

Mike nicholas' the graduate: a study of the misunderstood generation in the movie...

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In 1967, Mike Nichols released *The Graduate* a film that spoke to a misunderstood generation. The story involved a recent college graduation by the name of Benjamin Braddock (played by Dustin Hoffman), who gets into an affair with his father's business partner's wife Mrs. Robinson (played by Anne Bancroft). During their affair Ben falls in love with Mrs. Robinson's daughter Elaine (played by Katherine Ross). The film features a soundtrack by the folk-duo Simon and Garfunkel. Mike Nichol's was really into their music and decided to insert Simon and Garfunkel's songs instead of an original soundtrack, an odd move for the time.

The Graduate opens up with "The Sound of Silence" by Simon and Garfunkel, we see Benjamin Braddock get off the plane back from his four years in college. You see Benjamin riding the automated walkway with no expression on his face. The music helps to show that Benjamin is isolated and alienated from the world around him, even though he had just reached a pivotal moment in his life. "The Sound of Silence" plays again after Benjamin and Mrs. Robinson start meeting in the Hotel room to begin her affair. The song starts after the lights turn of shows Benjamin's mundane lifestyle, meeting up with Mrs. Robinson to have routine like sex. While the song plays we are reminded how detached Benjamin is from reality and hasn't spoken word of about what he wants to do with his life. Benjamin continues to be seen rendezvous with Mrs. Robinson while the music plays, despite this we are still getting a feeling from Benjamin that he is lonely, dissatisfied, and disillusioned with his life even though he is having these intimate moments with Mrs. Robinson. The final time we "The Sound of Silence" is during the end of the film when Benjamin and Elaine flee her

wedding and take a seat on the bus. The song that started the film, ends the film to show that Benjamin's constant problem of feeling disconnected despite this seemingly happy ending. During the end scene we are given a glimpse of Benjamin and Elaine, with the Simon and Garfunkel hit playing and the song gives off a feel of insecurity and whether the decisions they just made were best for them. "The Sound of Silence" brings about the themes of dissatisfaction, disillusionment, and isolation to the character of Benjamin Braddock despite him unable to communicate his feelings throughout the film.

During the montage scene with Benjamin loathing around and meeting up with Mrs. Robinson in the hotel, another Simon and Garfunkel song starts to play called "April Come She Will". The song doesn't match the tone of the story but still offers a really nice song to listen to. "April Come She Will" has lyrics that tell a sad story and a melody that is light and airy, the lyrics don't match up with the song because of it describing a love that builds up and fails, something that Mrs. Robinson and Benjamin never shared. The song's superficiality is what helps make it an important element in the plot because Benjamin is surrounded by people who are fake and he is longing for an actual person that cares for him more than a physical attraction.

Another popular song from Simon and Garfunkel in *The Graduate* is "Scarborough Fair", an adaptation from the traditional English ballad about the Yorkshire town of Scarborough. The song plays during Benjamin Braddock's major rut with Elaine after Mrs. Robinson ruins their relationship. It first starts to play after Elaine tells Benjamin to get out of her house, to

represent that despite these mishaps Benjamin is still very much in love with Elaine. After a couple of minutes from the previous scene the song starts to play when Benjamin decides to head to Berkeley to woo Elaine to become his wife. The song plays to show that Benjamin is really in love with this girl, despite her hatred towards him. He has a sense of urgency and this is apparent in the lyrics when the line " Are you goin' to" shows that he is traveling to get her back. We're given a breather from the song for awhile, until Ben follows Elaine to the zoo and is left at the monkey house. The song starts to play to show that despite being ditched he still has an undevoted love for her, despite being treated like nothing.

The final major song in the soundtrack is " Mrs. Robinson", a song written directly for the film and is so melodic it has transcended the film to become a popular hit song, even taking out the Beatles's White Album from the charts. During the movie it is still introduced when Benjamin is trying to convince Elaine to marry him, it isn't introduced with singing instead as an instrumental with some whistling. The song seems to bring up the tone of the film because it is to reflect Benjamin's current attitude, which has been uplifted since Elaine figured out the truth and is considering spending her life with him. We hear the song again after Mr. Robinson's confrontation with Benjamin and his trip back to Los Angeles to catch Elaine before she gets married. The vocals are present in this version helping give a chase effect to the scene with the dug duga duga duga, duga dug dug effect with the guitar. During the car chase scene to the church we are treated to the song once again but only in small bursts of dug duga duga duga, duga dug dug because

of Benjamin's car running out of gas. This is because it shows the actions leading up to the conclusion of Benjamin's quest to acquire the love of his life Elaine.

Simon and Garfunkel composed only one song for the movie, despite this their music helped play an important role to help identify Benjamin's predicaments. Their songs were chosen by Mike Nichol's because of his liking for the duo's sound and what it could bring to the big screen. Their songs helped accurately portrayed Benjamin's unattachment from his life and the issues he was going through. Nichol's helped usher in the use of non original soundtracks for films, allowing future directors to use popular hits instead to help convey a meaning to the story with already established songs.