



On Bertrand Fèvre's Short Film 'CHET'S ROMANCE' (1988)

35 years after the initial composition of the song "I'm a fool to want you" (in 1951 by Sinatra, Wolf, and Herron), Chet Baker forged his own, personal version using his voice and trumpet.

And it was in 1988 that French director/photographer Bertrand Fèvre decided to create a 10-minute short film, featuring the star singing this song, titled 'Chet's Romance'.

Although there lies artificiality, both from the unnatural light shining on his face and the organised assortment of each musician's seating positions, the film immediately captures his effortless nature; as the instruments are warming up, he descends the stairs with a smooth fluidity, perches himself on the chair, and inhales the smoke of his cigarette when he gets the chance, before and during the performance.

Amidst the hazy smoke, he starts to sing - a low brewing voice with warming rises; its melancholic, smooth vibrations resembling that of a soft locomotive humming. There is pain, physically shown on the face (not only from the sleep-inducing voice), and a form of nostalgia pervades...

The film ends with what seems like Chet finishing the start of his initial phrase :“Because all I have to give is music”. His statement, which could have merely been compressed into one sentence, is in fact extended by the interjecting ‘embedding’ of the song in question. Putting it plainly, the nucleus of his statement is the song, and the sense of its ‘completion’ is apparent at the end.

Ultimately it is Fèvre's technical structure that puts emphasis on the latter half of the sentence, enveloping its meaningfulness. The double bass of Riccardo Del Fra alone evokes the song's melody to end the film.

"Chet's Romance" was released to the public in '88, the year of Chet's death. It is one of his final public performances, and despite the haste walking of Time, the rawness of his emotions still lives, unfaltering. And it is Fèvre's film that captures for us this depth of feeling.

Chet Baker, trumpet & vocal, Alain Jean-Marie, piano, Riccardo Del Fra, double bass, George Brown, drums

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