

A comparative look at the work of baz luhrmann's moulin rouge!

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Introduction

Moulin Rouge! is a film famously known and celebrated for its artistic characteristics, involving the likes of poetry, art, music and dance as a way of telling and expressing the love story between two characters, Christian and Satine, throughout the movie. It is a romance musical set in the era of late 19th century Paris, during the Bohemian Revolution; heavily focusing on the ideologies of truth, beauty, freedom and love which are commonly if not always associated with many artforms due to having the ability to express yourself through them. Baz Luhrmann's film is commonly known as to have been derived from many different sources, including the novel 'Camille' written by Alexandre Dumas fils, the story of Giacomo Puccini's Italian opera La bohème, following a love affair between a poor poet and an equally poor seamstress in 19th century Paris and I recently discovered that the film was also heavily inspired by the ancient greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, yet another tragic love story for Luhrmann to incorporate ideas from.

Modern Music

Baz Luhrmann is a director most known for his lavish productions, heightened-reality and on top of that the way he uses modern music to captivate the audience's attention when viewing and experiencing his movies. Focusing solely on the soundtrack of my chosen movie Moulin Rouge!, Luhrmann brought together an assemblage of famous musicians and artists, from the likes of David Bowie to Christina Aguilera; and incorporated the lyrical and musical structure of musical theatre to consolidate an ageless love story about a struggling writer and a courtesan without the audience

feeling as if the story is outdated. The soundtrack consists of many songs from different modern decades, and a number of musical genres to help push forward a narrative that not only works for the era in which the story is set but also works perfectly with modern day and caters to a modern day audience. Many, including Baz Luhrmann himself, have said that the use of modern-day music from mid-to-late 20th century presents Christian's character as someone ahead of his time in both the eyes of the other characters within the film and also in the eyes of the audience, which not only makes the film more enjoyable but also implements another characteristic that builds Christian's personality and allows the audience to understand him better through the use of musical elements. The Film heavily relies on the use of music to develop the trajectory of the story, from the involvement of a musical theatre production within the story called 'Spectacular, Spectacular' which is a genius use of a subplot in which they tell a story within a story which heavily influences the romance plot of the main story.

This is a particularly impressive use of music in storytelling as there are moments of the film where the characters are purposely using music to tell a story, for example within the musical theatre production and other moments where it is incorporated in a scene to portray a development in the plot or to show character development. An example of this would be Satine's character arc, played by actress Nicole Kidman, Satine is introduced to us as an aspiring actress who has to work at the Moulin Rouge as a courtesan before she can accomplish her dream of performing at a real theatre, she tells

Christian when she first meets him that she is unable to fall in love due to her job which Christian is astounded by and vows to prove her wrong and thus the 'Elephant Love Medley' scene where he begins to sing modern songs starting with 'All You Need Is Love' by the Beatles, 'Heroes' by David Bowie and ending with 'I Will Always Love You' by Whitney Houston and 'Your Song' by Elton John. The character arc is demonstrated throughout the song medley, showing the development of Satine's feelings as she goes from trying to push him away and proving all of his beliefs wrong to singing with him and eventually falling in-love with him by the end of the Medley. This shows the use of both musical elements and Baz Luhrmann's over-the-top theatrical way of directing and producing.

Orpheus and Eurydice

The fateful love story reimaged into many films under the same or similar title, famously known as an ancient Greek legend between Orpheus and Eurydice, a myth about the love and passion which eventually lead to the death of Eurydice and Orpheus losing his faith in love and the Gods. This heavily links to the story of Moulin Rouge! due to Christian giving everything to be with Satine, due to, in his father's words 'having a ridiculous obsession with love' to the point that when he lost Satine, he lost faith in love and lost interest and inspiration to continue with what he came to Paris for, which was to write a novel about love. Orpheus was said to have been a musical genius and after losing his wife, used his ability to sing and charm his way past Cerberus, the three headed dog that guarded the underworld and melt the cold heart of Hades in order to be able to see his wife Eurydice once

again. In a way, Christian is much alike Opheus, due to the fact that he is seen by the other characters in Moulin Rouge! as a musical genius before his time, first shown in an early scene where Christian sings ' The Sound of Music' and captivates the attention of everyone in the room.

Many other moments throughout the film show Christian's ability to enthrall the attention of anyone he is singing to, including scenes between Christian and Satine where they portray their love through song, the main one being ' Come What May' which is sung numerous times throughout the film to contextualise a way for them to overcome the difficulties of them being together, much like the difficulties of Orpheus and Eurydice being together. However when Orpheus descended to the underworld to find Eurydice he was unable to find her, almost losing faith until he caught a glimpse of her soul leaving with the other souls of the dead, he later tried to return to the Underworld but the rule was that no mortal could enter twice and so he chose to call upon death so he could be with Eurydice forever. The stories of both Orpheus and Eurydice and the story of Christian and Satine are tragic and yet captivate the audience in a way that you cannot look away, and although you know neither of their romances end well the way in which the stories are told make you root and hope for a better outcome, which plays on the dramatic irony of both stories, especially in Moulin Rouge! due to one of Christian's opening lines being. This story is about love, the woman I loved is dead. This allowed the audience to know that whilst we are enjoying the love story between Christian and Satine, there will always be that thought in the back of your mind that something awful is going to happen and in time

Satine dies despite all that Christian went through to prove his love to her, this parallels with the myth in which Hymen, the God of Marriage told Orpheus that his and Eurydice's love would not last for many years and soon after Eurydice was bitten by a snake and Orpheus lost her and was warned yet again but this time by Hades that if he did not go looking for Eurydice that she would be brought back to life for him if he was patient enough but instead he went looking for her and lost her forever.

The Great Gatsby

The Great Gatsby is another well-known and well-celebrated film crafted, written, directed and produced by Baz Luhrmann and otherwise known for it's similar attributes to all of Luhrmann's work which involves a great deal of theatrical musical theatre and over-the-top storytelling. It is heavily shown that Luhrmann is greatly inspired by his own work as well as the work of others, and he continues to put his own methodologies into practise years after releasing his earlier successful films, including 'Romeo and Juliet' and my chosen film 'Moulin Rouge'. Luhrmann has always had his own set style that he portrays in his filmmaking, heavily relying on the use of colourful and extravagant lighting and sets, with tricky camera work and endless shots throughout his chosen scenes to keep the audience entertained whilst watching his movies.