[FEVER DOG IN]

WELCOME TO CINEMA SOUNDTRACKS, I’M YOUR HOST EVE ELLIOTT. FOR THIS EPISODE, I’M GOING TO BE TALKING ABOUT THE SEMI-AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MOVIE ALMOST FAMOUS.

[FEVER DOG OUT]

THIS MOVIE WAS DIRECTED BY ROLLING STONE JOURNALIST TURNED DIRECTOR CAMERON CROWE,WHO BEGAN WORKING FOR ROLLING STONE AT A VERY YOUNG AGE. WHEN CROWE WAS 16, HE FOLLOWED THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND ON TOUR FOR THREE WEEKS, INTERVIEWING THEM AND THE CREW MEMBERS. HIS ARTICLE ABOUT THEM ENDED UP BEING A ROLLING STONE COVER STORY. THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER HE INTERVIEWED MANY FAMOUS BANDS OF THE 70S INCLUDING LYNYRD SKYNYRD AND LED ZEPPELIN WHO ARE BOTH FEATURED ON THIS SOUNDTRACK. BASED LOOSELY ON CROWE’S OWN LIFE, ALMOST FAMOUS FOLLOWS THE STORY OF 15-YEAR OLD WILLIAM MILLER AND HIS LOVE OF MUSIC.

[SPARKS IN]

AS AN ASPIRING ROCK JOURNALISTS, HE LANDS A JOB WITH ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE WHO ASK HIM TO WRITE AN ARTICLE ABOUT THE UP-AND-COMING BAND STILLWATER. MUCH TO THE DISAPPROVAL OF HIS OVERPROTECTIVE MOTHER PLAYED BY FRANCES MCDORMAND, HE ENDS UP GOING ON TOUR WITH THE BAND FOR SEVERAL DAYS, INTERVIEWING THE BAND MEMBERS AND LEARNING ABOUT THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF 70S ROCK MUSIC. ALONG THE WAY HE MEETS PENNY LANE AND HER CROWD OF BAND-AIDS.

[SPARKS OUT]

[BAND-AID CLIP]

[SPARKS IN]

DESPITE SAYING THAT SHE HAS RETIRED FROM THE MUSIC SCENE, PENNY JOINS WILLIAM IN FOLLOWING STILLWATER ON TOUR, WHERE SHE REKINDLES A RELATIONSHIP WITH GUITARIST RUSSELL HAMMOND. WILLIAM TRIES TO INTERVIEW EACH OF THE BAND MEMBERS AS THEY TRY TO MAKE SURE HE WRITES A POSITIVE ARTICLE ABOUT THEM. AS TIME GOES BY, THE BOND BETWEEN PENNY AND WILLIAM GROWS.

[SPARKS OUT]

THE MOVIE FOLLOWS THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF A LIFE ON THE ROAD AS WILLIAM, PENNY, AND THE BAND STRIVE TO FIND MEANING THROUGH THE MUSIC.

THE FIRST SONG I’M GOING TO PLAY FOR YOU IS CALLED SPARKS BY THE WHO. AFTER BECOMING TIRED OF LIVING WITH HER MORE CONSERVATIVE MOTHER, WILLIAM’S OLDER SISTER DECIDES TO LEAVE AND BECOME A FLIGHT ATTENDANT. BEFORE LEAVING SHE TELLS WILLIAM TO LOOK UNDER HIS BED. HE FINDS HIS SISTER’S RECORD COLLECTION, INCLUDING THE ALBUM TOMMY BY THE WHO.

[SPARKS IN]

 THERE IS A NOTE ATTACHED TO THE RECORD THAT SAYS, “LISTEN TO TOMMY WITH A CANDLE BURNING AND YOU WILL SEE YOUR ENTIRE FUTURE”. WILLIAM LIGHTS A CANDLE AND PUTS ON THE RECORD AS THE SCENE ENDS. THIS IS ONE OF THE VERY FIRST SONGS IN THE MOVIE AND IT MARKS THE BEGINNING OF WILLIAM’S LOVE OF MUSIC.

[SPARKS OUT]

UP NEXT IS A SONG PLAYED BY THE BAND STILLWATER IN THE MOVIE. WILLIAM GOES TO A BLACK SABBATH CONCERT TO TRY TO GET AN INTERVIEW WITH THEM, BUT HE ENDS UP MEETING STILLWATER INSTEAD. PENNY LANE AND THE BAND-AIDS LET HIM BACKSTAGE WHERE HE GETS TO MEET THE BAND AND BEGIN HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH PENNY. DURING THE EXCITEMENT, HE AND PENNY MOVE TO THE SIDE OF THE STAGE TO WATCH STILLWATER PERFORM THEIR SONG, FEVER DOG.

[FEVER DOG IN]

DURING THE PERFORMANCE, PENNY NOTICES WILLIAM WRITING THINGS DOWN IN HIS NOTEBOOK. SHE TAKES HIS PENCIL OUT OF HIS HAND AND SIGNALS TO HIM TO WATCH THE BAND AND FOCUS ON THE MUSIC.

[FEVER DOG OUT]

ONCE WILLIAM GIVES HIS FULL ATTENTION TO THE BAND, HE REALIZES HOW TALENTED THEY ARE, AND BECOMES EXCITED ABOUT WRITING AN ARTICLE ABOUT THEM.

ONE OF MY PERSONAL FAVORITE SONGS FROM THIS MOVIE IS SIMPLE MAN BY LYNYRD SKYNYRD.

[SIMPLE MAN IN]

THIS SONG REALLY EMPHASIZES THE THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF THE SCENE THAT IT’S USED IN WHILE STILL REMAINING SUBTLE. THE ABILITY OF A SONG TO INFLUENCE A SCENE WITHOUT THE AUDIENCE REALLY NOTICING SHOWS HOW IMPORTANT SONG SELECTION IS IN MOVIES.

[SIMPLE MAN OUT]

THE STILLWATER TOUR GROUP IS HANGING OUT AT A HOTEL POOL LATE AT NIGHT WITH THE SONG SIMPLE MAN BY LYNYRD SKYNYRD PLAYING IN THE BACKGROUND. WILLIAM IS WATCHING THEM FROM A DISTANCE WHEN RUSSELL COMES UP TO HIM AND BEGINS CONFESSING HIS TRUE FEELINGS ABOUT THE BAND, AFTER MAKING SURE THAT WILLIAM HAS TURNED HIS RECORDER OFF. HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE THAT WILLIAM MAKES THE BAND SOUND GOOD IN HIS ARTICLE. HE THEN TELLS HIM THAT THE MORE POPULAR THE BAND BECOMES, THE MORE PRESSURE THERE IS TO SUCCEED. HE SAYS THAT HE DOESN’T FEEL LIKE A TRUE FAN OF THE MUSIC ANYMORE. HE’S WORKING SO HARD TO LIVE UP TO THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE AUDIENCE, THAT HE’S NO LONGER CONNECTED WITH THE MUSIC.

[SIMPLE MAN IN]

 THE SONG PERFECTLY DESCRIBES WHO RUSSELL WANTS TO BE, WITH LYRICS LIKE “BE A SIMPLE KIND OF MAN

[SIMPLE MAN]

OH, BE SOMETHING YOU LOVE AND UNDERSTAND”.

[SIMPLE MAN]

THE COMBINATION OF THE SONG, RUSSELL CONFIDING IN WILLIAM, AND HIS PHYSICAL SEPARATION FROM THE BAND DURING THIS CONVERSATION MAKES IT A SUBTLE YET IMPORTANT PART OF THE STORY.

[SIMPLE MAN OUT]

UP NEXT IS A VERY FAMOUS SONG BY ELTON JOHN THAT PLAYS DURING ONE OF THE MOST EMOTIONAL SCENES IN THE MOVIE. AFTER AN INTENSE ARGUMENT BETWEEN RUSSELL AND HIS BAND MEMBERS, EVERYONE IS RIDING ON THE TOUR BUS IN SILENCE LISTENING TO THE SONG TINY DANCER.

[TINY DANCER IN]

ONE PERSON BEGINS SINGING ALONG TO THE SONG AND THE OTHERS SOON JOIN IN. AS THE TENSION BEGINS TO FADE, WILLIAM TURNS TO PENNY AND SAYS,  “I HAVE TO GO HOME”. SHE RESPONDS BY TELLING HIM, “YOU ARE HOME”.

[I HAVE TO GO HOME CLIP]

THIS MARKS THE FIRST TIME THAT WILLIAM TRULY FEELS LIKE HE BELONGS WITH THE BAND, AND SHOWS THAT HE IS NOW PART OF THEIR INNER CIRCLE.

[THE WIND IN]

THE LAST SONG ON THIS LIST IS THE WIND BY CAT STEVENS.

[THE WIND OUT]

 THIS SCENE REALLY FOCUSES ON PENNY LANE’S LIFE IN MUSIC. SHE IS SEEN ON AN EMPTY STAGE AFTER ONE OF STILLWATER’S SHOWS, DANCING AROUND BY HERSELF AMONG THE EMPTY CUPS AND NAPKINS LEFT FROM THE NIGHT BEFORE. THE SONG CREATES A FEELING OF PEACE AND JOY THAT FITS HER ATTITUDE ABOUT LIFE.

[THE WIND IN]

[THE WIND OUT]

PENNY KNOWS THAT SHE WILL HAVE TO LEAVE THE BAND SOON TO  MOVE ON WITH HER LIFE, SO SHE IS REFLECTING ON ALL OF THE FUN TIMES SHE HAS HAD, AND HOW MUCH THE MUSIC AND THE PEOPLE SHE’S MET HAVE SHAPED HER. I PERSONALLY LOVE THIS SCENE BECAUSE OF HOW SIMPLE IT IS. THE ACOUSTIC TONE OF THIS SONG HELPS ADD TO THE SIMPLICITY OF IT, AND SEPARATES IT FROM THE INTENSITY OF THE REST OF THE SOUNDTRACK. THE MUSIC PLAYED DURING THE SCENES WITH THE BAND CAN SEEM KIND OF CHAOTIC, BUT THIS SONG AND THIS SCENE WITH PENNY REALLY SHOWS THE RAW HAPPINESS AND NOSTALGIA THAT SHE FEELS BEING PART OF THE MUSIC.

[THE WIND IN]

[THE WIND OUT]

[SPARKS IN]

BY THE END OF THE MOVIE, PENNY IS ABLE TO MOVE ON WITH HER LIFE AND FOLLOWS HER DREAM OF MOVING TO MOROCCO, ONLY AFTER MAKING SURE THAT WILLIAM GETS HIS INTERVIEW WITH RUSSELL. THE BAND FINALLY ALLOWS WILLIAM TO GIVE A REAL AND HONEST ACCOUNT OF THEIR JOURNEY, AND HIS ARTICLE ENDS UP BEING PUBLISHED AS THE COVER STORY FOR ROLLING STONE.

THAT’S ALL I HAVE FOR THIS EPISODE. ALMOST FAMOUS IS ONE OF THOSE REALLY TIMELESS MOVIES THAT YOU CAN QUOTE ENDLESSLY. IT’S SUCH A UNIQUE AND ENDEARING STORY AND IT IS ONE OF MY PERSONAL FAVORITES. FOR WHJE, THIS HAS BEEN EVE ELLIOTT, AND I’LL BE BACK NEXT TIME WITH A NEW SOUNDTRACK TO DISCUSS. FOR MORE PODCASTS LIKE THIS ONE, GO TO WHJE.COM.

[SPARKS OUT]