the appearance of the film modern Baz has highlighted the timelessness of the story.

Luhrman has opened the eyes of many of his audiences to ballroom dancing; he has in his film made the rivalry and politics obvious to the audience and thus interesting them into the concept of ballroom dancing. The fact that it is a love story has also helped open peoples eyes to ballroom dancing in a way that they perhaps wouldn't of thought of.