

In "The Gold Rush", Charlie Chaplin plays a young gold miner who falls in love with a woman. In "The General", Buster Keaton plays a young train driver who attempts to save his loved ones: his train and his girlfriend.

The first thing that struck me when comparing the two films was not the ability of both artists to make you laugh, but rather their very different techniques on how to make you laugh. Charlie Chaplin channels the humor, in vast majority, through his character and the way he acts. Buster Keaton, on the other hand, prefers to construct humorous situations in which he puts his character. This isn't to say that one isn't present in the other, but this seemed like the overlying techniques.

Another difference I noticed was the emphasis on emotion that Charlie Chaplin gets across, and which Buster Keaton, to an extent, omits. For instance, when his character waits for his guests on New Year's Eve, you truly feel sorry for him. This, beyond simply adding more depth to the film, also creates a bond between the audience and the character. This means that, during an only mildly believable comical moment, the audience will be too emotionally involved to pay attention to the credibility of the situation. Buster Keaton, on the other hand, prefers to keep a comical tone all the way throughout the film, which is effective as well since the audience knows that the situations are supposed to be weird and exaggerated.

A relatively modern actor whose humor is similar to Chaplin's is, in my opinion, Louis De Funès. I say this not because their characters and films are similar; quite on the contrary. This connection takes place, once again, in the way that they make you laugh: through their character. Both have very defined, comical characters (Chaplin the Tramp, De Funès always getting angry at things), and both play these characters in a very pantomimical, exaggerated fashion. Although I do not find him as funny as Chaplin, I do think that he was very much influenced by him.

Chaplin make you laugh with his character, which I have already talked about, but the exact mimics that make you laugh are very hard to capture. Firstly, he acts in a way that the viewer can relate with. When in a difficult situation, he doesn't act heroically like a 'normal' protagonist, which is probably not what the viewer would do either. We would like to tell ourselves that we can act like the heroes in movies, but really Chaplin's anti-hero character seems closer to us. This makes the audience able to relate with him, understand his choices while laughing at how ridiculous they are. In a sense, we are laughing at ourselves.

His character getting hurt also makes you laugh. This is because of the incongruity of the situation, and why we laugh at people getting a little hurt in general: an incongruous event, such as falling, will seem funny to the human brain; however, this is only true if there is no negative consequence. We will laugh at someone tripping, because who cares? But we will not laugh at someone falling from a building and dying, because there is a very negative consequence to it. Chaplin, therefore, puts himself in situations where he gets hurt or is in danger of getting hurt, but from which no negative consequences actually arise.

In conclusion, Chaplin, unlike Buster Keaton who creates comical situations, uses expressive acting to create a comical character. This is a technique which has been around for a long time, but which he develops by adding touching and emotional parts to his films. Furthermore, he makes his character relatable to the audience, and puts it in painful or dangerous situations, but which never

amount to any truly negative repercussions. He uses all of these techniques to create situations which are still considered very funny today.