

Analysis of the Comedy Film Effect of Mahua Fun Age

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Abstract

Mahua Fun Age's comedy films have made good box office and opened a unique comedy style. This paper first sorts out the development process of Chinese comedy films and then analyzes the comedy effect of the Mahua Fun Age from the perspectives of parody, collage application, narrative plot, nostalgic music, and sketch-style performance. Finally, the problems and optimization suggestions of Mahua Fun Age's comedy films are put forward.

Keywords

Mahua Fun Age; Comedy Style; Comedy Film.

1. Introduction

Comedy films are feature films that are characterized by laughter and create comic characters and backgrounds through comic conception, and satirize phenomena in life through exaggeration [1]. At the beginning of the 20th century, influenced by French and American comedy films, China began to make funny short films, such as *Stealing a Roast Duck* (1909) shot by Yaxiya Yingxi. *The Gambler* (1919) released by The Commercial Press, and *King of Comedy Visits China* (1922) released by Mingxing Film Company. These funny short films were the embryonic form of comedy films. In 1925, the Chinese comedy film changed by not only making people laugh but also adding the thinking of social phenomena. The films focused on the daily life of small people, and gradually established the spiritual core of Chinese comedy. From 1949 to 1966, the creation of comedy films was affected by the political atmosphere and political demands. Until the end of the 1960s, Chinese comedy films developed into warm praise comedies, weakening the satirical elements in the films, telling stories in a relaxed and pleasant way, and praising the life of the new era, such as *Five Golden Flowers* directed by Wang Jiayi, and *Today, I Rest* directed by Lu Ren. In the 1990s, Chinese comedy films entered the golden age, with various comedy styles emerging one after another. For example, black humor is represented by such directors as Feng Xiaogang and Huang Jianxin. The comedy directed by Huang Jianxin mainly described the absurd little things in life. The plot was interspersed with the performance of sketches and humorous language, causing people to think deeply about society. The comedy films directed by Feng Xiaogang used language to create comedy effects, which brought more direct comedy enjoyment to the audience and catered to people's increasing desire for expression in the 1990s. Moreover, there also emerged kungfu comedies represented by Jet Li, Jackie Chan, and Stephen Chow. In the 21st century, China's comedy films present a situation in which hundreds of flowers contend. Taking Mahua Fun Age as an example, this paper analyzes how Mahua Fun Age creates a carnival-style comedy film and analyzes the comedy effect of Mahua Fun Age from the perspectives of parody, collage application, narrative plot, nostalgic music, and sketch-style performance.

Founded in 2003, Mahua Fun Age includes such team members as Zhang Chen, Liu Hongtao, Shen Teng, Ma Li, Wei Xiang, Chang Yuan, et. al. At the initial stage of Mahua Fun Age, it focused on "New Year's stage play" and launched 29 stage plays [2]. On May 30, 2015, Mahua Fun Age launched the first film adapted from the stage play of the same name - *Goodbye Mr. Loser*. *Goodbye Mr. Loser* won the box office of 1.441 billion yuan. In 2016, *Mr. Donkey* reached 173

million yuan at the box office. In 2017, *Never Say Die* was 2.201 billion yuan at the box office. In 2018, *Hello, Mr. Billionaire* broke through 2.5 billion yuan at the box office. *Hello, Mrs. Money's* box office was 604 million yuan. In 2019, *Almost a Comedy* was 188 million yuan at the box office. In 2022, *Moon Man* had a box office exceeding 3 billion yuan. The rapid growth of the box office shows that Mahua Fun Age's comedy films have formed their style and audience groups in mainland China, which can be attributed to the creative characteristics of Mahua Fun Age's comedy films.

2. Comedy Effect Analysis of Mahua Fun Age's Comedy Films

Goodbye Mr. Loser, *Mr. Donkey*, and *Never Say Die* are comedy films adapted from stage plays. Mahua Fun Age adapts the stage plays into a film by adopting the mode of original scripts + original creation. The stage plays that have been performed have withstood the test of time and audience, thereby accumulating a stable audience for the film. However, there is a difference between the creation of a film and the creation of stage plays. A stage play uses lines and exaggerated body language to present the story content to the audience, while a film uses pictures to present the story. Director Yu Baimei said in an interview: "Only 10 to 20 percent of the films adapted from a stage play overlap with the stage plays, and the rest need to be rewritten by the screenwriter." [3] In the film *Goodbye Mr. Loser*, the scene in which Xia Luo was ridiculed by her classmates in stage plays was deleted, and only the dialogue between Yuan Hua and Mr. Wang, and Xia Luo was retained. The contempt of other classmates for Xia Luo was shown through the film screen, and Mahua Fun Age adopted the method of reducing the bedding and bombing the audience with dense jokes in a short time. This adaptation method can not only stabilize the fans of the drama but also ensure the quality of the film after adaptation, which serves as one of the guarantees for the success of comedy films.

With the impact of consumerism and the secular tide, consumers have gained happiness through consumption and entertainment. Mahua Fun Age films use parodies of classic passages, collages of postmodern plots, exaggerated performances, and nostalgic music styles to create a carnival that conforms to modern popular secular culture and meets the audience's entertainment needs. The theme of Mahua Fun Age's films is focused on dreams, house prices, and first love. The theme is close to people's lives. The protagonists are mainly nobody, such as President Sun, who is selfish in the cloak of charity. Pei Kuishan hates evil but also feels inferior and weak. Zhou Tienan has a sense of justice but finally succumbs to instinct, and Zhang Yiman pursues freedom. Mahua Fun Age brings people's dreams that cannot be realized in life onto the screen to cater to public psychology. However, the secular is not vulgar. *Hello, Mrs. Money* has a segment of beach bikini dance, which shows a weak relationship between characters, a grandiose performance, and an illogical plot, resulting in a poor reputation. Therefore, this paper believes that although the audience's viewing preference and aesthetic taste have had an impact on the creation of comedy films, comedy films failing to arouse people's thinking and emotional resonance will inevitably cause audience aesthetic fatigue, which is also a common problem of comedy films. In the following part, the paper discusses the comedy effect and existing problems of Mahua Fun Age's films.

Parody is to imitate other works in one's works, and collage classic fragments in different narrative plots to bring visual pleasure to the audience, to achieve the comic effect of ridicule, ridicule, and games [4]. Collage refers to cutting and pasting pieces of various existing texts into one's works, and rigidly pulling together these heterogeneous materials to form one's text [5]. In Mahua Fun Age films, the objects of parody and collage are usually classic works. For example, in *Goodbye Mr. Loser*, Xia Luo's mother lied about being insulted by the headmaster, which was a parody of the story in *Forrest Gump*. Yuan Hua and Qiu Ya met on the top floor of the school or in the woods. The clips of Yuan Hua and Qiu Ya expressing their love for each other parodied

the love scenes in Qiong Yao's plays. The clips in Qiong Yao's plays can remind people of the 1980s and 1990s, and Yuan Hua with exaggerated expressions has increased the comedy effect. Edison, a shy man in *Never Say Die*, parodied the real estate agent's introduction to the house by shouting slogans on the boxing court, such as, "Buddy, why not have a look at the house? taking bags to live in a house along the subway and with prime locations and luxury decoration". *Never Say Die* pasted the common language of the real estate agent's introduction to the house into the boxing match, and skillfully grafted it to eliminate the seriousness of the boxing match. In *Hello, Mrs. Money*, Huang Canghai pretending to be an aunt, copied Xiaocui's lines and plot when she spoke in front of everyone. Huang Canghai alienated the language in the original sketch, dispelled the original meaning, and formed a novel comedy feature. *Mahua Fun Age* not only imitates the classic bridge but also imitates the stars. In *Goodbye Mr. Loser*, there are imitation versions of Na Ying, Jay Chou, and Bruce Lee. Xia Luo sang *Nunchucks* in the primary and secondary school singer competition. His performance imitates Bruce Lee. Xia Luo performed the *Nunchucks* on the stage but kicked down the classmate holding the *Sick Man of East Asia* brand by mistake. This segment pays homage to the classic image through parody, highlights patriotism, and expresses the Chinese nation's self-improvement, and perseverance Chinese self-reliance, perseverance, and indomitable national character express strong patriotic feelings. Some scholars hold a negative attitude towards the parody and collage used by *Mahua Fun Age* in the film, believing that parody and collage weaken the narrative rhythm of the film, make the film full of mischief and nonsense effects, and lack creativity [6] Some scholars believe that parody and collage is a nostalgic complex, a sort of combing and thinking about beautiful things, which not only has the spirit of entertainment, but also deconstructs the authority of classics, and deepens the meaning of irony and criticism. Parody and collage break with a precedent, overturn the classics, break through the fixed thinking mode, reshape the image or scene different from the past, from the effect of defamiliarization in the dismemberment of familiar things, and make the audience have a strange and familiar aesthetic experience. *Mahua Fun Age* films use a variety of materials to collage in the film plot, producing a carnival entertainment effect [7].

Mahua Fun Age also adopts the absurd narrative strategy of a national orgy. In *Never Say Die*, Edison and Ma Xiao swap bodies and then borrow the identity of a woman to enter the bathroom to reach the voyeuristic desires of the episode, the fast-cut fragmentary footage with the song "Y.M.C. A", the cheerful and exciting tune with an exaggerated performance, conveying to the audience the psychological state of Edison. In *Goodbye Mr. Loser*, Charlotte becomes the winner of his dream life by time traveling, but after he succeeds, he finds that he is not so happy, and finally Charlotte returns to reality and lives happily. In *Hello Mr. Billionaire*, the story of Wang Duoyu's overnight fortune leads to the discussion of the good and evil of human nature. These films portray people's emotional desires and dream under the impact of commercial society. Through absurd and transcendent plots, people's unattainable pursuits are realized in movies, mobilizing the audience's desire to watch movies, and venting their frustration-filled and anxious state of mind, which also triggers people's thoughts and resonance. Therefore, the carnival is to use words and scenes to invert things and simulate what it inverts, exaggeratingly affirming and amplifying things that defy common sense to achieve the purpose of negation and satire [8]. The *Mahua Fun Age's* films are inversions of real life; the characters in the films are exaggerated and nonsensical beings, often appearing as subversive minor characters who speak in dialect, imitate rich people, and say posh words that are completely against their identity. In *Mr. Donkey*, the coppersmith is an illiterate but forced to become an educator, standing embarrassed on the stage, and speaking poor English, and after an emotional change with Zhang Yiman, he puts on a mink coat and speaks seriously on the podium. The significance of the coppersmith's inversion is that it is perhaps not the peasants

who lack the most education in China. Mahua Fun Age uses carnival expressions to satirize a certain social phenomenon.

Sketch-style performance is a common method of expression in Mahua Fun Age's films. The performances are divided into linguistic packages and irony [9]. The linguistic packages include revealing the joke and irrelevant to the subject. Revealed the joke refers to padding, setting up, rendering, or building the atmosphere, and then shaking off the package to produce a joke [10]. For example, Ma Dongmei in Goodbye Mr. Loser explains the source of her name: "My father's name is Ma Dong, and he died when I was born, so my name is Ma Dongmei." In this line, "Ma Dong" is the pretext for the name "Ma Dongmei", and "he died when I was born" adds to the comedic effect of the character Ma Dongmei. The reversal of the correct order of words is deliberately reversed to create a laughing matter [11]. In Goodbye Mr. Loser, when Charlotte asks the grandfather where Ma DongMei is, the grandfather replies, "Ma xx Mei", "Ma DongWhat", "What DongMei" When the answer is "What DongMei", he uses a reversed way of saying it, which deepens people's impression of Ma DongMei.

The use of nostalgic style music in Mahua Fun Age's film is unique, and each work contains a large amount of nostalgic music, which is used as background music or sung by the actors to form a comedic effect. For example, in the episode of Goodbye Mr. Loser, when Yuan Hua suffers a blow from love, the intro of One Cut Plum will play. One Cut Plum is full of sadness, and this sad tune with Yuan Hua's performance highlights the comedic effect. The end credits of Never Say Die sounded Good Luck which the song was originally an expression of Chinese New Year. But in the film, it was used as a punchline to set up the end of the film.

The success of the Mahua Fun Age's films cannot be separated from the humorous and funny lines. For example, in Mr. Donkey, the commissioner asks the school principal about one of his lines. Principal: This was originally a temple of the rain god. Principal: Oh, we were approved by the county school board. Special Agent: This is not under their control. [12] In this line, a commissioner is a superstitious person which means he has greeted the rain god and other gods. The principal does not understand his meaning and thinks he is asking him whether this land is legal, thus creating this cold humor of answering a question. A line in Goodbye Mr. Loser, "When I was in school, she was famous, the school babe recognized by the whole school, and I was even more famous, the joke recognized by the whole school." [13] In this line, the words "school babe" and "joke" are used as homophonic to increase the comic effect.

3. Summary

From a commoner's perspective, the Mahua Fun age tells the different situations of one ordinary life after another, using laughing packages and humorous language to reveal some undesirable phenomena, this comedic expression is easily accepted by the audience. The film's comedic atmosphere is enhanced using a variety of artistic elements, and the use of music and sketch lines adds to the film's comedic impact. In Goodbye Mr. Loser, the characters in the wedding are presented in the form of cartoons, giving the audience a novel feeling. Thus, the use of various artistic elements forms the unique comedy film style of the Mahua Fun age.

The themes of Mahua Fun age's films are all socially focused, and the mode of creation is "comedy + hot topics", such as "comedy + richness", and "comedy + first love". The content of the films all deal with the relationship between money and human nature, and the plots are set up using misunderstandings and coincidences between the characters. A model has been formed for the creation of Mahua Fun age's comedy films. The development of comedy films will be hindered by the monotonous content, the formulaic mode of creation, and the standardization of plots. Therefore, Mahua Fun age comedy films need to expand the ways of expressing stories, not only to pursue entertainment and fun, but also to attach importance to the storytelling and ornamental aspects of comedy films, to pay attention to the image building

of characters, conflicts, suspense, and other film narrative elements, so that Mahua Fun age comedy films can not only maintain a high degree of joys but also have a strong storyline and narrative ability so that the combination of laughs and storyline. Comedy should focus on the spiritual core of the film, using the characters and the background of the comedy to create a second take on the ridiculous phenomena of life, celebrating the good things and satirizing the backward phenomena, and causing the audience to think about what's behind the jokes. Therefore, Mahua Fun age needs to pursue the plot and spiritual core of the film, explore the cultural connotations of different countries and regions, and enrich the creative inspiration of the film in a cross-cultural context so that Mahua Fun age's comedy films can reach the international screen.

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