

Moulin Rouge!

Baz Luhrmann

2001

127 minutes

Scene 1: 11:00 – 15:10 (4m 10s)

During the first two thirds of this scene, Luhrmann displays an explosive, stylized vision of the Moulin Rouge. This is partly achieved with the use of sound: during 3 full minutes, the multiple sound editors of "Moulin Rouge!" provide a constant presence of either music, comical sound effects, crowd sounds, speech, or most often, all of them combined. This gives the impression of constant activity at the moulin rouge, as if there was never a single moment where something wasn't happening. This reinforces this idea of a party that never ends, of constant entertainment and decadent fun.

At 14:14, the character of Satine is introduced in a sequence which is accompanied by an almost total absence of sound. This provides a very stark contrast from the loud, buzzing sequence that precedes it, and this contrast is supported by the cinematographer (Donald McAlpine)'s sudden and drastic change in light. The scene goes from a warm, bold and saturated lighting (1) to a cold, blue and dim one (2) with the arrival of Satine's character, "the sparkling diamond". These two changes do the following: firstly, the absence of sound connotes the stillness associated with diamonds, ice or crystal, therefore literally portraying her as a diamond. This is accompanied by the silver / blue light, which is the color most associated with diamonds. Secondly, this change serves as a way to bring the viewer's attention to this important part of the film. It pinpoints this as an important, even pivotal moment in the film, where Christian falls in love with Satine.

Scene 2: 49:00 – 50:20 (1m 20s)

This scene is a musical one, and Marius DeVries, the film's music director, creates a number composed of multiple popular songs, such as "All You Need is Love" by the Beatles and "Heroes" by David Bowie, along with many more. This makes the heroes' situation more relatable to the modern audience than if the score had followed the setting and stayed from the 1950s, as they describe more contemporary plights. Additionally, it grounds the situation into a more familiar, natural one, which helps balance out the explosive, unnatural aspects of the rest of the film.

In this scene, McAlpine subtly utilizes light to convey the emotions of the two characters. An instance of this is the split over Satine's face (3), but instead of the traditional light vs. dark, one side of her face is exposed to warm, orange light, and the other to blue light. This creates a different kind of significance: rather than good vs. bad, it displays her hesitation on the idea of love, the blue side showing her rejection of Christian's naïve portrayal of love, and the orange side her growing affection for him. This therefore visually shows the hesitation and doubt that is occurring within her.



(1) A warm, red lighting at the beginning of the sequence...



(2) ...and a cold, blue lighting following the arrival of Satine.



(3) The warm/cold split across Satine's face.