

How does baz
lurhmann remind us
that we are watching
a movie essay



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Moulin Rouge is described by Baz Luhrmann as audience participation cinema.

This means that the audience can get involved and that emotions are usually exaggerated. This has the same idea as Bollywood movies, which is where he got his inspiration from. This type of cinema is part of Baz Luhrmann's trademark and he purposely makes films that are fantasy rather than the ideal Hollywood technique of reality. He breaks the Hollywood rule, just as Satine breaks the rule and falls in love. For example, in "Romeo and Juliet", Luhrmann used the Shakespearean language to heighten the film.

In "Strictly Ballroom" he used dance to portray the emotions and story line. In "Moulin Rouge" he uses the fact that everyone bursts into song and dance as the main distraction from reality. Also he used music because you hear it on a different level than dialogue. You can make any simple words effective just by adding music to it (for example Elton John - Your Song).

Baz Luhrmann uses these techniques: music, camera angles/editing, lighting, colour, costume/characterisation and set design to remind us that the film is meant to be viewed as a fantasy. At the end of the 19th century in Paris many new technological advances had been made but there had also been an increase in alcohol abuse. There were many alcoholics, prostitutes and overcrowded living conditions. Tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases were spreading fast.

There was a demand for racetracks, circuses, operas, brothels, cabarets and balls. Bohemians were very much involved with this. They were all artists experimenting with different artistic genres. It became a drug and alcoholic

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culture, with absinthe as one of the favourite beverages. Montmartre became the centre of this new age. The Moulin Rouge opened in October 1889 as a music hall owned and run by Joseph Oller and Charles Zidler.

It was a huge success. "Moulin Rouge" portrays every aspect of Montmartre at that time, with almost every emotion possible. For example love (between Satine and Christian), jealousy (Christian was jealous of the Duke), hate (between Christian and the Duke), anger (the Duke was angry at people "touching his things"), excitement (of the Moulin Rouge) and so on. Music has to be the most important thing in the film that distracts the audience from reality. The film begins with the tuning of instruments and then introduces the audience cheering.

This immediately gives you the sense that you are watching a play. The 20th Century Fox music is played and then it goes straight into big dramatic, theatre-like music playing a medley of the Sound of Music, Roxanne and the Can Can. This gives you all the emotions of the film right from the beginning. The Sound of Music brings comedy and happiness, Roxanne brings you the dark side of the film and the Can Can brings you the excited parts. Then the music stops and you hear Toulouse singing. He has a lonely, sad voice and there are only some quiet violins in the background.

This makes the audience feel sad. It is a massive contrast to the beginning already, which prepares the audience for a fast moving story-line and many different emotions and unexpected things are to happen. His voice gets louder as he shows you to where Christian is and wind noises are added to make you feel like you are flying to where he is. Although the song was not

written about Christian it represents his theme. When he finishes singing the dramatic music is added again.

You see Christian typing and there is only a piano that occasionally plays a chord. This gives you the feeling that he is sad. Whenever you get flashes of inside the Moulin Rouge there is distant cheering. As the film winds back you hear a distorted accordion which sounds like a piece of music being wound back and then you hear French singing when the film is being played forward. This demonstrates that you have gone back in time. When Christian mentions children of the age, a child's tune is being played which sounds like it's from a trinket box, which emphasizes his statement.

There are cartoon sounds when he begins typing which accentuates Christian's father's idea of him being silly going to write in Montmartre Circus music then introduces the Bohemians and stays with them while they introduce themselves. You hear a lullaby when the narcoleptic Argentinean is sleeping. The music so far complements what people are like and how they are feeling. Christian goes into a sudden burst of song when he is on the ladder, which grabs everyone's attention (including the characters'). There is a break and then it carries on with a full orchestra, showing how great Christian's talent is. There is happy bouncy innocent sounding music until Christian talks about love and it suddenly goes very romantic and serious.

This confirms how tender a subject this is to him. There is a sound like an explosion when they all drink the absinthe and the Green Fairy starts singing. They join in and harmonize beautifully even though they look

terribly drunk. This gives you the impression that you are drunk with them and hear the singing as beautiful too.

Again the audience feels as though it is participating. It is an upbeat version of the " Sound of Music". There is laughing and screaming as the fairy turns evil and she introduces you to the Moulin Rouge. You go into the Moulin Rouge and the song " Voulez- vous coucher avec moi ce soir" is played straight away so you know exactly where you are, a brothel.

Harold Zidler begins singing his own words to the song tune. The Can Can is added to it. You get a verse or two of Nirvana so already you have several musical influences in the film. You can hear rock mixed with the Can Can and this is all within the first few minutes of being in there. This shows that the Moulin Rouge welcomes everyone and that it is exciting, in effect an artistic utopia. Then there is silence and a whistling noise while everyone gets into place for the dance.

There are constant interruptions of " Voulez vous couche avec moi". It seems like there is a battle on the dance floor as there is a very fast drum beat with the Can Can. This was actually made up of samples. The dancing emphasizes the battle, because it looks very arrogant.

This obviously wouldn't happen in real life so it feels like you're dreaming. The music suddenly stops and you hear sparkling sounds as Satine is lowered. She begins singing about a battle, which ends the battle on the dance floor. She sings on her own until a brass band accompanies her.

The trumpets sound sexy, which is how Satine is meant to be seen. While the important characters are talking the music is only in the background, which makes you concentrate on what the characters are saying. Then Satine and the girls start singing "Material Girl" which goes really well with her previous song "Diamond Dogs. While Satine and Zidler talk the music is in the background, which makes the audience again concentrate on what they are saying.

Both times it emphasizes that what they are saying is important and should be noted. There is constant cheering throughout the whole scene. There is chanting while Satine makes her "roll on the tongue noise" and they begin dancing to Salsa music. It is updated and has a good beat. Everyone knows the dance, which is like people today knowing the Macarena, but we also know that in the old days everyone knew dances like the Foxtrot.

This makes us understand it better. You can still hear bits of Nirvana in the background, which still means everyone is involved. While Satine and Christian talk the music again goes quiet and in the background. Satine returns to her trapeze and the music sounds like a striptease brass band sound, which reminds us of her sexiness and the services she offered.

When she stops breathing the music also stops and the cheering fades to the background. The same lonely piano plays again, just as it did at the beginning with Christian, indicating that there is a connection between his sadness and Satine's collapse. There is a loud clash of music when she falls to dramatise the fall. Zidler begins the cheering and pretends it was just part of the show, as he often says "the show must go on".

At this point in the music of the film so much has already happened that it all seems beyond belief, again emphasizing the fact that all is fantasy. The music is very effective because they down date new songs and update old ones. This shows that what it was like then influenced the way we live today and also that we are not very different from those ages, in that people you love still die. For example the Bohemians singing old songs updated gives you the impression that without that era we would not be living as we are now.

The audience can relate to it more because of the modern tracks. Many of the songs were sung live, which could give the audience a feeling of watching a live play, and all the songs show a huge range of emotions. Since there are so many different genres in what is meant to be the late 1800s it shows that this has to a film and the film is a fantasy. Baz Lurhmann and his crew picked famous songs so that everyone feels that they could sing along.

Some song's lyrics were changed slightly to get the story across more. This feeling that you want to join in is the biggest influence in his audience participation cinema. The camera angles can show you what type of world it is and the speed of the editing can reflect the mood you're meant to be feeling. At the beginning there is a slow close-up on the credits. The shots dissolve onto the screen.

This shows all the different aspects of Moulin Rouge. The camera zooms in and shows you the way through Paris quickly and then slowly, and from many different angles. This shows it to be a 360o world and gives you the

impression that you are flying. Then you get to eye level with Christian, which shows he is an ordinary person.

It emphasizes how upset he is. Then everything becomes jerky when he thinks of Moulin Rouge, it gives the impression of a nightmare, as the shots are blurry. It goes back through Paris quickly to show time has gone back. There is a fish eye lens on Christian's father, which makes him seem an exaggerated character. There is a 3D effect on the characters through Montmartre to emphasize what it was like. The shots flash to Satine, which cannot happen in real life, showing it is unreal.

On the station you see Christian and the film shows his way through Montmartre, again back to his flat. The changing pace of the film during the journey reminds the audience that this must be a film as such things do not happen in real life. When the Bohemians enter the shots move very fast to show excitement. The camera looks up at Christian when he is on the ladder to show that the Bohemians look up to him. When Christian is about to leave you see the Bohemians looking down at you so you know how he feels, intimidated. Also the film flashes back to Christian's typewriter, which recaps the storytelling.

The Green Fairy becomes several fairies at once and when she turns into the evil fairy she sucks you in a whirl into the Moulin Rouge with the Bohemians. In the Moulin Rouge the different shots move very fast so you get the impression of a very busy atmosphere with many different activities going on. The characters look at the camera. This gives you the feeling that you are actually in the Moulin Rouge and they are looking and talking to you.

Harold Zidler swaps from place to place in a matter of seconds, which is obviously impossible so therefore reminds the audience that they are watching a film.

Shots slow down when Satine comes in and that emphasises how important she is. You see Satine from below. You are in the audience. When she sings on the trapeze and looks up you are viewing her as though she is singing to you.

Where the shots are placed it keeps putting you into a different character. This helps you to know how that person views things and since it is impossible to be that character it gives the effect of audience participation cinema. The difference between fast and slow shots could show that some people were not ready for the Bohemian era. The speed also plays around with time, even though the sounds do not slow down or speed up, which makes it seem that time is standing still. The techniques keep swapping from reality to fantasy shots, therefore it must be a fantasy film. Just as the editing the lighting and colour show how you are meant to be feeling.

First there are spotlights on the red curtain, emphasizing the shadow of the conductor. Then there is a spotlight on the credits, and they are desaturated sepia. Next there is a spotlight on Christian and Toulouse and this presents them to you as important characters, giving you a feeling of watching a play. There is a hazy light approaching Christian's flat. The moon only lights his flat.

It looks like natural light, even though it isn't. He appears to be blue. It

flashes between saturated and desaturated, to show time difference. There
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are bold, bright, yet hazy colours in the Moulin Rouge, which could show a nightmare situation induced by drinking absinthe. The train station goes slowly from desaturated to saturated imitating a natural light from the sun.

It flashes back to when he's writing the story in a blue colour, which gives you the feeling that it's going to end up being a sad story. When Christian is with the Bohemians, the light is natural to portray the Bohemians as being natural people. The fairy glows green sparkles and is set against the dark sky, which makes her seem like a star, then it goes to the bright red in the Moulin Rouge. This shows contrast in the artistic difference of the Bohemians and the show folk. The colouring is bright and cheerful, which shows a new beginning.

There is very bright light on Satine. Her lips are bright red, contrasting with her pale face, which makes her look tempting and draws attention to what she is saying. In the first part of the film there are numerous colour and lighting changes, which forewarns the audience of the excitement to come. Moulin Rouge means Red Windmill, and the colour red plays a very important part throughout the film, representing danger, love, sex and excitement. The way the characters are portrayed plays a big part in why this film is viewed as fantasy rather than a reality film.

Firstly, the name Satine sounds as though it could be the French word for satin. This gives an impression of her being soft and gentle. She is always in a corset, which shows the era in which the film is set. It could also show that she is not free to do what she wants to.

She is controlled by the rules of her life and the times. By way of contrast when she is with Christian she is usually dressed more casually, in a dressing gown or loose fitting outfit. Either showing her allegiance to the Bohemians or perhaps just that part of her life with Christian where she is more free. She begins in a white sparkly, diamond-encrusted bodysuit, which distinguishes her from the other girls in the Moulin Rouge. Compared to them she seems pure, less like a courtesan and more like a star. Throughout the whole film she wears beautifully designed costumes.

This gives you the feeling that she is constantly performing. This obviously would not happen, and the fact that she looks so glamorous all the time makes her seem like a princess in a fairy tale. All her costumes are very detailed and fit her perfectly. They are all elegant clothes, which make her seem more high class than the other girls.

Her hair is always wavy and bright red, which reflects her bubbly, bright character. When she falls off her trapeze it seems to show that Christian has fallen in love with her. It shows the extent of his love. When Christian talks about her in the beginning you see dark flashes of her. This makes her seem mysterious and almost dangerous.

Her lipstick always draws attention to her mouth as it is bright, which draws the audience to concentrate on what she is saying and that it is important. Her eyes are not made up as much as the other girls, which again indicates purity, but as the audience by now knows she is far from pure as she is a courtesan. At the end Christian calls her a "whore." This is a shock to the audience because she has been called a courtesan throughout and so it

wakes them up and they realise exactly what she is, even though she has not appeared to be like that. They are in shock together with the characters in the film, which shows audience participation cinema. Christian's name seems pure.

He is entering a new world, like a naïve person it seems (from his name).

Christian is dressed untidily and has a beard at the beginning. His flat is in a mess and this reflects how depressed he is. He feels lazy and worthless.

Then you see a massive contrast when you see him at the train station. He is dressed neatly; hair combed back and looks fresh.

This shows that he has come to Montmartre for a fresh start. The clothes he wears for the rest of the play all make him look handsome. This was done purposely.

It brings the idea of fantasy that he looks so good all the time.

Christian dresses differently from anyone else, which distinguishes him just like Satine.

Christian's character is based on the Orpheus myth: the journey of an idealistic young man with a great gift for song. The young man travels to the underworld of lost souls in pursuit of his lost love. Having found her he uses his gift to rescue her from this place. Human failing however causes him to make a fatal mistake and he loses his love forever. He carries on, older and wiser, having grown from his loss.

This is also why the Moulin Rouge is referred to as 'the underworld'. With this story shape they incorporated his story with the 19th century novel, 'La

Vie de Boheme' by Henri Murger. It is the story of a young man who falls in

love with a prostitute, but it ends badly. Since his character is made up of <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-baz-lurhmann-remind-us-that-we-are-watching-a-movie-essay/>

two stories then he can't be real, and if the audience know this information then it will seem a fantasy story. Harold Zidler is the ' ringleader' of the Moulin Rouge. He is a larger than life character, who seems to act everything with a song and dance.

He is always wearing ringleader's clothes as though he is in charge of a circus. This could show that the girls act and are treated like animals. His hair is an orange ginger colour and his cheeks are always rosy. He looks and acts bright, just like the Moulin Rouge. He also acts crazy, which represents the craziness of that era.

He doesn't seem the type to run a brothel so this brings about the fantasy idea. The dancing girls all have completely individual costumes and all play a role of some sort, such as a schoolgirl, a child's doll, an Asian, Chinese twins, a dwarf etc. Some girls are more famous than others. The costume department actually made over 300 costumes from scratch.

They are all brightly coloured. The girls are called " creatures", which lowers their stature. The girls seem like individuals whereas the rich and powerful all wear penguin suits. This makes them seem all the same. In real life you wouldn't have everyone dressing the same in a show. You would have chorus girls.

This reminds the audience that they are watching a film. The girls are called the diamond dogs. The diamonds seem to refer to the girls and the dogs as being the men. The Duke is a stereotypical baddy. He has a moustache, lives in a Gothic Tower and has a wimpy sense about him. He plays a very important part and his voice sounds evil as it has a nasally sound.

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He is like the character out of a cartoon, which again makes the film seem like a dream. The Bohemians are resourceful, as they used a shirt for a nun's hood. The musician is bald, and they are always drinking absinthe. They are always excited and they bring humour to the film. The difference in their clothes from the other characters shows their different artistic influences.

They are all larger than life characters, and they all seem unreal so you must be watching a film. The green fairy is bright green and glittery, which is like the colour of absinthe. This is total fantasy. She turns out to be evil, as her red eyes indicate, and shows the evil of absinthe. The characters are all just stereotypical characters of a classic story. You have Christian who is like the knight in shining armour, Satine who is like an ill-treated princess, Harold Zidler who is like the father of everything, the Duke who is portrayed as the baddie, the Bohemians seem like the comedy group, and the dancing girls are just the extras who fill up the rest of the story.

The green fairy seems like the fairy Godmother. It is surprising that no one has the same dress sense because in the real world there would be fashions and people would wear the same type of things, but since they don't it seems you're living in a dream world. The set design is very important, as it is one of the most important ways of telling you where you are, what it is like and if this is fantasy or reality. The way it is used in this film shows that it is fantasy. At the beginning you see red curtains, which immediately gives you the feeling that you are watching a play.

Toulouse is shown standing out of a chimney above Montmartre, which is very abstract and gives you the feeling of make-believe. It always has an old-

fashioned film frame around it, which carries on the old theme. Paris looks like the stereotypical Paris because the Eiffel Tower's height is greatly exaggerated, just to emphasize where you are. Paris itself looks like it has just been built.

The whole set is extravagant. It was actually built inside a studio and there are miniscule details like cracks in the wall, which gives you the feeling of Paris was like at the time. Christian's flat is a big contrast to the Moulin Rouge. It is isolated, dull and shabby, whereas the Moulin Rouge is big, bright and exciting. Everything except Moulin Rouge is a brown colour, which emphasizes how wonderful and how different it was to Paris and Montmartre itself.

Paris was computer generated, but models of important places were made. They purposely did not try to make it look real. The colours of the set design show each place's character. For example Gothic Tower is depict dark and evil, the Moulin Rouge is bright depicts excitement.

The Gothic Tower has the stereotypical look of an evil lair, which cannot be seen as reality. The elephant is a massive extravagant design, which looks unbelievable and gives us the feeling of fantasy. The "Moulin Rouge" is a story of a story of a story within a film. It is very confusing and this is why it doesn't seem like real life. It is a very original film, which reflects the original ideas and the endless creative possibilities of the Bohemian lifestyle.

It is a film about new experiences, which the audience get to experience for the first time themselves. The audience seem to become part of the story and are taken through a roller coaster ride of emotions. Another aspect that <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-baz-lurhmann-remind-us-that-we-are-watching-a-movie-essay/>

reminds the audience that they are watching a film is that “Moulin Rouge” is set in France and yet in it no one speaks a word of French. The whole film is about performing and that is why it seems more like a play than a film. The characters do impossible things and are larger than life characters.

Baz Lurhmann was definitely successful in making this film audience participation cinema.