

## **THEMES:**

I have identified four themes throughout this film:

- Loneliness.
- Depression.
- A search for identity.
- A battle with healing.

It was extremely challenging to narrow these themes down to four. Originally, I wanted to include hopelessness - but that is counteracted by Ally being this beacon of light to Jack and Jack helping Ally find the light in her that she couldn't find... [paraphrasing *Always Remember Us This Way*].

Ally is on a journey searching for her identity as a singer and she happens to fall in love along the way. This is how I see her personal motivations steer her choices as a character.

Jack struggles with loneliness and depression while simultaneously battling his physical, mental, and emotional healing.

### **What clues do the filmmaker and screenwriters give you to let you know what this film is thematically about?**

The filmmaker and screenwriters let audiences know what this film is about thematically through many small yet very effective choices. I noticed there is minimal score in this film which shines light on the reality of how these characters live (in my opinion, a musical score is either included because it is one of the main focal points of the film and is intended to win awards... or it adds emotional draw and connection to films that need to say more). There is no need to glamorize or add fillers to a story that is already full of so much emotional power.

We see details of a celebrity's life behind the scenes. For example, Jack is chauffeured around by his driver directly after an exhausting (but also exhilarating) concert. Phil and Jack talk to each other as if it is normal for someone to be drinking straight liquor like life depends on the emptiness of a bottle in the backseat of an SUV. This leans the film toward the theme of loneliness, depression, and a battle with healing.

Ally's nose concept being a burden to her music career indicates women being sexualized or held to higher beauty standards in the industry. From the very beginning, she is already defeated by this insecurity. Not to mention, the difficulty of starting out - Ally works for a hotel, lives with her dad who somewhat doesn't believe she'll make it and she's played gigs at a drag bar for a while with no legitimate opportunities. I think these were excellent choices for the filmmaker and screenwriters because they visualize how hard it is for Ally to find her identity throughout the film.

### **What do you notice in the filmmaking that isn't in the script?**

From what I gathered, the screenplay and film are almost identical. Only a few blocking choices and tiny alterations like where the characters stand/sit/eat etc. are slightly different. Other than that, this is the first screenplay I have seen this semester that mirrors the movie almost perfectly.

### **What do you notice in the song lyrics during specific beats in the film?**

Jack sings *Maybe It's Time* very often throughout the beginning stages of the movie. I think this mirrors his emotions of hopelessness, depression, loneliness, suicide, and the death of his father:

“nobody knows what waits for the dead, some folks just believe in things they’ve heard and things they read nobody knows what waits for the dead.” The lyrics makes me think he is saying ‘maybe death is better than where I am right now.’ I could be wrong; this is just how I interpreted this song.

Ally sings *Always Remember Us This Way* which I think resembles her search for identity: “you found the light in me that I couldn’t find.” It also reads as a love song to Jack, ‘I don’t wanna be just a memory,” “when you look at me and the whole world fades, I’ll always remember us this way.” This speaks to Ally loving Jack more than she ever thought was possible and no matter what happens, she’ll always remember their love as the anecdote to her identity. Again, I could be wrong; this is just how I interpreted this song.

### **How are Jack and Ally's core problems similar but also in conflict?**

Both of their demons destroy their relationship: we see Ally’s life at home where she cleans up after her dad and his friends routinely. She is accustomed to the men in her life relying on her to make their lives easier. Jack is no different, she loves him- but she also loves the stage and refuses to allow any “garbage” (I feel like that was a reoccurring word meant to make an impact on us in regard to Ally) to take that away from her. She punches back hard when things get rocky. Ally is searching for her voice while Jack is simultaneously losing his. Jack wants to help her speak truth to the world but Ally listens more to what Rez has to say (maybe because he was the first to sign her and truly pay attention to the seriousness of her career... while Jack is drunk and high when Ally tries to talk to him about it).

Jack’s music is inevitably coming to an end. His music will fail at some point due to his hearing, indulgence of drugs and alcoholism. Ally loses sight of her own truth while Jack is struggling with this. They are both losing their voice and they both think they can fix each other. Only Jack can make the choice to help himself, and only Ally can decide who she listens to regarding her identity. They both avoid these issues until it becomes too late.

### **What do you notice specifically about Jack and who he is and why he struggles?**

Jack grew up in a loveless household with a drunk father who cared nothing for him. This took a toll on him from a young age which we see revealed in rehab as he tells the man on the bench about the suicide attempt at 12. He’s constantly self-sabotaging by drinking too much and using drugs “trying to fill that void” (*Shallow*). The void (in my interpretation) refers to his happy soul that has and will never see the light of day. Even with Ally to pour his heart into, he cannot shake the death grip his demons have upon him.

### **How does this play out in his actions? How does that affect Ally?**

He avoids his problems by changing the subject, drinking, and using drugs. This affects Ally because he was her saving grace of identity and yet - he won’t acknowledge her success. For example, the scene in the hotel after Rez promises a future for her – Jack is extremely stoned and barely notices this huge landmark she is trying to share with him. Perhaps this is because he fears losing her... which is ultimately what happened because Ally isn’t even Ally when she listens to Rez.

### **Ally metaphorically loses her voice. How is this connected to Jack and his voice? His hearing?**

Jack tells Ally on the balcony of the hotel that she needs to speak her truth to the world, or she is screwed in the industry. She continues to spiral, becoming a piece of what the industry wants her to be. I think this is connected to Jack's voice and hearing because he knows his career is coming to a brutal end. Knowing that subconsciously scares Jack. Therefore, he fights for Ally's authentic self, so the breadth of her music is much deeper than where it's headed.