

## **In the Mood For Love: Wong Kar Wai's Stunning Adaptation of Modern Romance**

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Modern romance films portray love as something inescapable – a force that simply takes hold and wrenches people in. An emotion stronger than any sense of intellect or reason, it often overwhelms characters and engulfs their stories, separating them from the rest of the world. Wong Kar-Wai's *In the Mood for Love* paints love in a way that is much more profound: a slow encounter, devastatingly entangled in the worlds of the people who discover it.

The film centers around Chow Mo-wan, played by Tony Leung, and Su Li-zhen, played by Maggie Cheung. A seemingly uneventful plot, the two move in next door to each other only to realize that their spouses are having an affair. They soon find themselves involved in their own budding relationship, but are bound by a sense of duty that stops the romance in its tracks. On its surface, the film explores betrayal, loneliness, and loss, but its composition allows for so much more seep through.

Long takes, slow motion, and warm colors dominate the film. The unfaithful spouses are never shown in full, making them just as distant and removed to the audience as they are to the characters closest to them. There are many shots of Mo-wan and Li-zhen that leave out faces, focusing solely on torsos, legs, shoes, hands. The camera finds much more intimacy with them than with other characters, and arguably even more than they allow themselves to have with each other. Framing gives a sense of secrecy to the camera's presence. Shots around door frames, down alleyways, in reflections of mirrors and windows add to the sense of restriction inherent in Mo-wan and Li-zhen's romance. The repetition of *Yumeji's Theme*, slow, somber, and echoing, juxtaposes scenes of a bustling city and cramped apartments, but perfectly captures the underlying melancholy of the two protagonists.

Through slow movement and quiet sound, Kar-Wai makes overused motifs and clichéd shots appear dramatic and exceptional. The would-be lovers caught in the rain moves from tired trope to a moment of reflection and restraint. Images of form-fitting dresses and high stiletto heels skirt seductivity and progress to alluring, but innocent charm. Hand holding is transformed from flirty symbol into a heartbreaking instant that begs the question of what we truly consider to be a moment of weakness - and what actions we deem justifiable in pain. Kar-Wai capitalizes on minimal action and deliberate movement to create a dreamlike sequence that defies the limitations of traditional romance.