
Under the Same Moon by P. Rikken: Analyzing the Role of Music

The Role of Music in Under The Same Moon

Music plays an important role in all lives and often it goes unnoticed. Because it is so prominent throughout life it often becomes forgotten, people become so used to it that it loses its credit as just an average aspect of everyday life. But music holds power. It holds the power to make people feel. It has the power to provoke emotions buried deep within one enclosed with memories that would be better off not being remembered and arises them to the surface. It is easy to forget that one of the sole reasons why any emotion is felt during a film is because the music playing in the background is directing one's bodies to feel that way. In Under The Same Moon, the music playing in the background helps create the atmosphere of a scene, allowing one to feel the emotion of that scene. The music also sends a message to the films viewers. Music has the power to take an ordinary moment and make it intense, making one feel the emotions that were already present, but now stronger and heavier than before.

The music used in Under The Same Moon is not that of a typical soundtrack. A lot of the songs that play in this movie are backtracks, supplementary to the scene that they are played in. For instance, seven minutes into the movie chimes are heard and music that indicates Carlitos is daydreaming. The music helps portray Carlitos imagining himself on the sidewalk that his mother is describing. Music also helps one to feel the emotion of a scene. When Carlitos' abuela dies and Carlitos is trying to wake her up, "abuelita, abuelita," the music playing in the background arises a feeling of sadness and grief. It is important to feel these emotions in the film (Rikken 2007). Without them, one might feel a sense of sadness for Carlitos but not a true sense of loss, which is what Carlitos is feeling.

The difference between feeling sad for Carlitos and feeling connected with Carlitos' sadness is that in the second option one is able to identify with the character, something extremely important to any film or text. Especially in this scene, one would not be able to connect with Carlitos unless there was music in the background to fit the emotion and mood of the scene. It is also important to note that few other mediums can make one feel as music does. This can be explained by musicality, "each man is endowed with the inherent ability to react to music. It is this ability which enables man: (a) to compose; (b) to perform; and, (c) to enjoy music," (Knieter 46). Musicality is explained as all man's ability to respond to music. It is a universal language. The fact that Under The Same Moon is a Spanish film, people will still be able to understand what is going on in the movie, even if they don't speak Spanish, because of the music in the film and the emotions it gives off.

Music can connect any audience to the film they are watching even if they don't understand the language of the film. Music bridges the gap between the audience and the characters on the screen. Through the music used in films, the audience is able to feel empathy for the characters, connecting personally even though they never experienced exactly what the character in the film did. Psychologists have theorized how "underscoring relates to visual content and guides its interpretation," (Hoeckner 2010). Thereby, the music in a film could be the tipping point between someone seeing the loss and struggle Carlitos is facing and actually

commiserating with the loss and struggle Carlitos is facing and therefore understanding it on a deeper level. Music has been proven to arouse emotions in the audience of a film. "Presenting a film with its associated soundtrack (versus with the volume muted) impacted both subjective and physiological indices of valence and arousal (Ellis 2005). The effect isn't as much without the movie's soundtrack.

The music in *Under The Same Moon* also sends a message about immigration, especially illegal immigration. This is prominent around 51:00 when the song playing is mocking immigration by joking that Superman is an illegal alien. The song states, "it seems he's not an American. Rather, he is just like me, undocumented...and he is blonde, blue-eyed, and well-built and I'm dark, chubby, and short...he doesn't pay taxes...he doesn't have a green card nor a license to fly..." (Los Hermanos Ortiz 2002). It implies that just because superman was white and well off, he was written off as an illegal immigrant. The mockery in the song not only sends a message to the audience but also provokes emotions as well.

The power of music is endless. It can send a message to its audience in a way plain, spoken words cannot. Especially in a film, music has the power to provoke emotion, allowing the audience to empathize with the characters, deeply connecting to the movie in a way that is not possible without the films soundtrack. In *Under The Same Moon*, one can experience Carlitos journey as he searches for his mother, honestly feeling the pain of his journey, the frustration, and eventually the triumph. Without music, this could not be made possible. Music is mysterious. It is hard to describe its beauty, simply in the fact that it is universal in its ability to influence all man.