

CINEFANTASTIQUE

SCREENING THE IMAGINATION

Week 7: *Mulholland Drive* (2001) *Amelie* (2001) and *Moulin Rouge!* (2001)

Early David Lynch

The Grandmother (1970)

- A mix of animation and live action
- A 'mostly' silent film – using music to partly tell the story
- Concerns the 'story' of a young boy who 'creates' a Grandmother to shield him from the abusive treatment of his parents
- Cements Lynch's 'anthro-biological' obsession with the nature of the domestic environment
- "...establishes a distinction between the alienated environment and latent menace of the boy's nuclear family."
- Presents a strange mix of the world of fantasy and the world of desire

"...a version of life energized by productive delays between cause and effect, gaps between action and reaction – in short, moments of indetermination in which domestic organisms, having fully lost the gestures that make them human, spawn something new or unforeseen."

Justus Nieland

Mulholland Drive (2001)

- Started life as a TV show
- Was made around the same time as the centenary of cinema
- *Mulholland Drive* – seems to subvert the medium
- Seems to be asking 'What is cinema?'
- The opening 'drive' and beginning of the film, supports the narrative's intentions to illustrate "anxious arrivals in an uncertain and empty 'now'"
- The first two hours of the film show us Diane's 'Betty fantasy)
- Diane dreams an alternative existence – creates the character of 'Betty Elms' for herself
- Creates the character of 'Rita' – a construct to try and show 'Camilla' – the lover, who jilted her, in a more positive light – choosing to see the 'good' side
- *Mulholland* can be said to be about the 'Tragedy of being oneself'
- Adam suffers serial humiliations throughout the first segment
- Representing Diane's jealous wish fulfillment

The 'Crying' Scene

- The sincerity of the 'performance' makes us 'feel' one way
- Yet the make-up and fake tears suggest a level of fakery or illusion
- When the singer faints and the song continues, it seems to remind us not to trust what our eyes and ears have just experienced

Baz Luhrmann

- The most commercially successful Australian screen director – his films making up four of the top ten highest worldwide grossing Australian films ever

- Born Mark Anthony Luhrmann in Sydney 1962
- Raised in Heron's Creek, a small settlement in New South Wales
- His mother was a dress shop owner and ballroom dancing instructor his father ran a petrol station and a movie theatre
- At school, he began performing in various theatrical productions
- He first met Craig Pearce (co-writer of a number of his films) while he attended Narrabeen Sports High School
- After picking up various TV and film acting work he enrolled at Australia's National Institute of Dramatic Art
- There he collaborated with other students to create an early stage version of *Strictly Ballroom*
- It was seen by Australian music executive Ted Albert and his wife Antoinette.
- They eventually set up the film production company M&A Productions
- They asked Luhrmann if they could adapt his story into a film. He agreed on the condition that he would also get to direct it.

***Strictly Ballroom* (1993)**

- This is a celebration of the 'spectacle'
- Luhrmann doesn't so much present a stylized piece of work – his work is the style
- He offers up heroes, villains and grotesques yet his vision, a deliberately over-the-top theatrical outing also has a distinctly Australian feel
- *Strictly Ballroom* would become the first of his 'red curtain' trilogy
- Influenced by Italian grand opera and aspects of Bollywood productions, Luhrmann was also able to create his own look and feel, combining something magical and otherworldly with something more recognizably down to earth with its humour and universal themes
- It went on to receive a host of nominations and awards
- It was the highest grossed film in Australia for the year with a gross of A\$21,760,400.
- It grossed US\$11,738,022 in the United States and Canada
- It took A\$80 million at the worldwide box office, making it one of the most successful Australian films of all time.

"Ballroom works not despite its absurdities but because of them - and exactly the same goes for Baz Luhrmann's film...it's plot is a compendium of clichés, signalled well in advance, so that we all wait in happy complicity for the moment when Fran takes off her glasses and metamorphoses into beauty"

Phillip Kemp
Sight and Sound vol.2 no. 6 (1992)

***Moulin Rouge!* (2001)**

*"... we went to this huge, ice cream picture palace to see a Bollywood movie. Here we were, with 2,000 Indians watching a film in Hindi, and there was the lowest possible comedy and then incredible drama and tragedy and then break out in songs. And it was three-and-a-half hours! We thought we had suddenly learnt Hindi, because we understood everything! We thought it was incredible. How involved the audience were. How uncool they were – how their coolness had been ripped aside and how they were united in this singular sharing of the story... The thrill of thinking, 'Could we ever do that in the West? Could we ever get past that cerebral cool and perceived cool.' It required this idea of comic-tragedy. Could you make those switches? Fine in Shakespeare – low comedy and then you die in five minutes. . . In *Moulin Rouge!* we went further. Our recognisable story, though Orphean in shape, is derived from *Camille*, *La Boheme* – whether you know those texts or not, you recognise those patterns and character types."*

Baz Luhrmann

- Before filming began the main cast including Kidman and McGregor, entered into weeks of workshopping where they learned various dances and worked on rehearsals
- To their surprise, Luhrmann would change elements of the script and dialogue based the feedback and responses of the actors

*"[the] whole stylistic premise has been to decode what the *Moulin Rouge* was to the audiences of 1899 and express that same thrill and excitement in a way to which contemporary movie-goers can relate."*

Baz Luhrmann



Amelie (2001)

- Amelie can be seen as much darker than it seems
- Viewed by many as a kind of cinematic equivalent of the Kath Kidston range – all nice colours and a little bit quirky, this ‘look’ might be attributed to the lost mind of the protagonist
- As a child she is ‘caught between a neurotic and an iceberg’ and is arguably deeply damaged because of this
- There are several scenes in which Amelie consciously ‘blocks’ out any hints of reality
- Interrupts the neighbour’s football match – switches of news reports of Princess Di’s death