

El tango de roxanne

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Baz Luhrmann's multi-million dollar musical *Moulin Rouge* premiered at the recent Cannes Film Festival and opened in Australia a few weeks later to a tsunami of media attention. Rupert Murdoch, who financed the \$US50 million film at his Fox Studios in Sydney, led the *Moulin Rouge* media battleship with front-page stories and encouraging reviews such as "the coming of age of Australian film". Critics hailed the film as "garish", "vulgar" and "a mish-mash of ghastly costumes and sets". Critics were sharply divided; rival newspapers assailed the film as "an abominable nightmare".

Murdoch's film critics fought back stating it was "richly cinematic" and "the greatest Australian movie ever made". The movie is set during the *Fin de siècle* around the time of the French Revolution where the aristocracy was overthrown and France was heralding equality. Also, at this time, a Bohemian uprising was underway! The *Moulin Rouge* is a lewd cabaret club in the Montmartre district of Paris. Christian (Ewan McGregor) is a young British playwright who had defied his father's wishes and gone to Paris to find true love, where he encounters bohemian artist Toulouse-Lautrec (John Leguizamo) and composer Erik Satie (Matthew Whittet).

Christian composes a play called *Spectacular Spectacular*, and him, Toulouse and Erik plan to sell their play to Harold Zidler (Jim Broadbent) owner of the *Moulin Rouge*. Toulouse organises a personal meeting with Satine (Nicole Kidman), a courtesan who has plans to become an actress, but unbeknown to Christian, Zidler had also arranged a personal meeting with The Duke of Worcester (Richard Roxburgh), who is interested in turning the *Moulin Rouge* from a brothel into a theatre. Satine mistakes Christian for the Duke and

tries to seduce him in order to secure the investment to turn the Moulin Rouge into a theatre.

Christian and Satine are caught by the Duke in Satine's private quarters, a giant jewel encrusted elephant suspended above the Moulin Rouge. With the help of Toulouse, Zidler, Erik and the Unconscious Argentinean they improvise a script for Spectacular Spectacular set in India with a penniless satire player, a courtesan and an evil maharaja, in order to cover up what was happening. Christian falls in love with Satine and he sings his feelings out to a sceptical Satine, on top of the giant jewel encrusted elephant at midnight and Satine falls for Christian as he has for her.

Over the next couple of weeks Christian and Satine try to hide their emotions from the Duke until the Duke demands to know why the courtesan marries the penniless satire player instead of the evil maharaja, and Christian shouts " she doesn't love you" instead of " she doesn't love him". The Duke is insistent that the courtesan marries the evil maharaja or he will not finance the production. The El Tango de Roxanne is a tango scene in the main hall of the Moulin Rouge between the Unconscious Argentinean, the male and female dancers, Toulouse, Christian, and Satine plus The Duke in the tower to Sting's song Roxanne.

In the main hall of the Moulin Rouge the colours are bright and bold such as red, gold and the green in the Cri?? me de Menthe Toulouse is drinking. Red symbolises love and passion whereas gold symbolises wealth and the green in the Cri?? me de Menthe also represents the envy between Christian and The Duke. The tables in the Moulin Rouge are circular, symbolising equality

which is one of the main beliefs of the bohemian lifestyle, whereas the table in the tower is long and rectangular showing power, male dominance and fear.

The colours in the tower is a mix of blacks, dark blues and greys which symbolise the mystery around the Duke and Satine. Satine, throughout this scene, has bright red lipstick on to show her emotion and passion for Christian even though they have been separated. The scene comes to a climax when Satine is about to be raped by the dominant Duke, only to be saved by Le Chocolat, the black slave, which is also one of the bohemian beliefs that everybody is equal no matter what race you are. The scene starts off with one single violin playing the opening cords to Roxanne.

A spotlight follows the Unconscious Argentinean as he promenades around to Nini Legs-in-the-Air, telling the story of the brothels of Argentina. The dance picks up pace as Nini is thrown from male dancer to male dancer and the lyrics sing " Roxanne, You don't have to put on that red light". By now all the dancers are on the dance floor and dancing in sequence with sharp movements from each violin strike to the next. The camera shots and editing in this scene are crucial for its popularity, never focusing on the same shot for more than one second.

The shots, jump cut between close up leg shots and extreme long shots, of all the dancers in unison. The scene reaches its audio crescendo when Christian is standing at the foot of the tower and Satine is looking down at him. This sequence contains lots of over shoulder, high and low angle shots as if you were Satine or Christian looking up or down on one another. These

shots are give you the perspective that you were with Satine, Christian and The Duke as they gazed up and down on each other.

Satine begins to sing, her and Christian's secret song that they created to show their love and passion will never end but Satine forgets the Duke is behind her and sees her singing to Christian. The Duke is raging with anger and rips off a diamond necklace he has presented to Satine as a gift but also has the representation of a lead connecting her to him like an animal. In the main hall the dancers a flung and dragged across the hall as if they were toys for well-off men to have their way with and abandon in the gutters like cretins.

The scene ends with Nini Legs-In-The-Air being thrown from man to man. When she is thrown back to the Unconscious Argentinean he throws her to the floor like a piece of garbage. My outlook of this extravagant scene is utter delight. This scene really captures the passion, envy and hatred between Satine, Christian, and the Duke. It encapsulates Baz Luhrmann's artistic mastermind and allows the general audience to position themselves within the scene and join in with the whirlwind of emotion as it drives the characters apart.