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Film Foundations I

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Self Made: The Bridge Between Fantasy & Reality

Self Made: The Life of Madam C.J Walker (2020) uses a masterful color palette [and camera work] to fully immerse viewers into a vibrant experience. The second episode (“Bootstraps”) immediately begins with a rose-tinted visual of dancers advertising hair products, and finally ending with a reveal of Madam C.J Walker herself. Pink is used to encapsulate the light-hearted and charming nature of Walker’s dream, whereas blue is used to convey the stability she wishes to have in her career. As described by Kira Kelly herself, she wanted to give viewers somewhat of a “visual cue” to implicitly shift the inner workings of Walker’s brain. This method is also exhibited with the centering of Octavia Butler in the middle of the dancers revolving around her - expressing her desire of success while also catering to black women.

Later on, a rack focus shot is used with a conversation between Madam C.J Walker and Ransom. The scene subtly switches the perspective of who’s talking through the rack focus shot, and later ends with Walker looking into the mirror and fantasizing of how closer her aspiration is to becoming reality. Furthermore, another scene of Booker T. Washington and Walker highlight the differences in their goals. Washington wants to uplift black men and disregard black women, whilst painted in a shadow underneath the lights of a tunneled hallway. Madam C.J Walker, however, is arguing against that mindset and proposes her business for the upliftment of black women, stating that it’s not a competition, while fully beneath the lighting. These choices accentuate the contrast between the two, and clearly define which belief is beneficial to the black community.



[Unfortunately, I couldn't upload any pictures of the other scenes listed, as it doesn't show up.]

Time Stamps:

Ransom & Madam C.J Walker Talk: **25:50**

Booker T. Washington & Madam C.J Walker Argument: **42:20**

Sourcing:

<https://www.motionpictures.org/2020/07/self-made-dp-kira-kelly-on-why-black-stories-matter/>