

## **Moulin Rouge, 2001**

**PG-13, 127 minutes, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Film Corporation**

### Cast

Satine	Nicole Kidman
Christian	Ewan McGregor
Toulouse-Lautrec	John Leguizamo
Harold Zidler	Jim Broadbent
The Duke	Richard Roxburgh
The Doctor	Garry McDonald
The Unconscious Argentinean	Jacek Koman
Satie	Matthew Whittet
Marie	Kerry Walker
Nini Legs In the Air	Caroline O'Connor
Arabia	Christine Anu
China Doll	Natalie Jackson Mendoza
Môme Fromage	Lara Mulcahy
Audrey	David Wenham
The Green Fairy	Kylie Minogue
The Green Fairy	Ozzy Osbourne
Le Chocolat	Dhobi Oparei
Warner	Linal Haft
Le Petomane	Keith Robinson
Stage Manager	Peter Whitford
Satine's Doctor	Norman Kaye
Christian's Father	Arthur Dignam
Landlady	Carole Skinner
Man in the Moon	Jonathan Hardy
Man in the Moon	Plácido Domingo
Le Petite Princesse	Kiruna Stamell

### Crew

Directed by	Baz Luhrmann
Writing Credits	Baz Luhrmann & Craig Pierce
Produced by	Fred Baron, Martin Brown II, Baz Luhrmann
Associate Producer	Catherine Martin, Steve E. Andrews
Original Music by	Craig Armstrong, Marius De Vries, Steve Hitchcock
“Your Song”	Elton John & Kimberly ‘Lil Kim’ Jones
“Because We Can”	Fatboy Slim
Non-original Music by	David Bowie
Cinematography by	Donald McAlpine
Film Editing by	Jill Bilcock
Casting by	Ronna Kress
Production Designed by	Catherine Martin
Art Direction by	Ann-Marie Beauchamp
Set Decoration by	Brigitte Broch
Costume Design by	Catherine Martin & Angus Strathie
Makeup Department, Artist	Vincenzo Mastrantonio & Maurizio Silvi
Makeup Department, Hair Stylist	Giorgio Gregorini, & Ferdinando Merolla
Production Company	Bazmark Films

### Awards:

American Film Institute Composer of the Year: Craig Armstrong II  
American Film Institute Editor of the Year: Jill Bilcock  
Nominated American Film Institute Movie of the Year: Fred Baron, Martin Brown II, Baz Luhrmann  
Australian Film Institute Best Cinematography: Donald McAlpine  
Australian Film Institute Best Costume Design: Catherine Martin, Angus Strathie  
Australian Film Institute Best Editing: Jill Bilcock  
Australian Film Institute Best Sound: Andy Nelson, Roger Savage, Guntis Sics  
Nominated Australian Film Institute Best Actor in a Leading Role: Ewan McGregor  
Nominated Australian Film Institute Best Actor in a Supporting Role: Richard Roxburgh  
Nominated Australian Film Institute Best Actress in a Leading Role: Nicole Kidman  
Nominated Australian Film Institute Best Direction: Baz Luhrmann  
Nominated Australian Film Institute Best Film: Fred Baron, Martin Brown, Baz Luhrmann  
Australian Screen Sound Guild Best Achievement in Sound for a Feature Film – Effects Editing  
Australian Screen Sound Guild Technical Achievement Award  
Cannes Film Festival, Nominated Golden Palm: Baz Luhrmann  
European Film Awards, Five Continents Award: Baz Luhrmann

*Primary source Director's Commentary by Baz Luhrmann, compiled from other sources and Copyright © 2004 by Jay Seller*

## Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

European Film Awards, Outstanding European Achievement in World Cinema: Ewan McGregor  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Director – Motion Picture: Baz Luhrmann  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Motion picture – Musical or Comedy  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Original Score – Motion Picture: Craig Armstrong  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Original Song – Motion Picture: David Baerwald (Come What May)  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy: Ewan McGregor  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy: Nicole Kidman  
Nominated Golden Satellite Awards Best Art Direction  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Cinematography  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Costume Design  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Director  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Film Editing  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Motion Picture, Comedy or Musical  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Original Score  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Original Song, Come What May  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture, Comedy or Musical  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role, Comedy or Musical: Jim Broadbent  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Screenplay, Original  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Sound  
Nomination Golden Globe Best Visual Effects  
Hollywood Film Festival Movie of the Year  
Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards Best Production Design  
Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards Best Supporting Actor: Jim Broadbent  
National Board of Review, USA Best Picture  
National Board of Review, Best Supporting Actor: Jim Broadbent  
San Diego Film Critics Society Awards Best Production Design

Rocky Mountain News, December 27, 2001 “Director Baz Luhrmann says that, as an artist, he feels a special obligation in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks. ‘I think we storytelling folk, we have a lot to do. We have big job, and we better get on it. We need to be reminding human beings of humanity,’ Luhrmann told the *Los Angeles Times*. ‘At times like this, storytelling has many functions, and we need to get on and do that work.’ Luhrmann also discussed being in Japan to promote his latest film, *Moulin Rouge*, when the attacks occurred. He had a media appointment schedules right afterward, he said. “There was the question of whether I could face 200 Japanese journalists about a cancan film. What could I do? The show must go on,’ Luhrmann said.

Adulthood Inspires Moulin Rouge Movie. Moulin Rouge director Baz Luhrmann made the Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor movie because he wanted to grow up. Luhrmann felt it was time to face up to the realities of adulthood and this gave him the perfect theme for his cabaret film. He explains, "I was moving into my late thirties, and I knew I wasn't the same anymore. I didn't know then that dad was dying - he passed away on the first day of shooting - but I knew there was a lot of pain to come - it's supposed to. I'd always lived as if I were younger than I was, but you can hit the rocks if you're not careful, so I figured it was time to grow up. You have to adjust to the realities of adulthood; that's what the film's about." August 17, 2000.

Moulin Rouge is the third in a style they have dubbed the “Red Curtain” trilogy – a theatricalized cinema style they launched with *Strictly Ballroom*, developed with *Romeo + Juliet*, and now conclude with *Moulin Rouge*. A simple, even naïve, story based on a primary myth is set in a world that is distant, exotic, and yet familiar. The audience participates in the telling of the story through a device. In *Strictly Ballroom* that device is dance, while *Romeo + Juliet* uses the language of Shakespeare. *Moulin Rouge* is told through song.

With its Orpheum plot molded in the likeness of a tragic 19<sup>th</sup> century novel, *Moulin Rouge* is set in a heightened interpretation of end-of-century Paris. The whole stylistic premise has been to decode

## Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

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.

Release Date: May 18th, 2001 (LA/NY); June 1st, 2001 (wide); (originally scheduled for December 25th, 2000, this had been bouncing around the May and June schedule, but with the Cannes premiere scheduled, these dates should hold firm) Re-release: November 21st, 2001 (NY, LA, Chicago, San Francisco)

World Premiere: May 9th, 2001, Cannes Film Festival (opening the festival; also in competition)

Video Release: December 18th, 2001 (moved back a month from November 6th, 2001)

Awards: Best Film, Best Supporting Actor (Broadbent), 2001 National Board of Review; Best Cinematography, Best Sound, Best Editing, Best Production Design, Best Costume Design, 2001 Australian Film Institute Awards; Best Non-European Film, 2001 European Film Awards

Nominations: Best Picture (Comedy or Musical), Best Director, Best Actress (Comedy or Musical) (Kidman), Best Actor (Comedy or Musical) (McGregor), Best Score, Best Song ("Come What May"), 2002 Golden Globes (tied with *A Beautiful Mind* for the most nominations)

Christian/Satine Note: The names of the two central characters might as well have flashing alarms on them when it comes to symbolism. (Satine=Satan, etc.) Armchair deconstructionists, be prepared.

Baz Note: 1999 was a good year for Baz, as his musical version of the "Everybody's Free to Wear Sunscreen" was a fairly big hit.

Based upon: This is said to be loosely based upon the Greek legend, Orpheus in the Underworld. There's also a bit of a similarity to *Camille*, a novel by Alexandre Dumas (adapted to film repeatedly).

Not Based upon: This film has absolutely nothing to do with the 1952 movie directed by John Houston.

Filming: Production on this movie started on November 1st, 1999 in Australia. (Which allows Ms. Kidman to be close to Mr. Cruise as filming winds up on *Mission: Impossible 2*) (6/14/00) Filming wrapped up in late May, 2000.

Genres: Eye Candy, Fantasy, Historical, Musical, Romance

Festival Profile: Cannes

Official Director Site: [BazMark.com](http://BazMark.com) (lots here, including images and multimedia)

Official Site: [MoulinRougeMovie.com](http://MoulinRougeMovie.com)

### **Chapter 1: Main titles**

Baz Luhrmann is the director, co-writer and co-producer of *Moulin Rouge*. Catherine Martin was the production designer and co-costume designer of *Moulin Rouge* and the wife of Baz, and finally, Don McAlpine director of photography. This makes up almost a completely Australian team, with

*Primary source Director's Commentary by Baz Luhrmann, compiled from other sources and Copyright © 2004 by Jay Seller*

the exception of the principal actors and the music. This was a nine month journey from the beginning of the rehearsals with the actors to the completion of the filming.

*Parts of this lecture in italics, display the text of the 'Green Fairy' selections on the DVD disk's special features. These are all direct quotes from Catherine Martin, the Production Designer on the film and wife of Baz Luhrmann, except where noted. "This will give you a perspective of how the digital visual world is combined with the miniature world to create the opening look and shoot of Paris and the parting of the Red Curtain. Watch the bottom of the screen for the annotation of what shots you are viewing at any given time."*

When a movie writer is writing his screen play, he first starts out with an idea, then tries to figure out how to convey that idea to an audience. And thus begins the repeated discussions as to how do you start the film.

The idea here is that there is this boy, named Christian middle to upper class boy, who comes into this world, this Bohemian world. Or underworld, much like what is conveyed to you in the black and white camera movements to our subject's garret. As in the Orpheum myth and Christian is the Orpheum character. (A poet or lyre-player of Greek legend who tried to free his dead wife Eurydice from the underworld by charming the god Hades (Hades is the ancient Greek god ruling over the underworld) with his music.

Some of the earlier drafts of the story, they started in his upper world of Victorian society, with his father being a rich industrialist, and Christian was going to take over the family company that day and has huge augment with his father and says things like, "But father the world is changing and I want to change with it." And the father replies, "There is not enough time to make a change." Then it was to head into a song with his father.

*Moulin Rouge* is very much Luhrmann's vision. But, if he is the painter, Animal Logic Film is his paintbrush and his palette. In this intensely design-driven musical, visual-effects design was crucial to the film's final realization. And it became more crucial as production continued: at the start, there were plans for just 30 special-effects shots, but the film ended up with over 300, making it the largest undertaking ever for Animal Logic Film, one of Australia's leading digital design companies.

"Baz Luhrmann's imagination was as fired by the process itself as by anything else," says Animal Logic visual-effects designer Andrew Brown, who also worked on Jane Campion's *Holy Smoke* and DreamWorks' *Mouse Hunt*. But the new film was fun in a big way, says Brown. "It inspired us, it inspired Baz Luhrmann and I think it will inspire others. It was exhilarating." Luhrmann also stretched everyone: Animal Logic's Justin Martin wrote a plug-in street map of Paris, for example, which randomly generates buildings in the distance. And the team also created some unique particle animation for the 'Green Fairy' sequence.

Luhrmann's intention was to make Montmartre the cultural hub of Paris. This meant that everything outside the quartier was inconsequential and boring. In fact, everything else outside it was reduced to miniature, and shot with motion-control cameras. To create the striking, nostalgically surreal opening shot over Paris, for instance, "the front frame and mid-ground uses photos in a 3D environment, and beyond that we built 3D model buildings," explains Brown. "We didn't have much

## Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

by way of references to work with, so one of our designers flew over to Paris and took a bunch of collage shots, from the top of the Eiffel Tower and the top of Montparnasse.”

This establishing wide shot - the Paris vista - carries within it one of the driving design concepts that appeals to Luhrmann, which imagines a central axis running through the frame. In this case, it runs between the Eiffel Tower, the Moulin Rouge and Sacré Coeur (which was being built at the time of the film’s setting). This requires a slight rearrangement of the real Paris. But, considering the fantasy-driven nature of the whole musical, it would seem churlish to complain.

*“The Windmill. Montmartre (Mo-marsh) was a village on a hill near Paris, where flour was milled. These mills as time went on became the location for working class dance halls. Impresario Charles Zidler and his partner had the radical idea of creating an illicit theme park, his palace of women, a carnal playground that was created not for the working class, but a place for the rich and powerful could fashionable slum, with the ever turning sails as it’s symbol the red windmill, la Moulin rouge.”*

*“The original Moulin Rouge was designed by an illustrator called Willet. He was commissioned by Zidler to do a themed environment that was crowned by a windmill and had two themed structures on either side. Zidler embraced electricity with a passion and totally illuminated the façade of the Moulin Rouge. In fact the area surrounding the Moulin Rouge was one of the first to be electrified.”*

Of the entire red curtain films, with obviously Moulin Rouge being the most developed of this kind of philosophical notion that they had. The first thing they do is to remind the audience that they are entering into some sort of contract with the production. By the opening with the Fox Logo the audience is keenly aware that they are participating in this motion picture. That this is not about naturalism, and a way of doing that is this sort of signaling that the clearly it was theatrical piece that they were about to watch. This idea and this opening piece has been done in many films before this, and they are really quoting a lot of cinema from the forties and the fifties here.

## Chapter 2: There Was a Boy

Here is one of the digital shots done for the movie, which gives the audience the feel that they are going inside this black and white movie.

**Biography Ewan McGregor, Height 5' 10 1/2"**

**Mini biography** Ewan Gordon McGregor was born 31 March 1971 in Crieff, Scotland. At 16, he left Crieff and Morrison Academy to join the Perth Repertory Theatre. His parents encouraged him to leave school and pursue his acting goals rather than be unhappy. McGregor studied drama for a year at Kirkcaldy in Fife, then enrolled at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama for a three-year course. He left right before graduating after snagging the role of Private Mick Hopper in Dennis Potter's 1993 six-part Channel 4(UK) series Lipstick on Your Collar. His first notable role was that of Alex Law in *Shallow Grave*, directed by Danny Boyle, written by John Hodge and produced by Andrew MacDonal. This was followed by *The Pillow Book* and *Trainspotting*, the latter of which brought him to the public's attention. He is now one of the most critically acclaimed actors of his generation, and portrays Obi-wan Kenobi in the first three Star Wars episodes. McGregor is married to French production designer Eve Mavrakis, whom he met while working on the TV show *Kavannagh QC*. They married in France in the summer of 1995 and have a daughter, Clara Mathilde, born in February 1996. Another child is expected in October 2001. McGregor has formed a production company with friends Jonny Lee Miller, Sean Pertwee, Jude Law and Sadie Frost. Called *Natural Nylon*, they hope it will make innovative films that do not conform to Hollywood standards.

**Spouse Eve Mavrakis 1995-present**

### Trivia

- Former roommate of Jude Law.
- (October 1997) Ranked #36 in *Empire* (UK) magazine's "The Top 100 Movie Stars of All Time" list.
- Daughter, Clara Mathilde. Born at 3:45pm-CET
- He met his wife while filming for "Kavannagh QC" (1994).

*Primary source Director's Commentary by Baz Luhrmann, compiled from other sources and Copyright © 2004 by Jay Seller*

## Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

- Was originally up for the lead role in *Beach, The (2000)*, which would have reunited him with director Danny Boyle and screenwriter Hodge, John who collaborated with McGregor on *Shallow Grave (1994)*, *Trainspotting (1996)* and *Life Less Ordinary*, A. The role went to Leonardo DiCaprio. While McGregor blames studio influence for the casting decision he has not spoken to either Boyle nor Hodge since.
- (5 July 2001) Was presented with an honorary doctorate from the University of Ulster at a graduation ceremony in Belfast, Northern Ireland.
- Ewan says that he was inspired to get into show business by his uncle, actor Denis Lawson. Lawson played Wedge Antilles in Episodes 4-6 of *Star Wars*.
- Daughter Esther Rose born 7 November 2001 in London, England, UK.
- Being considered by Chris Columbus to play Remus Lupin in the third Harry Potter sequel, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.
- Was voted #4 in the F.M. magazine's Top 50 list of the sexiest Brit Actors (2001).

Chris Godfrey, the visual effects supervisor started working with the production designers a vista of Paris that you could travel into, even before they started shooting. It started simplistic as a travel through a pop-up book, and developed into quite a complex move through a three-dimensional world. It ended up in this transition as you go through the gate into a world of miniatures that they constructed and shot on a stage in Sydney.

All of these buildings that you see in any detail are actually models. A lot of the digital work that they did was not about making the film look perfect, but imperfect, to try to give it a feeling of old stock and old cinema, because the feelings is that we begin to trust black and white film.

They set the language of the film up here in the beginning opening. This film is meant to be what is know as “high concept comedy and high concept tragedy” that is why these opening sequences are so important to the audience, as it prepares them for this type of vehicle, comic tragic opera.

The shot you see here in the black and white photography with Nicole with a cigarette was a costume check shot that was inserted in the film that is why it is the only shot you see of her with a cigarette.

They constructed several model street scenes outside of that window, which would represent their constructed sights of Paris. This shot pulling out of Paris and then back into the train station is all digital. It was all done with digital matte paintings and all of the characters that you see are all blue screen shot and then superimposed in the scene or set. As we go through the window we are going through the window of a model and then into a set.

*“Christian’s garret (small or cramped watch tower) was designed to be the room of a penniless poet. It was directly south of the turning windmill and the Moulin Rouge. Baz wanted the windmill to be directly outside of his window, while he was typing. For Christian’s garret they made two versions of it, 1) was the real size set, where all of the interior scenes took place. It also had an half interior, so they could shot both inside and outside of the window. 2) Version of Christian’s Garret was a model, which encompassed his apartment and Toulouse-Lautrec’s apartment above. Baz using the big stick is using it to express how he wants the shot to look. Baz likes to use his own video camera to express what he wants the content of the shot to be. It really is the easiest way for the crew to get inside of Baz’s head to understand the look and the feel of what he wants to achieve.”*

*“Christian’s garret would appear to be the simplest of the all of the interiors you see in this film. Ironically, some of the most simple are the most difficult. There are also so few pieces of furniture, thus they get the most focus.”*

### Chapter 3: Meet the Bohemians

“Only one problem, I’d never been in love.” Was the last shot taken for this film. What they now do is take you from this tragic moment to this heightened moment, much like a Warner Brothers cartoon, except that this is a Fox film, to this *Alice in Wonderland* feel. They keep pushing you to accept a little bit more, very much like “we are off to see the wizard,” on this magical journey.

In a weird way this is serving the same function as the gas station scene in the Leonardo DeCaprio’s *Romeo and Juliet*. They are making an active choice with the audience, saying “don’t be passive; you have got to keep up with us here.” Really much like slapping the audience around, keep up with us, you have got to be awake; you have got to get involved. They are almost like daring you to give up on them. Of course, once the story line does arrive, it is an almost classical story line that they give you, but you have to sit through about twenty minutes of this questioning, as to where this is going to take you. I don’t want to use the word confronting, but you have got to make the choice to engage in this film. You can’t sit back and be passive about it.

The reason John Leguizamo has a shirt on his head, is that he is supposed to be portraying a nun. He is also playing one of the historical characters of the film, that of Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901). The film also stars John Leguizamo as Toulouse Lautrec, who plays cupid to the two lovers. “I’ve read a lot of biographies of Lautrec... he was the product of first cousins and very wealthy, but he had a lot of defects, so his parents stopped having children after him,” says Leguizamo, who studied the painter’s life and spent time learning about his background. “He was born a dwarf with an enlarged tongue, so he spoke with a lisp, drooled a lot and had big sinus problems. He was a decadent little man who loved attention. He loved to be noticed, and he found a way through partying. He loved to drink and he drank himself to death. Well, he died of syphilis and absinthe poisoning! I’ve tried absinthe: its wild stuff! It’s like drinking acid - it burns a hole right through your gut.”

Lautrec’s short stature meant that Leguizamo had to work on his knees, with little stilts attached. But, since *Moulin Rouge* is a musical, he had to dance as well, and his knees took such a beating that the actor had to use sticks when walking about off the set.

Crippled at age 12, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec was born into an aristocratic family in the south of France in 1864. His father, Count Alphonse, was a notorious eccentric known for all kinds of unpredictable behavior: from washing his socks in the river (unheard of for an aristocrat!) to galloping off to a hunt wearing outlandish costumes, to simply disappearing for long stretches of time. The young Henri never became very close to him.

Unknown at the time, Henri suffered from a genetic condition that prevented his bones from healing properly. Fatefully, at age twelve, he broke his left leg. And at age fourteen, he broke his right leg. Both legs ceased to grow, while the rest of his body continued to grow normally.

At maturity, Lautrec was 4 1/2 feet tall. But his great misfortune was a sort of blessing in disguise, at least from our perspective. After his accidents he was no longer able to follow his father in the typically aristocratic pastimes of riding and hunting. Instead, he focused on sketching and painting.

## Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

Art and alcohol; In his late teens, Lautrec was honored to become a student of the artist Fernand Cormon, whose studio was located on that hill above the city, Montmartre.

When he graduated from Cormon's studio, Lautrec gave himself up fully to the bohemian life, spending much of his time drinking and carousing -- and constantly sketching -- in cabarets, racetracks, and brothels.

His stunted physique earned him laughs and scorn, and kept him from experiencing many of the physical pleasures offered in Montmartre, a sorrow that he drowned in alcohol. At first it was beer and wine. Then brandy, whiskey, and the infamous absinthe found their ways into his life.

Art and alcohol were his only mistresses, and they were mistresses to which he devoted all of his time and energy. He was doing one or both almost every day of his life until he died.

Adapting the fad for Japanese style (asymmetric composition, flat areas of color) that then pervaded French art to the also burgeoning art of the picture poster, he created thousands of artworks both to memorialize his friends and to advertise their venues. Among those whose images are now a part of art history are the Moulin Rouge dancers Louise Weber and Jane Avril, and the combative singer/entrepreneur Aristide Bruant.

One of the things that Ewan is doing as an actor, and they are enhancing with the typewriting and the rhythm of cutting, and the visual language of it, getting faster and faster, as an actor he is taking us from this tragic more naturalistic performance to this heightened crazy nightmare. Now that is crucial, as very soon a lot of characters are going to start singing, and so when everyone breaks out in song, they are preparing the audience for this heighten world. You need to be able to break out in song.

The typewriter is used extensively to explain the plot, is actually very close to being historically correct. Even though the typewriter is an antique for the film, they had to get it completely renewed, so it wouldn't look like an antique, and also they had to get it to work.

The green fairy was toyed with as being an evil fairy and they were even going to incorporate the likes of Marilyn Manson for these shots, and then scraped the idea. Pop star Kylie Minogue takes on the small but key role of the Green Fairy. Every nightclub needs one!

Absinthe was referred to as the green fairy. We know it was in terms of 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris it was an affliction of the whole society. At about 6 o'clock in the evening everyone was basically off of their face on this totally hallucinogenic drink that was a drug. There is a point to this very Disneyic dream fairy, who is beckoning Christian into the underworld, and he enters in a kind of an Alice in Wonderland manner. Where he finds himself in the underworld a world where love and just about anything is for sale.

The essential stylistic guide laid down by Luhrmann meant that everything had to be related to the music and had to play to the rhythm of the film because, after all, it is a love story, with powerful, uplifting music: the visual effects and the music are all part of the whole jigsaw that give the film its emotional impact.

Meanwhile, Luhrmann, who has “wonderful memories from when Cannes launched my first film, *Strictly Ballroom*”, is especially excited about being back on the Croisette. “I am particularly gratified that an American-financed film almost completely created in Australia and specific to french culture and history, has been embraced this way by Cannes,” he says.

#### **Chapter 4: At the Moulin Rouge “you’ll Have Fun”**

When Napoleon III and his city planner Baron Haussmann planned out how to make Paris the most beautiful city in Europe, the first step, naturally, was to grant large sweeps of land near the center of the city to Haussmann's friends and financial supporters. This drove the original inhabitants to the edges of the city: to the districts of Clichy, Le Villette, and the hill with a view of the city, Montmartre.

Since Montmartre was officially outside the city and free of its taxes, and the nuns there made wine, the hill did not take long to become the place to go to get drunk cheaply. From there, it was only a short step for Montmartre to become the center of free-wheeling and decadent entertainment.

Life in the Montmartre district of Paris near the turn of the last century, especially in the popular cabaret the Moulin Rouge, was filled with characters like you might find in a movie. In fact, some of the characters in the recent movie "Moulin Rouge" were based on real people -- especially the artist portrayed by John Leguizamo, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

When the Moulin Rouge opened on October 5, 1889, Lautrec had already gained much popularity within the bohemian community and was one of the invite-only guests at the opening night party.

The Moulin Rouge, which means "red mill," was just that: a huge windmill painted red. It became a landmark, and a symbol of the *joie de vivre* -- the joy of life -- in Paris at the time.

The Moulin Rouge was the "rendezvous du high life." It was a theater, a concert hall, and a dance hall -- all at the same time.

People came from all over to dance, to watch the dancers, and to watch each other watching the dancers. And Lautrec was there, at the same table every night, drinking and sketching everything which caught his fancy, particularly the dancers.

One of the first dancers who caught Lautrec's eye was Louise Weber, nicknamed "La Goulue," (The Glutton). Shameless and outrageous, she earned her nickname through her habit of outdrinking anyone in a bar. She quickly drew attention to herself by dancing on tables, displaying the heart embroidered on her underwear, removing men's hats with her toes and, of course, drinking everyone under the table. One of the men La Goulue attracted was Auguste Renoir, the painter. Renoir introduced her to nude modeling, and through these connections she found her way into the fashionable dance clubs of Montmartre.

At the Moulin Rouge, she danced with her lanky partner, Jacques Renaudin, whose skeletal frame and rubbery contortions brought him the nickname "Valentin le Desosse," (Valentin the Boneless). Lautrec immortalized these two in his most famous poster, "Moulin Rouge - La Goulue." Her alcoholism got worse over the years, and she got fatter and fatter. When she eventually returned to

## Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

Montmartre, no one recognized her. She scraped an existence by selling peanuts, cigarettes, and matches on the streets. On her deathbed in 1929, Weber asked a priest, "Father, will God forgive me? I am La Goulue."

The singer-comedian-entrepreneur Aristide Bruant was one of Lautrec's first friends in Montmartre. When Bruant opened his own club, Le Mirliton, Lautrec was one of its first regular patrons.

Bruant was famous for wittily insulting and degrading his audiences, to their great amusement. His customers were regularly greeted as "scoundrel," "prostitute," "sonofabitch," and "pig." They were warned. The sign at the door read: "For people who like to be told off."

Lautrec was the only patron consistently treated with respect. When Lautrec entered, Bruant would silence the house and proclaim, "Here comes the great painter Toulouse-Lautrec with one of his friends ... and a punk I don't know."

When Bruant performed at the club les Ambassadeurs, he asked Lautrec to paint an imposing portrait of him for the poster. At Bruant's insistence, "Ambassadeurs: Aristide Bruant" was posted all over the cabaret, and all over the streets of Paris, drawing considerable attention not just to Bruant but also to the young painter who had so accurately and strikingly portrayed him. It remains one of Lautrec's most famous paintings.

Lautrec's lifestyle could not be sustained. In 1899 he entered what we would today call a detox clinic.

In September, 1901, he passed away at the age of 36.

As he lay dying, his mother and a few friends sat at his side. When his father, the rarely-seen Count Alphonse showed up, everyone was astonished -- except Henri. He said, "Good Papa. I knew you wouldn't miss the kill."

During Henri's last hours, Count Alphonse behaved as strangely as ever. The count suggesting that they cut off Henri's beard in accordance with certain Arabic customs that he'd heard of, and that they use Henri's shoelaces to flick at noisy flies. Henri's last words were addressed to his father: "Old fool."

Today we know Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec as the archetypical bohemian artist of the belle époque, the "beautiful era" in Paris in the last decade of the 19th Century. He helped usher in the new century, and died when the job was done.

Lautrec captured the spirit and emotion of the era in his posters and portraits. Although his handicap and his alcohol abuse kept him from enjoying some of life's pleasures, Lautrec clearly shared in the joie de vivre of the time. Today, we can share in it through his artwork.

### **Helpful Background:**

Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

- Toulouse-Lautrec was the scion of one of France's oldest aristocratic families. As a youth, due to a congenital calcium deficiency, he broke both legs and they stopped growing. He was thus handicapped for life. Toulouse-Lautrec took up painting during his convalescence and became one of the most original and prolific of French painters. He frequented the cabarets and brothels of Paris and was friends with a number of artists and intellectuals, including Vincent Van Gogh and Oscar Wilde. The Moulin Rouge was a famous cabaret in Paris frequented by Lautrec. One of his most famous works is a poster created for the Moulin Rouge. Lautrec died of a stroke brought on by his alcoholism.
- Toulouse-Lautrec is classified by art historians as a "Postimpressionist," a group which includes Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Cezanne. These artists developed their distinctive styles at the end of the 19th Century. In their paintings the "Postimpressionists" convey, not how the world looks, but how the world makes them feel. Toulouse-Lautrec was strongly influenced by Japanese prints which were popular in Paris at the time. His work is distinguished by foreshortened perspectives, sharp lines, flat expanses of color, asymmetric composition, and oblique angles. Examples of Lautrec's work can be found at [The Lautrec Web Site](#). There are many books with copies of Lautrec's work. Point out to children the use of line and color characteristic of this painter.

*“The Main Hall. This particular dance hall was built to capitalize on the dance craze of the Cancan. At this point it wasn't kick line kind of dance, it was more of a cross between break dancing and lap dancing. There are a number of enclosed dance halls in Paris, but arguably this one was the largest and the most sumptuous. The main hall of the Moulin Rouge could probably hold at any given time somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000 people in it. On any given day we could only have 350 extras, so in order to give Baz the experience of being in the Hall, we got a whole bunch of scale railway people and stuck them into realistic groupings and built a model that was in the same scale as the people and showed Baz.*

*One hundred to one hundred and fifty people at any one time were constructing the set of the Moulin Rouge. This included everyone from a carpenter, to a soft furnisher, to a decorator, to a metal worker, to a modeler, to a plaster, floor specialists that come in to make sure the floor works. The real work is to give the audience the experience of being in the Moulin Rouge and what it was like, like Hunter was in 1890.”*

As everyone is aware these are the voices of Christy Aguilera, Kimberly ‘Lil Kim’ Jones, Mya and Pink. The idea here was to take popular music and decode it so that audiences today could see what it would have felt like to be the audience in the Moulin Rouge at that time. It felt sexy and exciting, and they try to convey that with the use of this music.

Here again on the exterior shots of the Moulin Rouge, you are using a tiny model, with real people placed inside that model to get this look and feel. The editing of this film had to be a real slave to the story line, always forcing the storyline forward. This is all filmed in a 1940's and 1950's movie style of filmmaking.

This film thus far was all shot on six stages at the Fox Studios located in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. There is only one exterior shot in this film, which in this day and age is remarkable.

*“The Garden. The garden at the Moulin Rouge was a sort of secondary dance area, it was also the historical equivalent of a big pick up joint, it had a lot of extra entertainment possibilities. A side show booth, the band stand, boxing ring, where people could watch boxing, donkey rides, so you could get to see girls lifting their dresses, bushes for illicit rendezvous, and of course, there was the giant elephant.”*

*“The Moulin Rouge actually had a giant elephant, and inside of it there was an opium den and an Arabic night club. The elephant used in the film is a little bit different, but the same kind of building. In our movie, it house’s Satine Boudoir the elephant red room. Developing the elephant was on of the lengthiest processes in designing the Moulin Rouge, for a lot of practical reasons. The audience needed to believe that you were in the stomach of the elephant which meant it needed to have the feeling of being rounded and belly like.”*

*“We also had to make a real scale elephant at about thirty feet or ten meters tall. For the Moulin Rouge garden we built two interpretations of it, the first one was a real live set with a ten meter elephant, and the second version of the set was a 1/10 scale model that they shot to fill in any of the gaps of things that they weren’t able to shoot on the real set.”*

*“They had real limited time to shot inside of the garden, we were running over schedule and Star Wars was coming in hot on their heels. So they had to leave the garden after four days of shooting, instead of the scheduled seven days.”*

*“Seeing the elephant, our defacto mascot, being destroyed in the garden, was a very sad moment in the filming of the Moulin Rouge. Rest in Peace 1999-2000”*

### **Chapter 5: The Can-can (Bohos Evade Zilder)**

They spent a great deal of time designing and making the cancan dresses for these ladies. The Cancan dance was a shocking dance as the women were exposing their legs, but even more shocking was the fact that the women wore split Knickers at this time, thus they were exposing a lot more. Obviously, in a PG-13 film you can not do that, so they were trying to create excitement about lifting up your dress, in a kind of much, sort of tame away, naughty but nice.

Zidler’s Rap was a solo by itself here, but was later mixed with the Cancan. It was done to a slower tempo and was removed after an early screening. It did feature the poverty of 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris outside of the walls of the Moulin Rouge.

The whole idea of the world of Moulin Rouge is that it gets wilder and wilder until suddenly you think it is going to explode, and then at the very moment when you think it is going to explode, and it couldn’t get any more incredible, Satin arrives.

### **Chapter 6: Satine – The Sparkling Diamond**

In case you are wondering, it is Nicole, high up on this trapeze. Being Nicole, she absolutely insisted on doing this herself, and she did take lessons from form circus trapeze artists. Nicole spent approximately three hours a day in the make-up chair getting all of theses wigs, jewelry and costumes on her.

## Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

Kidman and McGregor are acknowledged as actors. But, asked the world, can they sing? As usual, Luhrmann defies expectations - not just those of the audience, but those of the industry and even of his cast. Kidman's remark that she "would find that, if I was to sing I couldn't do it. But if I sang as Satine, I could", adds weight to the growing belief that Luhrmann is some kind of cinematic shaman, egging his actors and his crew on to things they have never previously attempted on film.

The actress, however, reveals the secret pact she made with McGregor. "Ewan and I had a tacit agreement that we'd support each other throughout, taking risks, and be willing to make complete fools of ourselves in front of each other," she says.

She needn't have worried. "Nicole sings like a kind of Marlene Dietrich," says Luhrmann. "She's an actress-singer, but she absolutely puts a hole in it. She's not Whitney Houston but she can kick it. And she's really whacky!"

You can see the horse theme, the equestrian theme, and that is meant to be a decorative theme, that picks up from Satine coming down.

**Mini biography for Nicole Kidman**, Nickname is Nic, height is 5'10"

Elegant redhead Nicole Kidman, known as one of Hollywood's top Australian imports, was actually born in Honolulu, Hawaii to Anthony (a biochemist and clinical psychologist) and Janelle (a nursing instructor) Kidman. The family moved almost immediately to Washington, D.C., where Nicole's father pursued his research on breast cancer, then, three years later, made the pilgrimage to her parents' native Sydney.

Young Nicole's first love was ballet, but she eventually took up mime and drama as well (her first stage role was a bleating sheep in an elementary school Christmas pageant). In her adolescent years, acting edged out the other arts and became a kind of refuge--as her classmates sought out fun in the sun, the fair-skinned Kidman retreated to dark rehearsal halls to practice her craft. She worked regularly at the Philip Street Theater, where she once received a personal letter of praise and encouragement from audience member Jane Campion (then a film student).

Kidman eventually dropped out of high school to pursue acting full-time. She broke into movies at age 16, landing a role in the Australian holiday favorite Bush Christmas (1983). That appearance touched off a flurry of film and TV offers, including a lead in BMX Bandits (1983) and a turn as a schoolgirl-turned-protester in the miniseries "Vietnam" (1986) (mini) (for which she won her first Australian Film Institute Award). With the help of an American agent, she eventually made her US debut opposite Sam Neill in the at-sea thriller Dead Calm (1989).

Kidman's next casting coup scored her more than exposure. While starring as Tom Cruise's doctor/love interest in the racetrack romance Days of Thunder (1990), she won over the Hollywood hunk hook, line, and sinker. After a whirlwind courtship (and decent box office returns), the couple wed on December 24, 1990. Determined not to let her new marital status overshadow her fledgling career, the actress pressed on. She appeared as a catty high school senior in the Australian film Flirting (1991), then as Dustin Hoffman's moll in the gangster flick Billy Bathgate (1991). She reunited with Cruise for Far and Away (1992), the story of young Irish lovers who flee to America in the late 1800s, and starred opposite Michael Keaton in the tear-tugger My Life (1993).

Despite her steady employment, critics and moviegoers still hadn't quite warmed to Kidman as a leading lady. She tried to spice up her image by seducing Val Kilmer in Batman Forever (1995), but achieved her real breakthrough with Gus Van Sant's To Die for (1995). As a fame-crazed housewife determined to eliminate any obstacle in her path, Kidman proved that she had an impressive range and deadly comic timing. She took home a Golden Globe and several critics' awards for the performance.

In 1996, Kidman stepped into a corset to work with her countrywoman and onetime admirer, Jane Campion, on the adaptation of Henry James's Portrait of a Lady, The (1996). A few months later, she tore across the screen as a nuclear weapons expert in Peacemaker, The (1997), adding "action star" to her professional repertoire. She and Cruise then disappeared into a notoriously long, secretive shoot for Stanley Kubrick's sexual thriller Eyes Wide Shut (1999). The couple's on-screen shenanigans prompted an increase in public speculation about their sex life (rumors had long been circulating that their marriage was a cover-up for Cruise's homosexuality); tired of denying tabloid attacks, they successfully sued The Star for a story alleging that they needed a sex therapist to coach them through love scenes.

Family life has always been a priority for Kidman. Born to social activists (mom was a feminist, dad a labor advocate), Nicole and her little sister, Antonia, discussed current events around the dinner table and participated in their parents' campaigns by passing out pamphlets on street corners. When her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, 17-year-old Nicole stopped working and took a massage course so that she could provide physical therapy (her mom eventually beat the cancer). She and Cruise adopted two children: Isabella Jane (born in 1993) and Connor Antony (born 1995). Despite their rock-solid image, the couple announced in early 2001 that they were separating due to career conflicts.

Spouse: Tom Cruise (December 24, 1990- August 8, 2001); 2 children

*Primary source Director's Commentary by Baz Luhrmann, compiled from other sources and Copyright © 2004 by Jay Seller*

## Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

### Trivia

- Listed in "People Weekly"s "Most Intriguing People" list. (December 25, 1995/January 1, 1996 issue)
- Suffered a broken rib while rehearsing a dance routine for the movie *Moulin Rouge!* (2001). Production was halted while she recovered.
- (1999) Chosen by People Magazine as one of the 50 Most Beautiful People in the World
- (1996) Chosen by People (USA) magazine as one of the 50 most beautiful people in the world
- Wore a corset while filming *Portrait of a Lady, The* (1996) to take her waist down to 19"
- Spent two weeks in bed after filming of *Portrait of a Lady, The* (1996) diagnosed as suffering from "emotional stress"
- Adopted 1 son and 1 daughter.
- Nicole's father is renowned Sydney psychologist Anthony Kidman, famous in his own right for work done with breast cancer patients, among other things.
- Left handed.
- (October 1999) Crusader against child abuse. "Children should be allowed to grow up without fear of cruelty."
- (5 February 2001) Separated from husband Tom Cruise.
- In *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) Kidman actually sang alongside Ewan McGregor.
- Conor Antony (adopted son) born January 17, 1995.
- Isabella Jane (adopted daughter) born December 22, 1992.
- Scared of butterflies
- Chosen by Entertainment Weekly as the #1 entertainer of the year for the year 2001.

### Personal quotes

- "Every day there is a compromise. Living with somebody requires a lot of understanding. But I love being married. I really love it. Sometimes I try to downplay it a bit because people are like, 'God you guys.' I just feel so fortunate that I have found someone who will put up with me and stay with me." - on her marriage to Tom Cruise - August 2000
- [On husband Tom Cruise] "I wouldn't want to be married to me, but luckily he does."
- "Now I can wear heels." [commenting on her break-up with Tom Cruise - August 2001]
- "It's so bizarre, I'm not scared of snakes or spiders. But I'm scared of butterflies. There is something eerie about them. Something weird!"

### Biography from Leonard Maltin's *Movie Encyclopedia*:

Born in Hawaii and raised in Australia, she studied dance and drama from childhood and made her film debut in *Bush Christmas* (1983) at the age of 14. Her performance in the 1985 Australian miniseries "Vietnam" made her a star in that country and won her several awards. Other credits include *BMX Bandits* (1983), *Wills and Burke: The Untold Story* (1985), *Windrider* (1986, as a rock star), *Emerald City* (1989), and the miniseries "Five Mile Creek" (1985) and "Bangkok Hilton" (1990). Her performance as a snooty upperclasswoman in *Flirting* (1990) was duly noted when American moviegoers got to see the film in 1992. This tall, strawberry-blond actress garnered excellent notices for her first major film role, as the terrorized but resourceful wife adrift with a homicidal maniac in the Australian sailing thriller *Dead Calm* (1989). She came to America for *Days of Thunder* (1990), in which she was conveniently cast as a doctor for leading man Tom Cruise. The highly touted racing saga failed to live up to expectations, but offscreen Kidman won the heart of costar Cruise, whom she subsequently married. Since then, she has played Dutch Schultz's moll in *Billy Bathgate* (1991), an Irish immigrant in *Far and Away* (1992, reteamed with Cruise), an American spouse (who's a psychopath in reality), in the overheated *Malice* and an expectant mother in the tearjerker *My Life* (both 1993). In 1995, Kidman starred in *Batman Forever* and *To Die For*.

The use of blue light in this scene is done to emphasis Nicole's wonderful skin tone, which is as white as it actually appears on film. An actor or actress who has white skin like this really shines under the filming lights, like Marilyn Monroe. The reason is, is that they actually reflect more light. This actually was a necessity in the early 50-60's for stars, because of the way lighting was, it is not a necessity today. But it is a massive asset, because you do stand out, look at how Nicole stands out here, even if you disregard her beauty and ability.

We are constantly changing gears here, from high tragedy to high comedy. They are giving this a sort of Vincent Minnelli musical look. This look is reflected in the lighting design and choice and of course in the production design.

Nicole's costume had been redesigned numerous times; originally it had a ripe off skirt that she was meant to ripe off as she landed on the ground. As you can see from the acrobatic nature of the performance, the skirt would just not cooperate. So they took the skirt off, and one of the cutters, who cut all of Nicole's costumes, came up with the idea of creating a tail suit back for it.

As historically incorrect, a lot of this is done with stage follow spots, but it a license that they needed to take. But if you imagine a Cabaret show from the 40's and the 50's, a spot light look, suits that language. If it were to look like the 1900's you would have a lot of low light, presumably very heavy and moody. You also would not have seen as much of Nicole Kidman's legs either. The historical truth is that Ziegler, the founder of Cancan, did have a natural fascination with the new  
*Primary source Director's Commentary by Baz Luhrmann, compiled from other sources and Copyright © 2004 by Jay Seller*

electric light. In fact one of the reasons that Ziegler needed so much money for his productions at the Moulin Rouge was his fascination with the electric light bulb. Some people actually went to the Moulin Rouge, to see the use of the electric lights, amongst other things. At this time period one of the entertainment features was to go to the Electric Light Palace and look at the lights. Much like when the invention of the television came to America, people would stand twenty deep to see the image on the television screen displayed in the store windows.

One of the strengths of this section of the film is the massive energy levels they transmit through the screen; the scene is just full of energy. It is also right on the border of what you can take as far as cinematic language is concerned. There is also so much historical detail that they couldn't go into, the Moulin Rouge was a place that was full of extraordinary almost freakish performers, the famed pet-a-man, for example. They only attempt to give an impression of that, as they are driving through this story, a very simple classic story of tragic love.

The music was critical to the film's realization. Luhrmann uses contemporary music to instill in the audience the notion that the Moulin Rouge is the sexiest, wildest nightclub in the world where the most dangerous and electric dances are performed on stage. That meant that a rehash of the traditional can-can just wouldn't do it for today's audiences. "But if you hear Fat Boy Slim's music..." says Luhrmann, helpfully...

What is more, the popularity of many of the songs helps to ground the film, according to executive music producer Anton Monstead, even if they are sometimes rearranged, like The Police's 'Roxanne', which is done as a tango, or 'Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend' à la Kidman; or Bono with T-Rex's song, 'Children of the Revolution'. The first single, 'Lady Marmalade', is already a disco hit, but has been reworked, as has Nat King Cole's 'Nature Boy', with David Bowie and Massive Attack. And McGregor teams with Placido Domingo for Elton John's 'Your Song'. Clearly, *Moulin Rouge* is not your average musical. But, insists Luhrmann, our familiarity with the basic musical material (and lyrics) makes for accessibility.

Nicole and Ewan do all of their own dancing. When you see all of the hats getting kicked up into the air, there are hundreds and hundreds of fishing wires connected to them. As she is lifted up into the ceiling, this is a four walled set, with no ceiling, they designed these levels of red curtains, which you can now see, are on slides, and they can move them up or down and fill in the gaps that you now see. And now in this much heightened fifties musical moment, we cut into it with tragedy again. This device of reminding the audience all the way through the film, that Satine has only so many minutes before she dies, is absolutely a fundamental device of comic tragedy. The audience must always be reminded of the end, and they know where they are traveling towards.

## **Chapter 7: Satine Falls**

The grips designed a dolly track that ran along the walls in this back stage area, to get these overhead shots of her being carried to her dressing room, a clever idea, certainly achieved on very short notice.

You should notice here, that Satine's costume is quite different, as this was one of the first things that they shot. The sequences of the dance meant that they had to change certain elements of the costumes; particularly the straps had to be elasticized in a firmer fashion, so that if you look very carefully you will notice that there are some differences.

This musical piece does not appear on the soundtrack CD, but is known as Beck's Circus performance of David Bowie's Diamond Dogs.

There was a two sided facet to the Moulin Rouge, out on stage there was intense glamour, but backstage it was a lot of squalor. All of the girls at the Moulin Rouge came from the streets; all of the girls were prostitutes. They were really street people who were presenting an entertainment, to attract and catch the attention of the middle class and the upper class.

The squalor of the backstage helps to underline the glamour that both the girls are searching for backstage and the audience comes to get at the Moulin Rouge; it kind of intensifies both areas of the spectrum, and also makes you feel more intensely about backstage.

Rare that you get an actress to turn around and say, "How do I look?" and you have to reply, pretty good actually, it is a pretty unanimous decision, people all agree.

### **Chapter 8: A poetry Reading**

Many versions of the elephant were made and in this sequence, they use all of them, 1) a model shot at the beginning, in which Christian is matted into the front, 2) the legs of the real elephant, 3) and now they are in a room, which is a set inside the belly of the elephant. Every time you look out that heart shape in the background of Paris, it is all models work; it is not CG or Digital work, but old fashion models. Scale models of the city, through the elephant's sinus cavity.

Of course, there was a real elephant at the Moulin Rouge that had been bought from a theme park that was located right next door to the exhibition that was in Paris in the late 1900 century. There was a craze for these elephants and there was also one in Philadelphia, and they all had a spiral staircase up the leg and a theatre in the stomach where performances could take place and a viewing platform on top, where the saddle of the elephant was. In the case of the Moulin Rouge historically there was a night club with sort of strip dances in there, where opium was smoked. The other thing that is really interesting is that everything that you see has an absolute historical basis for it appearing in this movie. But they weren't really bordello rooms inside of the elephant, what they have done is taken the whole world of sin, with its night clubs and its bordellos and night clubs, and conjunct it into the Moulin Rouge. So that world of Manmarta that Christian would have entered into would be contained in the Moulin Rouge. Now it is an absolute fact that prostitution took place in the garden of Moulin Rouge, and it is an absolute fact that with enough money you could get into a sexual relationship with the girls. The decision to put the boudoir inside the elephant was that it was just a good clean way of telling the story.

There are all kinds of famed pictures of brothel rooms, quite extraordinary brothel rooms. From Arabic themes, to hospital themes, to bull ring themes, this is one of the director's favorites. This is a very small set that you are looking at, thus you will notice how they restrict the camera. Many times they move the camera round, just to show you how small the set really is, one of the little side notes is the weather in Sydney held up the filming of these scenes. The columns and mirrors in the background are resin and it had rained for about a month in Sydney and it would dry, so they couldn't get the pieces up to paint them.

## Chapter 9: Your Song

Question came to the producers and the directors, is it really their voices. The answer is yes, the only imported voices were for the minor characters, and Jim Broadbent, who plays Harold Zidler. All of the principals, and particularly Ewan and Nicole, it is their own vocal work throughout the whole film. They used two techniques, 1) which is old style, where they sing to playback, which is what Christian is doing here, 2) the new method, known as 'Sing in Situation', where they sing in the set. This is where they link the orchestra to the voice with new software.

This is known as a fast set and a box set. A box set as it is defined by the walls around it and it is vertical, a fast set, as the doors open and closes. That sounds simple enough, but with a working door, it rarely works, there is always shifting of the door frame and the walls of the set.

This section is known as 'Dance across the Sky.' They did so many drafts and executions of this sequence, that it was a very difficult day of shooting. Ewan had just come back from England, and Nicole from the Academy Awards, and they had been working on the dance routine a long time, with only one day to shoot it. A lot of these shots of Nicole are actually stolen from a previous scene and layered in, just because they didn't get enough close-ups of her at the time. You'll see later some of the other deviations of this scene. The idea of it was to do a kind of 1930's musical device, and so because of his incredible like Orpheus gift of song, they fall in love. (Orpheus, a poet and lyre-player of Greek legend who tried to free his dead wife Eurydice from the underworld by charming the god Hades with his music.) Dance across the sky had another version which was eliminated after a preview, which featured a border around the picture, much like a Victorian postcard of clouds and stars, and then had dancing animated stars that sang the chorus part with the moon, and finally ending with a rain of rose petals.

That whole sequence was made up of actually shooting in the studio around models on a smoky floor and digitally enhancing that, and model shots and matte paintings.

## Chapter 10: Introducing the Duke

You get a little Vivian Leigh here, "Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn." You get that Vivian Leigh and Clarke Gable photo type here, ala *Gone with the Wind*.

Toulouse's hat is tied on his head for these shots. Some other great costume trivia, all of Nicole's garter clips were designed and cast for her. Which is certainly going a little bit far in the detail department, but also they were cast in sterling silver. Why Sterling Silver? Sterling silver is a very firm metal, which doesn't bend; as a result it creates tension in the garter belt. You can't have just a simple buckle there, as you do get that close up of Ewan hiding behind her bottom, and with the rest of the detail in the set, it must also be carried out in the close-up views of the costuming and props.

They are also walking the edge of period references and references to movies of the forties and fifties, thus wherever they had a chance to take something from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and honor it, they actually enhanced that vehicle. They had a catalog of jewelry items from the 19<sup>th</sup> century that they used extensively to copy and then bejeweled items and props for use in this movie. Often times in a movie, they can get by with really cheap accouterments, however, using the real item or something that closely resembles the real item, really motivates the actors. It is like taking that little step forward and being forced to do your absolute best.

## **Chapter 11: The Emergency Rehearsal**

This box set was also designed so that any wall can be pulled down and removed if needed. It is not like they are on wheels and they can be wheeled around, it would take a half day to de-assemble the wall. So as a director is shooting, he must be very clear about the type of shots he wishes to achieve in a day, so that the set people can have the set ready for those shots on the next day of shooting. This is called 'planning coverage,' which is the shots. You must really understand about the shots that you are going to be setting up and dropping.

This is a real garden with a real elephant in it, this quick insert shot here of them kissing in the window. The set was built around a real thirty foot elephant and was only used for a couple of days of shooting, as they were really far behind in their shooting schedule.

Nicole had a great time playing dead, heavy. The room is based on 19<sup>th</sup> century quasi (resembling, but not having all of the characteristics of) Indian eroticism, there is all of these Karma Sutra statues all around and they are really quite hardcore, as they depict about every sexual position you can imagine. They had to have the prop person constantly moving them around, as by the time they were all in the room, they could hardly point the camera without picking up one of these hardcore statues in the immediate background. The airline version asked that the half naked lady on the wall painting, to be removed from the film. But she really isn't naked, she is wearing a bikini, but as you can tell it is hard to perceive that. There is a really ridiculous list of what some airlines will accept and what others will not accept, it is a "dark and terrible place to visit" according to the director.

When that Garnish (decoration) first arrived, they had bought it out of a Hindu temple there in Sydney, and it was possibly the most garishly bright garnish that they had ever seen, they had to add that bronze paint job to it.

In the old MGM movies the idea of an ensemble scene was very common, and to do a scene like this as an ensemble, the company of actors has to rehearse for a very long time. Notice that they are then able to film it in wide shots in a sort of theatrical way, as if you are observing a play and that is what makes it interesting. Normally when we watch a movie we are watching a lot of individual performances in a scene. This is all very stagy, very forties, and very old fashion, but very unusual in this day and age to see this kind of ensemble/working together performance in a movie, especially with that many people.

## **Chapter 12: The Pitch**

A problem with propping this room was that the director wanted all of the props that are used in this sequence to naturally occur in this room. Thus they had to have a lot of practices with the cast to decide where they would pick up each of the props that they were to use in this scene.

John Leguizamo is wearing artificial legs connected to his knees, with his knees strapped up behind him, to walking on his knees wearing blue socks that would later be digitized, to wearing wires. It was really a lot of effort to get him to appear as this handicapped individual, in almost every shot that he is in.

Most of the set accouterments were purchased in India for this set. All of the curtains were made, soft furnishings made, tassels made and embroidery made, and fringing.

It is hard to describe how much commitment is required from the actors to do a sequence like this one, you've got ensemble acting, seven actors in the scene. Not only do they have to do long retracted (repeatedly doing the same piece again and again) period of rehearsals, but they had to be involved in creating these elaborate looks, there is virtually no one that is not touched in a kind of stylistic way. For example, if you look at Satine, she is wearing a wig, if you look at the Argentinean there, he is wearing a weave, and bearded... all of that had to be attached. If you look at Zidler he is also wigged and bearded, Duke has hair, false teeth, false mustache, all of these very old elaborate styles of hairdos, were several hours of hard work every morning, just to get them ready to shoot.

There is something to say about the horse here. You will see it here in a sequence where the Maharaja chases them on a horse. You will see a horse later on in the background, there was a whole sequence that was deleted from the film, where they are chased by a horse in the finally, but it didn't contribute to the drama. The stage in the final sequence of the film was reinforced so a horse could run on it, but they never used the horse.

This is a standard wipe stuff here, as you go into one set, to the ladder, then down the ladder to a bit of darkness, and then back to the ladder in another set, standard wipe.

### **Chapter 13: One day I'll fly Away**

Here is a nice way to show through individual shots that they are both conscious of each other, and thinking about each other.

The shot of Ewan through the window, he is in a set located in Madrid. This is a great shot showing how you can use a model shot and put a little bit of life into the model shots. It is a great way of combining the old, model shots and the new digital shots together. The shot of Ewan perspective across to Nicole in the Moulin Rouge (13 0:45:20), and the same thing with her perspective back at Ewan (13 0:45:41).

As Nicole goes up the stairs on the elephant we are on the real elephant set. As the camera pulls back notice the little bit of shake that happens. The director Baz Luhrmann allowed it to stay in for the reason of a naturalistic shot. Much like you would see in a Barbara Streisand *Funny Girl* movie, as she is on the ferry and the camera pulls back in the helicopter shot or in *The Sound of Music* when she is on the Alps as the camera pulls back. This could have been smoothed out, but it would have appeared too smooth and not realistic looking. Audiences today are absolutely conscious of perfect digital manipulations that they didn't want to give you that shot.

The images you see behind them are all made to appear like scenes you would see out of *Singin' In The Rain* they are all little painted models and painted cycs. The lights that you see in the distance that represents Paris are all digital. They are also cutting between two sets; they are now on a new set, which is just the top of the elephant cut off. Thus you had the full size elephant set and the top of the elephant set. You are dealing with the safety issue; you want the actors on the set that places them closest to the ground for the longest part of the shoot. The top of the elephant set was known

as the close up set. When they go wide, both of the actors are wearing safety harnesses on them, which you can not see because they have been digitally removed, they take the wires away. If you are going to have two actors running around on the top of a thirty foot elephant they need to be in safety harnesses.

### **Chapter 14: Elephant Love Medley**

*"The very first stages of writing, based on the Orpheum myth, you know Orpheus was a young man who had a gift, a genius gift for song, it was so beautiful, that they very rocks and stars would get up and follow him every where that he went, that is how great he was. And it was essential in our film that Christian had an almost magical gift for poetry. As soon as Craig and I started writing, genius poetry, it became pretty clear that we weren't going to be able to do that job very well."* Baz Luhrmann.

*"If poetry is great songs of the twentieth century then it was kind of a collection of the mad outpouring of all the great love songs."* Craig Pearce.

*"Two years before shooting. That is the biggest notion in the film for the audience, which is, that even if you are not a prostitute in the Moulin Rouge many people sleep walk through life going, I've got to hope once, that I am not having an emotional life. So you have got to open people up to the notion, what's the argument." Baz Luhrmann.*

*"His words are his talent, to make people want to fall in love with him." Craig Pearce.*

*"Yes, but what words did he say." Baz Luhrmann.*

*"You do need a balance to base things together as a drama." Craig Pearce.*

*"We looked at a lot of songs, at one stage it was going to be, a duet, like 'What's Love Got To Do With It' mixed with 'Higher Love.'" Baz Luhrmann.*

*"The problem with the two songs, there was no development in the ideas. The two characters' were having an argument, really weren't having an argument any more, because they were not able to better their opponent. By bringing many more songs into the equation, what it did was give each character, sort of armed with new ammunition, to sort of top the other character." Anton Monsted, Musical Supervisor, Executive Music Producer*

*"The idea behind it was that love is the greatest thing to live for, from Christian. But from where Satine was, no, I am a career girl; I can not afford to love." Baz Luhrmann.*

*"What they have done, is created a song that was formerly song by just one character." Anton Monsted, Musical Supervisor, Executive Music Producer*

*"They had to find a popular song, that all of the audience could agree, or sign off on, to tell that argument, to make that argument work." Baz Luhrmann.*

Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

*“Songs that have only ever been sung in one voice are suddenly turned into dialogue between two people.” Anton Monsted, Musical Supervisor, Executive Music Producer*

*“This is something of the style of the ‘red curtain’ cinema. Of taking something at the heart of it is very beautiful, and just turn it around and look at it from another angle.” Baz Luhrmann.*

*“We had to stretch and bend the very mechanics of music licensing, to fit our story.” Anton Monsted, Musical Supervisor, Executive Music Producer*

*“The writing of the Love Melody, came from a dramatic need for Christian to make Satine, break her golden rule and fall in love.” Craig Pearce.*

*“Look at the songs you think you know, and discover them and experience them in a new and different way.” Baz Luhrmann.*

Baz Luhrmann stated that the making of *Moulin Rouge* was one of the most difficult tasks he has ever lived through, but he did say the making of the “Elephant Love Medley” was a pure joy. It said it was just fun sitting on top of an elephant watching these two sing along to the playback, these love songs to each other, like having good tickets to a very good show.

Most of this scene was shot with a camera remotely controlled on the end of a crane. The problem with that is that the crew member called a focus puller, really has no close-up reference, and the skill of Patrick McCoddle in keeping focus through out all of this is just amazing. Sometimes the camera is only three inches from the subject, with the camera operator thirty or forty feet away.

The language of this cinema is close-ups, and you can spend a lot of footage that will be completely useless, if it is not in focus. Thus the focus puller is one of the most pressured jobs on the set. Focus Puller – Camera assistant, who adjusts the focus of the lens while filming, often needed because the camera operator simply can’t do everything at once. Also known as 1<sup>st</sup> Camera Assistant.

Safety harnesses, actors consider them for their safety on the set or in the set, producers consider it insurance, if one of your actors is taken out during shooting, you have no film to continue with, so it a matter of perspective.

Filming was halted for two weeks in November 1999 after Nicole Kidman fractured a rib rehearsing a dance routine for the film.

Star Ewan McGregor and the director Baz Luhrmann first met when McGregor auditioned for the part of Mercutio in Luhrmann’s 1986 film *Romeo + Juliet*.

Now we have a blue screen effect here for this fireworks moment. The actors are on a little turntable, the camera is not turning they are turning. The back ground is also turning around them digitally.

Then closing the scene with this digital shot of the moon that looks a little suggestive of Disney animation – Placido Domingo, but brings to the forefront this heightened world in which we live in.

Final trivia moment here, as he is typing notice the food on the plate, it is left over curry, an Indian food.

### **Chapter 15: The Contract**

Part of this scene is shot in Madrid and part of it is shot in Sydney. The reason why you see some shots done in Madrid for this movie, is that they never finished the film while they were filming in Sydney, thus they did some catch up scenes in Madrid. It is just a sound stage they used in Madrid. Now that you have been told that, you may notice a difference in the hairdo on Richard Roxburgh, playing the role of the Duke. He mentions his manservant Warner, and since this is filmed in Madrid, it is not Linal Haft playing Warner here, but an extra.

This set was not built on a rostrum (platform), so the windmill outside of the window had to spin and the blades collapse as them came close to the ground.

### **Chapter 16: On With The Show**

This is the first scene that was shot with both Nicole and Ewan. Notice the heightened lighting effect in this scene, verse the fake sunlight you saw coming into the rehearsal hall in the previous shot. Notice the sky outside of the window, the lighting crew spent the entire night lighting that sky, and the Baz came in and wanted it changed from the green sky to a purple one, and they changed it for him.

An historical bit about Toulouse-Lautrec, he used to invent crazy languages and he used to invent crazy dishes, thus you see this crazy plate of food he is carrying here. Baz decorated the food in that dish himself, for which he would say, "That is why it looks so succulent!"

The dressing room here, with the green walls is Madrid, the other surrounding shots are Sydney, that being the rehearsal hall and Zidler's office.

Pick-up shot – A shot that must be added to the schedule because there is something missing that needs to be "picked up" before the show wraps.

Look at the rehearsal hall here, there is a master shot that is done in Sydney and then the close-up pick-up shots are all done in Madrid. So the scene with the three characters of Satine, Christian and the Duke are shot in Madrid, with slight movement behind them, and then cuts back to the master shot, which was done in Madrid. What is amazing is the way a studio can match the shots, so that the audience can be fooled as to their time and location. For example: for these pick-up shots, they simple hung a piece of red curtain and two extras running around in the background. You can clearly see by the master shot, that there was much more than that in the background. With a pick-up scene, you simply have to create the illusion of what is supposed to be in the background.

### **Chapter 17: The Duke's Demand**

The film is dedicated to Baz Luhrmann's father Leonard, who passed away just as filming was about to begin.

### **Chapter 18: A Darker Force**

*Primary source Director's Commentary by Baz Luhrmann, compiled from other sources and Copyright © 2004 by Jay Seller*

Some English cover music here, which works perfectly for her monologue, originally they were going to repeat *Fly Away*. As she faints here, you will notice that the costume goes dark. She was in the wrong costume for the fainting shot, so they digitally went in and changed the color of the costume so the audience could not tell that it was not the right gown.

### **Chapter 19: Like a Virgin**

*“The Gothic Tower. Our Moulin Rouge wasn’t just the historical Moulin Rouge, it was more of a conglomeration of the historical fact and also research that we did on Nightclubs and Bordellos of the period. The Gothic Tower was based on themed façade of the actual Moulin Rouge. And we are not sure what actually happened inside of it, but they surmised it could possibly be a themed room, like one of those incredible themed brothel rooms that were available for the wealthy gentlemen of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris.”*

*“There were many revival styles of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the gothic revival style was one of the most popular.”*

*“Originally they had a scene where Moome Fromage, was dressed as a dominatrix, wiped a whole bunch of men wearing a leather nappy (diaper). To the tune of Grace Jones, Slave to Rhythm, in order to undermine the particular fetish bent of this particular room. I worked very hard on this scene, and I can not believe it was cut. (The later said sarcastically.)*

Notice the gear change again here; they go from high tragedy to this comic beat, which will then lead into another tragedy beat. The comedy is more present in the beginning and then it is sorted out as you continue. They are constantly trying to disarm the audience so that they accept this very melodramatic direct emotional playing. (Melodramatic – a dramatic form that exaggerates emotion and emphasis plot or action at the expense of characterization.)

They were running extremely close in set preparations and lighting the set, as a result the production department was finishing the floor as the lighting crew was mounting instruments, the end result was that the floor was getting very dusty and slippery for the dancers. The best solution for this is to mop the floor with coca-cola, which is what they did twice a day with this set, to keep the floor just a little tacky for the dancers. This is a ballroom dancer trick, that they learned when they made the film, *Strictly Ballroom*, also directed by Baz Luhrmann and had Catherine Martin as the production designer, just like this film.

Baz, nicknamed this scene *Hello Dolly in Hell*, with the singing and dancing wait staff. This is also like the devil attempting to seduce the Duke into staying, by setting Satine up as a virgin. But it is all done camp, (camp – something that provides amusement by virtue of its being contrived, overdone, or tasteless.) over the top, all kicking, all singing and dancing. You know, *Hello Dolly in Hell!*

Notice that the pigeons do not fly away, their wings were all clipped, plus they are shooting inside. Baz is very protective of animals in films, the reason is that he says that they are in the wrong environment and so much is going on, that they can be easily overlooked or not protected from harm.

Richard Roxburgh plays the Duke of Worcester, who finances a play by the bohemians, the self-labeled “Children of the Revolution,” which is also the title song on the soundtrack. Roxburgh also starred in the film, *Children of the Revolution* (1996).

All of this gothic revival furniture was made in their workshops in Sydney, Australia. The gothic revival furniture available in Sydney was very expensive to rent and not the correct scale that they needed to fill such a large room as this. (Gothic – of or pertaining to a style of architecture prevalent in Western Europe from the mid-12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, characterized by pointed arches, ribbed vaulting, flying buttresses, rich ornamentation, and progressive lightening of structure.) You have this little bit of *Benny Hill* and at the same time, it is meant to be like a Shakespearean tragedy.

You also have a form of low comedy, that is meant to be fun, ridiculous and stupid, so that you undercut it and you race straight back in to tragedy. If it works effectively, it sort of catches the audience out.

### **Chapter 20: Satine is dying.**

The costuming choice is nice here, we see Nicole sort of stripped of all of the costuming of the courtesan and rather simple, with just this Japanese Kimono on. They actually had a great oriental influenced dress for her to wear in this scene, in fact it was a special dress that Nicole loved and so did the costume designer, they had saved it for this scene. But Nicole came out of her dressing room and was having a conversation with Baz, when she realized the dress was too stiff, and restricted her movements, movements which would be required in this scene, thus the garment was scrapped. The simple fact is, the clarity of the storytelling is the most important element, and sadly the costume had to go. You get a glimpse of the Chinese dress for about two seconds, when they kiss in the dressing room.

### **Chapter 21: Come What May**

She is wearing an antique Japanese Kimono that turned out to be a worth while purchase.

*Come What May*, is a new composition that was written for this movie, everything else, is a collaboration of pop and classical songs that had their day of popularity.

Talk about a complicated shot, they are on a set here, at the corner of this balcony, and as the camera pulls out the construct a digital world around them. The large red ‘L’amour’ sign seen on Christian’s building was part of the set of Baz Luhrmann’s production of ‘La Boheme’ for the Australian Opera. It also appeared in *Romeo + Juliet* (1986). Everything you see here is really a digital execution, the birds and everything, until we arrive in another set with the hilltop picnic.

Notice this small gesture performed by the Duke in this scene, the killing of the frog. It is actually a small plastic frog on a piece of string, tied to a stick. A prop person is operating it off screen. It kept flipping upside down; in fact if you watch carefully in slow motion you can see it is a frog that jumps upside down. What they were trying to show subconsciously is that this guy is a psychopathic murderer.

There was a longer version of this piece which was cut back to what you see here after an early screening of it. It featured this couple on several more outings with the Duke, in a row boat on a

lake and her holding a parasol, and then another of them in a balloon over a postcard of Paris. Both are available on the DVD versions second disk, not worth visiting in this class.

This movie was clearly influenced by the successful operas Baz Luhrmann has directed: “La Bohemian” and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” La Bohemian is set in the same time and place as Moulin Rouge, while A Midsummer Night’s Dream used the same Indian theme as Moulin Rouge’s play-within-a-play.

There is a secret inclusion here of the shawl on Nini, to represent the tango sequence which has yet to be seen by the audience, and it is a clue. But it is a misdirected clue as no one gets it or understands it, until it is highlighted to them.

## **Chapter 22: I Don’t Like This Ending**

There is the horse in the background, which never gets used, except for this one shot. (22 1:12:38)

Nice lighting effect here to symbolize daylight in this rehearsal hall, with those large windows. The real outside wall of the studio is about ten feet behind those windows, so they have a massive battery of lights, simulating the sunlight; the shiny floor is a big asset. This set took up most of Stage Two, with an access corridor around it of about 5 meters, which is about 15 feet.

You can write a scene for actors, but the moment they take the stage, the scene becomes theirs. This scene is a great example of how their thought and pause, says more than words in a script. These are two things that an actor adds to any dialogue that they must deliver, and nothing from the director can interpret these moments. So it goes beyond saying, giving me a great script and I will give you a great actor.

Now to ruin this moment, I will mention that Nicole is wearing a wig. But a lot of people are wearing wigs, and it is very common in movies, the Duke, the Argentinean, Lesley Vanderwalt is the person responsible for the hair and make-up look of this film.

Here you get a Marlene Dietrich look, with the black veil.

## **Chapter 23: Le Tango de Roxanne**

They had a rule that the music must enslave the story. As a result you get the tango going on downstairs here, while upstairs another tango is taking place. What happens is the story of jealousy, when you fall in love with a woman who sells herself, that story is now simultaneously taking place downstairs and upstairs.

The tango scene allows the lighting director to go into exaggerated dramatic lighting effects; much like would accompany a play. Once again they are using theatrical lights, follow spot lights here. Carlo Sora, the great tango cinema director, look is being provided here. The dress that Nini is wearing is based on a very famous silent film tango dress, which is quoted by John Galleano and then here. What they are quoting here is a Hollywood style tango, not a genuine Argentina Tango.

Musically you recognize the music of Sting, but it is actually a music overlapping of a piece called *Tangera*, and the lyrics are written to that classical piece. Thus you have the melting of musical themes like an opera, which was the whole notion of this.

You can see the spot lights up on the stage.

The costumes that the dance chorus are wearing now, which is basically their real underwear, came about from the French Renoir film *Cancan*, and they had budgetary restrictions which they had to consider, and how could they costume all of these girls. They were reminded in that film; the *Cancan* girls rehearsed their numbers in their underwear, thus the solution to the budgetary restrictions.

This necklace, they needed a piece of jewelry that signified a bargain between the Duke and Satine, and this piece of jewelry was designed for the film by an Australian jeweler. They had arranged to use an authentic piece of jewelry worn by a famous courtesan, but the insurance to protect the use was too expensive. However, the piece you see is all real diamonds and it is worth \$1,500,000 dollars.

Nicole doing her own stunts, she is quite fearless when it comes to performing her own work. This was a stunt dress used here, with a rip away. People sometimes fail to remember, you know what is the big deal she fell down, but you do have to shoot it five, six or as many times as needed, and there is always a chance you are going to sprain your leg or whatever. You also don't want to rip an expensive costume, so you use what is known as a stunt costume.

On the tango dance they had four cameras filming at all times, which gives them lots of options in the editing room. The dance itself was also four to five minutes long; you can view it in its entirety on the DVD version.

### **Chapter 24: We'll leave tonight**

We go to the model shots and push right in to Christian's room. Here in the room they are using a handheld camera to give you the sense that you are in the room with them, but the camera is also on an extended arm that circles them. What you really have is a crane over them, with a dolly on it, and the camera man operating the camera. Thus it allows for the fluid movement, and the jittery handheld appearance of the shots themselves.

### **Chapter 25: I'll have the boy killed**

This sequence is shot on a set, so there is no echo in it; it is not made from stone, so it is a sound device that they are using. How they achieved this is that they added a little bit of echo in the dialogue in post production. Thus you get the sense that the set is made of stone and not wood.

But in reality all of the sound effects are added in the post production stage of making a film, every jangle of an earring, door knob turning, everything.

Notice how they light Zidler as the devil, you can even see the flames of hell licking at his face.

I want to point out the use of mirrors here by Baz Luhrmann, his purpose for their inclusions is to remind the audience that these people live in a world of illusion and what they sell is illusions. There life is like being in a hall of mirrors and the trick is that Satine has to keep in mind, what is a reflection and what is real. And of course, she gets really confused when she really falls in love.

When she finds out that she is dying, we need to get into her mind to see what she is thinking, and one of the devices of a musical is that this can be sung. But before we can get into that state, we need a transition, thus we uses the mirrors as a kind of device to show what she is thinking.

### **Chapter 26: Fool to Believe**

Some small references here, the bird in the cage; she is like that bird in a cage, trapped.

Mirrors were also a huge decorative item at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; they had been able to mass produce them for a number of years. People used mirrors and candles to enhance the lighting effect in a room, so it also served a purpose besides merely decoration. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century mirrors were a novelty, the reflection of a mirror and a mirrors reflection of itself, the Palace of Versailles, the hall of mirrors.

### **Chapter 27: The Show must go on**

This song is nice as it shows the squalor of backstage, and the attempt to create the illusion of beauty on the stage.

Watch the transitions here as Satine walks out of the rehearsal hall set, into the garden set, and then we have a wipe digitally to a model set, that we zoom through to see a digital Christian placed inside the model set, as he turns his head, we are now in the set of his room, amazing.

### **Chapter 28: Satine's Scarifice**

As the get closer and closer to her death, they start with really simple and naturalistic scenes. Now you also become more of an observer of the drama and not so much a participant in a game, as you were in the beginning of the movie. The lighting is also following that path of naturalistic lighting. They saved this scene to the very end of the shoot; it was actually done right after the scene of her walking down the hallway.

Talking about the vernacular of heightened drama, here is a sequence with these shots that are known as interiors/exterior. This style of shooting an exterior, but making it an interior really belongs to films of the fifties and forties. *David Leans, Oliver Twist, Jane Eyre*, motion pictures like that, *Camille*, they tried to evoke that with these model exteriors shot interior.

### **Chapter 29: The Storm Breaks**

This was shot on a one story street set that they built at a studio. Thus the horse and carts and people, and the rain are really there. Above that first level is a blue screen and then everything above it is matted in.

It was John Leguizamo who convinced the director that there needed to be a scene with these two characters together to sort of resolve their relationship with each other. John wanted to take some of the real words from Toulouse-Lautrec, "You know you may see me as a drunken, pathetic Nome

whose only friends are pimps and girls from the brothels.” So what they did is they took numerous quotes from Toulouse’s letters and crafted together this little scene.

It is a great solution to finding resolution between these two characters. It is also rather clever how John can turn this clown around into a pathetic and real person.

### **Chapter 30: Hindi Sad Diamonds**

Now getting a curtain to open like this, with all of the resources of the world, it is extremely difficult.

Earlier they were doing a sort of *Hello Dolly* kind of interpretation, now they do a Baliwood style, i.e. Hollywood, sort of the 40’s and 50’s musical style with a heavy tone of Hindu reference. The choreographer, or dance instructor who did all of these numbers is John ‘Cha Cha’ O’Connell and John O’Connell II.

They spent three days, 24 hours a day, lighting this set theatrically for this number, all of the lighting effects are controlled by computers. Not too terribly uncommon as even the lighting system in the Horizon Auditorium is controlled by computers.

Some more nice cross referencing of cultures, the song you are listening to is a very famous Hindu pop hit, called Jamajama, with of course the famous Marilyn Monroe 50’s track of *Diamonds are a Girl’s best Friend* layered over. Steve Hitchcock is the man responsible for the mixing of the songs to create these original pieces for the film.

Baz wanted the reflections of the diamonds to appear on the Duke’s face, how they achieved this is they took little pieces of a mirror and placed them on a canvas and then shook them to get the reflection of the light on his face. The sparkles on Satine’s diamonds are actually digitally enhanced.

### **Chapter 31: This woman is your now**

Here is something to watch for, a thimble gag, he drops out of frame, then a stunt man jumps in to do the fall down the stairs and into the hole, and then back to the Argentina man.

When you see these under the stage shots, they are the actually support holding up the scenery you see in front of the stage. The only thing they did to disguise it, was to paint it dark brown.

As they walk on the catwalk here, you get a glimpse of the light bulbs of the period; they were made for this film and had modern bulbs inside the period bulbs.

The shot of the gun running forward is a steady cam shot, a camera worn on a harness. You get some more hand held effects here to get the disturbed effect. There is a rule that they have applied here, to get this show-within a show conclusion, and get back to the stage, they make it as theatrical as possible. That way you see it in the perspective of the audience, and they try to make it clear that they think it is part of the show. When ever they want to ground it into the cinema audience in a realer emotion we get behind and we shoot out to the audience to break down the theatricality of it. So if you look at it from that perspective, it looks like an ugly theatrical melodrama.

### **Chapter 32: Come What May reprise**

Originally they were going to light this historically correct, which would have been footlights and some lights coming from the wings, but then they decided they would do like the music and almost everything else in this film, is that they would re-interpret the energy with the tools that they have of today. So as a result it is all computer controlled and state of the art theatrical lighting.

This was a really difficult emotional scene to film, because there are so many elements involved here it took several days to film this one sequence, and yet the actors had to keep their emotional levels.

As she turns around to face the camera, Nicole is singing the beginning of this number, situation live, to give the cinema audience a chance to experience what it would have sounded like if she was struggling to sing frailly here to the man she loves as he leaves the building.

The light on Ewan as he walks away from the stage is just the light on the camera dimming as he gets farther and farther away from the stage. Then as he turns around we get the reflected stage light in his face.

The windmill you see outside of the window is about three feet away from the glass wall.

They were also rather lucky with the group of extras that they were able to hire for this film. These extras need to be a part of the story telling, they need to participate as audience members watching a play. If any one of them looks at the camera or gives something away, it would ruin the shot.

John Leguizamo did this entire scene squatting, but as a result afterwards he needed some therapy.

### **Chapter 33: Coup D'etat**

The goal here is to give the audience as much joy as possible, right before tragedy strikes. The original idea here was to bring the curtain down and then they would revert to the finally set. It took too much time to bring the curtain in, so they do this flash of light here and you join the second finally set. Funny thing is that no one ever questioned this, but at the time they were deciding to do it, it was a very frightening idea.

*“One of the biggest challenges of the film was how to create a comic-tragic cinematic language, because we don’t that except in vaudeville films. (Shoot Day 76) The device is that you flip from silliness and comedy to tragedy, very quickly, from the perspective of audience the play, its comic. It’s a fairytale. When you come behind the characters and shoot against the audience, it makes them appear just that little bit real, and we see the pain and the drama of he characters of the film.”*

*“The problem was they we didn’t complete the happy ending. We had written in the script with Satine dieing before the curtain came down, and this totally disarmed the idea of comic tragedy. So having realized our mistake, Craig and I re-wrote the ending, bringing the curtain down, separating the on stage happy ending, from the back stage tragic sad ending of Satine’s death at the end of the film.”*

*“(Shoot Day 77) All that was left was to shoot it. Moments before we rolled, I realized we had a major problem; the new re-write had not dealt with three major issues. 1) We had already shot the*

*Duke upstage with Warner. That meant that he would be included in Satine's death scene. This was wrong as his function ended with the happy ending on the other side of the curtain. 2) What to do about the gun. How did the Duke get the gun, how to separate the gun from the duke, and 3) What to do with Zidler, which side of the curtain should he end up on, and having decided this, how to get him there."*

### **Chapter 34: The final curtain**

You go from the fabulous Hollywood endings of the 40's and then you transition in to the tragedy, death is calling. The petals drop, that you have seen falling on her face from the beginning of the movie, is the idea that death is calling.

Interesting when scenes like this are filmed in a studio, it can become disturbing to the crew members, because of the strength of the acting in the scene. This is what happened to the crew as they witnessed this scene, they would walk out of the range of the scene, as they found it too disturbing to them. It is also hard to hear some one suffering for extended periods of time, and they did film this little piece all day.

The use of the side light is great, as it prevents one person from throwing a nasty shadow over the other, of course it is also dramatically functional. This is also about good acting, where an actor really exposes himself. Actors usually have the ability to pour on the tears, but to really expose themselves that is difficult. I believe that Ewan sets a good example here. That guttural sound that he makes here is an example of exposing himself, by letting out that embarrassing sound that exposes the core of his soul.

We go to this Orson Wells quote, from *Citizen Kane* (1941), "There was a boy, a strange enchanted boy."

They are letting you know that the world is coming apart, that the world of the *Moulin Rouge* in 1899 is coming a part, and that a new century is dawning.

### **Chapter 35: Above all things...love**

All of that you are looking at along side of his window is tiny little models, of boxes and cages. He is digitally placed in the window of this model.

They make a quick cut there, by waving the curtain in front of the lens.

### **Chapter 36: End Titles**

One of the rules about this 'red curtain cinematic form' is that they like they have to get rid of the credits at the beginning of the film and place them here at the end.

It took two years to make this film, and two years to develop it, thus it was a four year journey.

One of the last credits reads, "The producers wish to thank: Moët Chandon Champagne."

And then finally, "This story is about, truth, beauty, freedom, but above all love."

## **Reviews and Extras**

**LOS ANGELES, Dec. 6** — The offbeat, hopped-up, downright peculiar musical “Moulin Rouge” topped the National Board of Review’s list of the year’s best movies, boosting its chances for a potential Oscar nomination. National Board of Review honors 2001:

**Best Picture:** “Moulin Rouge,” followed by “In the Bedroom,” “Ocean’s 11,” “Memento,” “Monster’s Ball,” “Black Hawk Down,” “The Man Who Wasn’t There,” “A.I. Artificial Intelligence,” “The Pledge,” “Mulholland Drive.”

Other winners included:

**Documentary:** “The Endurance: Shackleton’s Legendary Antarctic Adventure.”

**Foreign film:** “Amores Perros” (Mexico).

**Animated feature:** “Shrek.”

**Breakthrough performances:** Naomi Watts, “Mulholland Drive”; Hayden Christensen, “Life as a House.”

**Career achievement award:** Jon Voight.

**Career achievement award for film music:** John Williams.

**Billy Wilder Award, excellence in direction:** Steven Spielberg.

**Directorial debut:** John Cameron Mitchell, “Hedwig & the Angry Inch.”

## **DVD, Disc Two**

**The Making of the Moulin Rouge**, 30 minutes. Worth showing to the class if you opt not to show the “Green Fairy” version of Disc One.

**The Stars**, musical introduction to interviews with the following stars, some of this is a repeat from the making of section. (60 seconds):

**Nicole Kidman** (3:27)

**Ewan McGregor** (2:00)

**John Leguizamo** (2:17)

**Jim Broadbent** (2:16)

**Richard Roxburgh** (2:30)

**This story is about...** this section not of much value to show in class.

1. **Interview with Writers Baz Luhrmann and Craig Pearce.** (3:44)
2. **Craig Pearce reads early treatments.** (2:15)
3. **Old Storylines & script comparisons.**

## **The Cutting Room**

**Interview with Editor Jill Bilcock and Baz Luhrmann** (3:36)

**Unseen footage of abandoned edits** This information is included in the lecture, the scenes are interesting to view, but not worth the course time.

1. ‘Come What May’ from Preview Screening No. 2 (5:05)
2. ‘Dance Across the Sky’ from Preview Screening No. 1 (2:01)
3. ‘Zidler’s Rap’ First Assembly, a low tempo. (2:00)
4. ‘Outside It May Be Raining’ to ‘Meet the Boho’s’ First Assembly (3:21)
5. ‘Green Fairy Previsualisation’ featuring Serena the Visual FX Coordinator (1:02)

**Director’s mock previsualisations (with apologies to the actors)** Baz Luhrmann describes how they shoot pick-ups. (4:57)

**The Dance.** makes use of the multi-camera angles. You can view the dance sequences from as many as four different cameras filming the scene at the same time.

**The Music.** Takes a behind the scenes look at how the music and artistry of the music was created for the film, of particular interest to music students. Includes: 1) The Music Journey (10:00), 2) Interview with Fatboy Slim (3:05) 3) The Lady Marmalade Phenomenon MTV Music Awards (5:08), Music Clip featuring Missy Elliott (4:09), 3) Come What May (3:39)

**The Design.** An extensive look at the costumes and graphic designs used to create many of the model shots used in the film, the complete section could take 30 minutes to view, it is all narrated by the effects team. Nice look at the creation of the Green Fairy.

**Marketing.** International Sizzle Reel (Displays photo spreads from magazines, worth showing to the class.)

Photo Gallery

The Little Red Book (Photo gallery)

Poster Gallery

Trailers

Music Promo Spot

Review on *Moulin Rouge*

**Review (\*\*\*\*):** There was a time when most of the songs on the Hit Parade (back when there \*was\* a Hit Parade) had their roots in stage or film musicals. Radio allowed people to grow familiar with the songs, but they started in film (presuming one didn't live near Broadway). Musicals and their influence on pop songs took a hit with the advent of teen "rock" songs in the 1950's, and then in the 1960's as the songwriter model (popularized by Bob Dylan, the Beatles, etc.) injected pop with a new life separate from showtunes, and yet just as well written. Ten years later, film musicals were on the last legs, with **Grease**, by my reckoning, being the last of its breed to attain blockbuster status (and it did so with mostly a soundtrack of... pop songs).

**Moulin Rouge** revitalizes the film musical by recognizing the last 40 years of pop songs (and plenty of music before that too), creating a pastiche of a story woven around lyrics. One might too easily say that the melodrama is paper-thin when one removes the lyrics, but to remove the songs from a musical is like taking the sex out of a porno. If one feels listless when the music stops, you've hit upon the power of the musical; you're supposed to long for the songs again.

The story of **Moulin Rouge** is a play-within-a-film which mirrors the romantic longing between a courtesan with a heart of gold, Satine (Kidman) and a starry-eyed poet, Christian (McGregor). Check your cynicism at the door, because Baz Luhrmann delivers a full-on fantasy akin to the films of Terry Gilliam or the collaborations of Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet (**Delicatessen**, **The City of Lost Children**; Jeunet's new film, **Amelie**, is also set in Paris' Montmartre district). Luhrmann gives us a Paris that feels like a live-action **Looney Tune** at times, with a high-pitch fever state of high jinks, vaudeville, and physical comedy mixed, all helter skelter, with music.

**Moulin Rouge** is daring. I should note that I was not a fan of Luhrmann's **Romeo + Juliet**, but the same things that felt artificial and too much like a music video there work in **Moulin Rouge** because, removed from the Bard, he's free to create fully a fantasy world where his imagery stands on its own. Carefully chosen lyrics (mixing such "uncool" sources as Phil Collins, Joe Cocker, and Dolly Parton with songs by Bowie, Queen and U2) provide the depth that might be lacking from some of the unsung portions, but as a whole, it's all so energetic, joyful, exuberant, flashy, and fun that I can't nitpick. The absence of the musical has also been more-or-less matched by the absence of a sense of imagination and fantasy in mainstream films. Sometimes, things don't have to always

*Primary source Director's Commentary by Baz Luhrmann, compiled from other sources and Copyright © 2004 by Jay Seller*

make sense (watch out for the singing character borrowed from the Georges Melies 1902 classic, **A Trip to the Moon**), if the film is very clear that it's all fantasy and fancy-free, and maintains that sense of abandon. Abandon, that's a funny way of saying it, because it really takes a great deal of control to maintain the level of energy, zaniness, and out-for-everyone-to-see-it sentimentality this film has.

It's funny I've gotten this far and I haven't talked as much about the music as I should. First off, this film would have sunk if all of the performers, especially Kidman and McGregor, couldn't sing. Kidman's singing is excellent (though she lacks a certain "zing"), and McGregor's, which I had to warm up to, won me over as I realized he has a certain Bono-ness in his voice... he belts songs out (note: of U2, not Sonny).

Most of the songs in the film appear either as medleys or in some cases, just lyrics interlaced into dialogue. Other songs, however, including "Your Song" (Elton John), "Like a Virgin" (Madonna), and "Roxanne" (The Police) are showcased, usually twisting them into versions unlike what we're used to, but somehow, making a lot more sense now ("Roxanne" fit wonderfully, especially if you like the throaty, dirgey Nick-Cave-like way Jacek Komanczyk sings it). The songs might work best if you're at least partly familiar with them (ie, you know pop songs of the 1970's-1980's along with some showtunes), but I've got no way of knowing for sure, since I knew about 90% of them. For example, people who aren't David Bowie fans (or who live in a country where "Heroes" wasn't a hit, like the USA) might not feel the same sense of excitement when Kidman and McGregor trade "Heroes" lines back and forth. There's also a wonderful Indian theme running through the film that gives a deserving nod to Bollywood, the Indian cinema that has kept the romantic musical alive while it's died elsewhere.

In a way, **Moulin Rouge** is a film that delivers MTV-style visuals to a VH1 audience (but is marketed to both), because I have a feeling that kids who are used to the frenetic visuals of MTV are probably less receptive to what they might consider old-hat than older audiences to whom this approach (especially to a historic topic like the **Moulin Rouge**) can be seen as daring and risky. The counterside to that is that there's a big difference between maintaining a roller coaster sensation through a three-minute video (usually without dialogue) and doing the same thing with over two hours, an actual script, etc. Bottling the previous memes up, I'll cap it up by saying that **Moulin Rouge** has something for everyone, especially if you can accept its freewheeling approach to 1899 (like the "Zidler Rap"!), and just enjoy a ride... a ride that with this summer's **Hedwig & the Angry Inch** does a great deal to revive the musical genre. If **Hedwig** is like the new **Rocky Horror**, **Moulin Rouge** is like the **Star Wars** of romantic musicals, reinventing and revitalizing the genre in one gutsy burst of cinematic glam and joy.

**Greg's Preview Thoughts:** This third film from director Baz Luhrmann promises to be interesting, if nothing else. You might remember the visually arresting version of **Romeo + Juliet** that he gave us in 1996? Well, this is his follow-up to that project, and it promises to be as visual, and as unusual. You see, though it's set in 1899, the music will be contemporary (no word yet on musicians who might be on the soundtrack), and there may be other anachronisms, who knows? What is known is that Baz is saying that **Moulin Rouge** is a "reinvention of the musical form". We'll see. (5/11/00) One hint as to the use of music in the film is the news that songs and music from throughout the 20th century, including the Beatles and Madonna will be used.

## Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

(5/17/00) Fox has announced that they plan to release this film sometime in December, 2000.

(7/31/00) ...and the answer is Christmas Day. (10/5/00) According to **The Hollywood Reporter**, Fox has decided to move this to a summer, 2001 release to give Baz Luhrmann more time to finish postproduction, so the film isn't "rushed." (10/27/00) Fox has settled on a release date of June 1st, 2001. (1/13/01) Moving *Joy Ride* to June 1st instead, Fox is now looking for a date in May.

(2/6/01) May 4th it is. (2/15/01) The official site is active now. I'm not sure I'm that wild about it... it looks a lot like the **Monty Python** animation Terry Gilliam used to do for the show, which I'm not sure is a great thing as far as navigating a site goes (heads and legs popping up at strange angles, etc.) Baz's site probably sells me more effectively on the film. So... does this mean we can expect a trailer next week with *Monkeybone*?

(2/27/01) Fox reports that they are now aiming for a platform release that will see this going wide on June 8th. Considering the artsy and critically-friendly nature of this film, it seems like a wise move.

(3/9/01) This isn't confirmed yet, but the release may be changed again, to a wide release on Wednesday, May 2nd. (3/15/01) Yep. The platform will now start on that Wednesday, going wide on May 11th.

(3/22/01) This week, it was announced that this will premiere at Cannes on the 9th, which means the 5/2 date had to be moved back a bit (or Cannes wouldn't be the world premiere). The new dates of 5/18 and 6/1 (wide) should now hold, after all this recent bouncing around.

(4/14/01) The trailer is in theaters now (I saw it before *Bridget Jones's Diary*). I was a bit surprised that the trailer greatly emphasized the dramatic elements, and barely acknowledged that this is one of the first real musicals from Hollywood in many years. Sure, we do hear a line or two of "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend" and "Roxanne", but they are very brief. The art direction does seem to compare with **R+J**, but I was expecting to see more song and dance. I wonder why Fox is shying away from this...? After the movie is already made is a strange time to decide you don't want people to know it's a musical.

It's not like it's going to stay a secret for long.

(5/14/01) As the buzz/hype does indeed progress, **SNL** did an extended send-up of **Moulin Rouge** this weekend. Central to their spoof was the suggestion that most of the songs are from the 1970's (not entirely true; still funny), every song ends with the line, "...at the *MOULIN ROUGE!*" (not true... still funny), and that the best quote Fox can come up with is Peter Travers of **Rolling Stone** calling it, "*interesting*." It wasn't a particularly funny week for **SNL**, but they nailed this bit.

(10/24/01) To give the film a bit of a late 2001 Oscar buzz push, Fox will be rereleasing this in four cities on 11/21 (just a few weeks before the video release).

### **A Review:**

***Moulin Rouge*, eccentric as it is, could bring singing back to the silver screen**

By Peter Sobczynski

## Film Study Lecture *Moulin Rouge*, 2001

Film genres come and go and sometimes come again, but no genre has ever stayed dead as long as the American live-action musical.

After the huge success of *The Sound of Music* in 1965, every studio jumped on the musical bandwagon with disastrous results. (Remember *Paint Your Wagon* with Clint Eastwood, Lee Marvin and Jean Seberg? Of course you don't. Hardly anyone saw it.)

As a result, studios all but abandoned the musical genre. Even the few successful excursions into musical filmmaking, such as 1978's *Grease*, failed to revive interest (although Disney continued to make popular animated features for kids).

This year, however, the live-action musical seems to be trying, at least, to make a comeback. (Ironically, this comes as animated musicals seem to have run their course. *Atlantis*, like the last couple of Disney cartoons, contains no songs, and *Shrek* pokes wicked fun at the animated musical formula.)

This year has already seen the sing-a-long version of *The Sound of Music* with the lyrics subtitled. (The film is packing the Music Box Theatre.) This July sees the release of the Sundance favorite, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, based on the long-running off-Broadway show. (A stage version is at the Broadway Theater on Broadway south of Belmont.) Even *A.I.*, the new film from Steven Spielberg (who has often spoken of doing a musical, and actually pulled off some elaborate dance numbers in *1941*), is rumored to feature a musical moment or two.

The most eagerly anticipated of these new musicals, however, is *Moulin Rouge*, the wild new film from Baz Luhrmann. The film, which premiered opening night at the Cannes Film Festival, is a \$50 million gamble that promises to divide audiences sharply. (Half of the reviews from Cannes were rapturous while the other half were derisive. One can expect a similar ratio here.)

Loosely based on the Orpheus myth, the film stars Ewan McGregor as Christian, a struggling young poet who falls hopelessly in love with Satine (Nicole Kidman), the lead dancer at the Moulin Rouge nightclub. He vows to love her forever. She vows that she will never love anyone unless the price is right.

While set in 1900 Paris, Luhrmann (director of *Strictly Ballroom* and *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*) chose to have his characters warble songs from throughout the 20th century. Satine's nightclub act includes "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" and "Material Girl", and courtesans croon "Lady Marmalade (Voulez-vous coucher avec moi?)". The poetry of Christian contains bits from "Your Song" and "Smells Like Teen Spirit". In one memorable medley, Christian and Satine sing to each other a tune that incorporates pieces of David Bowie's "Heroes", U2's "Pride", Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You", KISS's "I Was Made For Loving You", and others.

Having characters in Belle Époque Paris sing songs that would not be written until much later in the century indicates that *Moulin Rouge* is no a standard-issue musical. Instead, it seems to be more about the form and content of movie musicals, much in the way that the *Scream* movies were about mad-slasher films ... such as *Scream*. This approach (call them meta-musicals) has been attempted

before, most successfully in *Pennies from Heaven* and the recent *Dancer in the Dark*, but never on such an elaborate a scale.

Luhrmann, however, seems perfectly suited to such material. In his earlier films he demonstrated a flair for grand emotion, visual splendor and song-and-dance numbers. In addition, his cut-up approach to many of the songs appears to be in keeping with his Famous Quotations Only approach to Shakespeare. Toss in a couple of stars who are actually passable as singers (Kidman is all right and McGregor is really quite good), and the result is intriguing enough to almost make you forget that the cast list includes treacly Aussie pop singer Kylie Minogue as The Green Fairy.

The musical genre in film died for an obvious reason. While the best musicals were created for the screen (*Singin' in the Rain*, for example, and *An American in Paris*), most filmmakers tried to adapt Broadway hits for the screen especially after the huge success of *The Sound of Music*.

Unfortunately, the American musical theater chose to wither at the same time. Now the river has actually reversed its flow, with Broadway deriving some of its biggest hits from film (e.g. *The Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *The Producers*).

Not a single stage musical in recent years has been popular enough to score immediately on the screen. Even *Evita*, a hit musical if there ever was one, took 20 years to reach the screen. Broadway musicals are still pretty much dead. However, the best film musicals have been originals not bound by the limitations of the stage. Perhaps the genre needs only one tremendous hit for the studios to regain their confidence in movie musicals, and perhaps *Moulin Rouge* as audacious as it is will be that film.