Astounding Sounds

Intention and Ambivalence in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music

Wendy Jane Jordan

Goldsmiths College, University of London

PhD Degree

GOLDSMITHS

8703404936

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is all my own.

Signed..

WENDY J JORDAN

Abstract

Astounding Sounds: Intention and Ambivalence in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music

This project examines how music expresses the complexities of urban existence in contemporary Hollywood films. To do this I trace the history of Hollywood film music, while surveying existing literature on film scores. Significantly, I include commentary from practitioners to authenticate an evolving model of scoring practices, in addition to ideas from musicologists, film studies and film music academics. The early chapters describe the development of the specially-composed classical score, the rise of the pre-existing pop score, and the introduction of hybrid scores. Paying equal attention to classical and pop scores, I conduct a film musicological analysis of three contemporary existentialist films – *Heat* (1995), *Magnolia* (1999) and *Moulin Rouge* (2001). I explore ideas expressed by, among others, Claudia Gorbman on the persuasive power of the 'unheard' classical score, and by Anahid Kassabian on the open-ended permutations of the 'heard' pop score, in order to unravel the subtle changes in modern film scoring.

In my chosen films, characters choose actions which result in psychological turmoil and damaging relationships. My central question is: How does contemporary film music express such ambivalence? How is it different to 'conventional' film music which privileges narrative? Indeed, is music becoming the new narrative? To pursue these questions, I controversially employ the techniques of traditional musicological analysis to assert the equal value of both types of score used for contemporary urban films.

My study shows that when conventional film music techniques are subverted by giving the score increased status, more complicated, open-ended and challenging stories can be told, which more directly express the contemporary psyche. These 'music narratives', comprising ambiguous scoring techniques, generate a range of ethical questions for audience contemplation, exposing and reinforcing the deep-rooted ambivalence of survival. If the repositioning of music is redefining film narrative, then music analysis and musicological method are becoming indispensable for film studies.

Table of Contents

4

Introduction

In this study, we will travel through time to examine the development of music in film, from live solo pianists playing over the whirr of the projector in the early nickelodeons, to electronic, studio-created scores reflecting "plastic surgery, chemical alteration, electroshock therapy and nerve stimulation"[1]. In this introduction, I want to illustrate how this project came into being, and how my thinking developed through the case studies of *Heat* (1995), *Magnolia* (1999) and *Moulin Rouge* (2001).

The origins of the study

The journey to this project began unconsciously, when teaching music in Edinburgh during the 1980s and 1990s. There were two controversial issues within the music teaching community at that time – the employment of the notated score, and musical tastes and values. In my early years of music teaching, I discovered that much could be achieved with picture scores[2] or reduced scores[3], particularly when teaching composition at any level. Musical ideas could be expressed, talent spotted, teaching-needs met and potential realised. More importantly for this study, I recognised that the traditional notated score was the best source for the reproduction and analysis of classical music, but only quite useful for popular music performance and analysis. A lead sheet, for example, often proved a more appropriate guide for a jazz singer, as it leaves space for improvisation, interpretation, creativity, and the swing behind the notes – the embodied experience of which can never be

---

[1] In Philip Brophy, *100 Modern Soundtracks*, London, BFI, 2004.
[2] Scores in which pictures or other visual symbols replace traditional notation. I used them for young children, getting my artist brother to draw action-packed adventure scenes. So, for example, if I pointed to a black cloud, then the children would know to improvise on the bass drum!
[3] There are several examples: lead sheets for songs (comprising the melody line and chords only), piano adaptations of a full orchestral score, sets of lyrics with chords, all offering the chance to create new versions of existing music.

7

captured on manuscript paper, although with more success in audio or audio-visual recording. In popular styles, playing "accurately" from the notated score can expose its lack, yielding performances which are robotic and unmusical.

However, regardless of musical style, I continued to find the notated score a helpful shorthand to communicate essential musical ingredients to all types of musician, whether they be classical, jazz, punk, amateur or professional. In my experience of composing show songs and themes, performing and teaching across the educational spectrum, musicians speak the same language, which uses the basic musical components of chords, notes and melodies, keys, styles, rhythms, forms and instrumentation. The working language employed is no more or less complex for any particular style of music in any situation. The thinking behind the musicological method in this study, therefore, resists canonisation, embraces stylistic and musical education diversity, and considers the score as part of a dynamic embodied musical experience, as opposed to a notated score reduced to "cadavers on a slab"[4]. This makes it a resolutely critical musicology. I recognise the strengths of traditional musicology, but also its weaknesses. I seek to find increasingly effective ways to discuss how music is heard and experienced in contemporary art forms, in the realisation that this is an on-going, developing process. I also discovered during my years of music teaching that popular music interested all students, whether they were musical or not. The subject of music, it seemed to me, should contain a respectful "tastelessness", for all types of music and for a variety of score forms. Not everyone agreed.

In this period, I also wrote four reference books on music[5], aimed at anyone at all interested in music. One of these books, *Music Forms and Styles*, gave equal status to popular and classical music terms, and was the first of its kind. For example, the reference entry for **fugue** stood proudly next to **funk**, and **dodecaphonic** next to **doowap**. The book sold surprising well, even with no illustrations, and I noticed that while cultural divides were eroding within the general music-reading public, they were being preserved in

[4] Ian Maxwell, referring to Sebastian Chan in 'The Curse of Fandom: Insiders, Outsiders and Ethnography' in Hesmondhalgh & Negus (eds), *Popular Music Studies*, London, Arnold, 2002

[5] *Music Forms and Styles*, Chambers, 1987 (reprinted 1988, 1991); *The Language of Music*, Chambers, 1987 (reprinted 1988); *Musical Instruments of the World*, Times Federal, 1995; *Essential Guide to Music*, Hodder & Stoughton, 2001 (co-written with Tudor Morris). All these books are published under my previous name of Wendy Munro.

educational establishments. I also noticed that there was as much depth of musical analysis and history required for the entry on funk as for fugue, for binary form as for bebop. When I read William Brooks' article 'On Being Tasteless' (1982) on arrival at Goldsmiths College in 2003, for an MA course entitled 'Music as Communication and Creative Practice', I was reminded of the importance of these issues for music analysis. Indeed, I chose to write an essay on the strengths and weaknesses of Luiz Tatit's musicological method[6] for analysing popular songs, which also examined the role of the musicologist within popular music studies.

The critical musicological method running through the study has been informed by all such experiences, and it focuses on the dynamic construction of music as it is heard, experienced and performed with moving images, speech and sound. The notated score is employed to furnish written evidence, rather like a musical diary of events, and to provide a springboard for analysis. I find the reduced notated scores from sheet music particularly invaluable to my thinking on songs. With the salient musicological information secured within the notated score, it is possible to focus more sharply on aspects of performance, the "grain"[7] of the voice, the choice of instrumentation for a particular scene, the study of how and why music moves and works in film. With a score which imparts the rudiments of music as described above, I find that it is easier to discuss its intentions in a film, and observe how other film elements are reacting to the music. I will return to musicological method later in this introduction, discuss it extensively in Chapter 1, and then again in Chapter 6 where I illustrate how my "film musicology" evolved across the PhD, and how it might be employed in the future.

---

[6] Luiz Tatit, 'Analysing Popular Songs', in Hesmondalgh and Negus (eds), *Popular Music Studies*, Arnold, 2002. In discussing the differences between slow and fast song characteristics, Tatit employs a reduced score which effectively illustrates the links between lyrics and music. However, in my opinion, it also allows details to be missed, including date of composition, performers, arrangement and version, which would impart social, historical and political meaning.

[7] This word is taken from Roland Barthes' essay 'The Grain of the Voice' (1977). He describes the "grain" as "the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs". It is the unique embodied "geno-song" in music, as opposed to the socially-constructed "pheno-song" which constitutes the "grain". The "grain" can only be heard and felt personally during performance. When the "grain" is present, "*signifiance* explodes, bringing not the soul but *jouissance*" (p183).

The unconscious, nascent ideas for a PhD began, then, with issues of musical taste and value, and some sharply-honed ideas on musicology. These were to be developed significantly in my MA dissertation, *Surprising Scores: The Use and Effect of Anomalous Music in Film* (2004). In this study, I aimed to transcend musical cultural barriers (of popular v classical, pre-existing popular v specially-composed classical, etc) by asking certain questions about the film score, which would be addressed with a musicological method. The questions I asked were: What happens when pre-existing music is used anomalously in contemporary film? What happens when pre-existing classical music is used in a modern-day setting? What happens when pre-existing popular music is used in a period film? Two of the four films I selected were known for their controversial employment of music: Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* (1996) for its use of vibrant dance music (including Bizet's *Habanera*) in a film about addiction among the underclass; and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), Kubrick's film about Alex de Large, a teenage gang leader who rapes, plunders and participates in "a bit of the old ultra-violence", for its employment of classical music, mostly Beethoven and Rossini.

Two important themes to arise from this study were those of 'intention' and 'ambivalence'[8]. These were to form the core of the PhD. In researching for the Masters dissertation, I found that pre-existing music, when employed anomalously in contemporary film, was capable of expressing a range of opposing emotions, themes and ideologies *at the same time*. Using Michel Chion's terms, the music worked both *empathetically* and *anempathetically*[9]. In *A Clockwork Orange* this is particularly acute. For example, in the first section of the film, Rossini's 'Overture' to *The Thieving Magpie* begins non-diegetically, signalling Alex's preferred taste in music. Slowly, Kubrick's favoured wide-angle lens reveals an ornamented painted ceiling. The 'dolce' strings play a delicately-structured melody, musically complex and typical of the romantic period, which perfectly reflects the ornate decoration on the ceiling. This is empathetic music – indeed, it could be specially-composed. The music can "directly express its participation in the feeling of a

---

[8] To clarify these words: by 'intention' I mean musical objectives, the functions of music; by 'ambivalence' I mean the co-existence of opposing emotions or mixed feelings over choices or things, which can be extreme in challenging situations, causing psychological damage and angst.

[9] From Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, Columbia University Press, 1994

scene, by taking on the scene's rhythm, tone and phrasing" (Chion, 1994, p8). As the film continues, we become aware of faint screams in the background, then as the camera tilts down, we view the enactment of an horrific gang-rape. Suddenly the music is anempathetic – "exhibiting conspicuous indifference to the situation, by progressing in a steady undaunted, and ineluctable manner" (Chion, p8). As the music develops, it acts as a Greek chorus reflecting and commenting on the action in its own coded language. The music, working together and against the action, forces an audience to confront scenes of violence and rape while encouraging empathy with Alex's point of view. The intention was to shock. The intention was also to convey ambivalence. Kubrick said: "You can regard Alex as a creature of the id. He is within all of us. In most cases, this recognition seems to bring a kind of empathy from the audience, but it makes some people very angry and uncomfortable" (in Strick and Housten, 1972, p129).

These themes of ambivalence and complex intentions for the music were also evident in *Trainspotting*, particularly in the scenes where Renton attempts "cold turkey" accompanied by the music of Bizet's *Habanera*. In these scenes, the music, as if specially-composed, mirrors Renton's meticulous actions and speech patterns with its sparse, precise scoring and reiterated syncopation. This syncopation is also seductive and dance-like, and it reflects the difficulties of resisting the longings for heroin. As this is the only classical music in an otherwise contemporary dance score, the music simultaneously celebrates and denounces difference. The music rejoices in the fact that Renton stands apart from his drug-taking friends and is attempting to give up addiction, and denounces difference in its reminders that he is from the underclass – this music, with its associations with affluent, faraway places, is not reflective of Renton's existence. The music, then, encapsulates and expresses the four central issues in these scenes: the constant struggle against heroin addiction; the disciplined way in which heroin must be conquered; the temptations of giving up; the isolating experiences of a complex contemporary existence. The ideas for the PhD were planted. A pre-existing piece of music could work similarly and differently to a specially-composed score, and yet *simultaneously!* In the spaces of difference, more complex intentions were evident, and these seemed to be connected to a theme of ambivalence when deployed in a contemporary film.

11

My starting point for the PhD was to ask the question: What are the functions of contemporary Hollywood film music? In other words, how does music work in contemporary films? What are its intentions? I wanted to know if the functions of music were developing, if there were now different reasons for the placing of music in film than before. At this stage, I wanted a cinema with a defined history, so that I could delineate how and why film music has changed in recent times. This initial central question was the driving force throughout the literary review, and indeed throughout the musical analyses of film music extracts. It is a standard musicological question, but in this case transformed into a critical musicological one, which yielded rich results. The more refined question which was to shape the entire PhD – How does music express the complexities of urban existence in contemporary Hollywood films? – came much later, during the examination of my three case studies: *Heat*, *Magnolia* and *Moulin Rouge*. Neither of these questions had been directly addressed before, and I suspected that they would generate some fresh ideas.

How my thinking developed

The first chapter begins with a return to cultural divides and the problems for musicologists in the fields of popular music studies and film studies. In the literature, it soon became evident that there were segregated camps emerging: music practitioners (including composers, arrangers and music editors); musicologists; film studies and film music academics; and in more recent film music literature, film directors. Some of these divides centred around the language of music, which I sought to erode with my critical film musicology. This fractured cultural landscape provided a useful scenic backdrop, to explain the rather haphazard history of literature on film music, and to include the often-ignored comments on the film score by composers, music editors and directors. However, I quickly shed the tensions of cultural divides as they began to hinder the addressing of the central question, reducing it to partisan views which did not move the ideas forward.

Initially, my reading included books and articles on sound, but I soon discarded these – I was interested in music, in musicology, how music works in film – and while

aware of arguments which promote analysis of the whole 'soundtrack' or 'soundscape' and the art of sound design[10], I wanted to focus on the art of composers and performers of pre-existing popular or classical music, or specially-composed music increasingly experienced and enjoyed in or out of the film world. (At this stage, I had not uncovered the film music which did not quite fit into either the pre-existing or specially-composed categories). These ruminations enabled me to sift through the literature and determine a structure for the introductory chapters.

The first chapter, dealing with the development of the specially-composed classical Hollywood score, revealed striking similarities and differences to film music today. In early cinema, the emerging role of music as supportive and subservient to narrative was clear to trace, but it was also interesting to learn that film makers were trying to entertain their audiences with pre-existing popular music, just as they do today.

Modern views were also evident in the literature across the range of "cultural camps". In their 'Statement on Sound' of 1928, Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov suggested that music should aim at a "sharp discord with the visual images" so that the "necessary sensation" of a "new orchestral counterpoint" could be created. Composer Marc Blitzstein identified *counterpoint foreground* and *counterpoint background* as two out of four relationships of music to film, in the final issue of *Films* in 1940. Blitzstein also promotes foreground music as much as background music, the role of song as a potential component of narrative, and pre-existing popular music as an aid to character construction. Adorno and Eisler (1947) challenged the use of the leitmotif in films, criticising the lack of thematic development of music in film. They also questioned the need for music to be unobtrusive, to include melody at any cost, and the reliance on the romantic symphony orchestra. They wanted more experimentation with the film score, more employment of the extensive musical resources available. Composer Aaron Copland (1949) encouraged viewers to *listen* to film music and appreciate it as an art form equal to any other. This collection of theorists, directors and composers transcended cultural barriers and looked forward to scoring practices which would yield more wide-ranging intentions for music. On

---

[10] Writers include Philip Brophy (2004) and Michel Chion (1994, 1999).

reflection, their thinking on film music did not include concern with aiding the narrative or persuading an audience to a particular perspective. Instead, these writers recognised the potency of music to express far more than Hollywood was allowing in those decades. These writers stood out as intellectuals who questioned the prevailing ideology, the one which was to dominate the golden years of Hollywood, and beyond.

Nevertheless, I needed to understand the dominant views on how music should work in classic Hollywood film, and it was Claudia Gorbman's 1987 book *Unheard Melodies* and the model within, to which I kept returning, regardless of musical style or type of cue. This was a surprise. I was convinced that the most revealing and musicologically interesting accounts of film music scoring would be found within composers' comments, or derived from theorists such as Adorno and Eisler who were trained musicians. In fact, such was Gorbman's meticulous research into production conditions, industry publications and Max Steiner's scores, (all achieved from the perspective of writing in the 1980s), that her grand overview became intrinsic to addressing my original questions: What are the functions of film music? What are its intentions? The model (which Gorbman stresses must be flexibly interpreted) was to be the springboard for comparing ideas on classical scores and the scores of today. I had been guilty of adopting a 'tasteful', culturally-divisive approach myself. I had assumed that "insiders" rather than "outsiders" would be more knowledgeable, and therefore more authoritative[11]. However, this is not to undermine the insightful, expert comment from composers, to which I returned many times.

As my reading expanded into film music of the 1950s and beyond, I noticed that the intentions of music were becoming more complicated. At this stage, I created a large matrix, to obtain a wider picture of how, why and where this was happening. I listed all the commentators on the classic Hollywood film score and beyond, including composers, music editors, directors, musicologists, film music and film studies theorists, and documented the intentions for music that these experts discussed. Often the music objectives were mentioned indirectly, but I was usually able to identify and extract the

---

[11] Reference is to Ian Maxwell's article 'The Curse of Fandom: Insiders, Outsiders and Ethnography' of 2002, in which he addresses the problems of being an 'insider' or an 'outsider' in a research field. Maxwell aims to "move away from an epistemology of popular music grounded in objectification, insofar as that journey leads us toward a radical subjectification" (p103).

salient musical details. The matrix soon became unwieldy, but it reflected the diversity of thinking which was to become Chapter 2. Another important point to be made here is that the most wide-ranging, rich and challenging ideas about film music were not coming from film industry personnel, as I had expected, but from film studies.

The first half of Chapter 2 is concerned with the development of the pop compilation score, from the 1950s onwards. The foregrounding of music within popular culture, the rise of new technology, the fragmentation of the Hollywood studio system, the proliferation of tie-in musical products, the introduction of commercial synergy and the MTV aesthetic were all to have an impact on the score, its listeners and the film industry. Directors suddenly had more choices – they could select a pre-existing pop or classical score, a specially-composed score, or a hybrid score comprising specially-composed music and pre-existing music. Another significant shift was evident: directors could draw directly from their own musical backgrounds, tastes and experiences, seizing more control of the soundtrack themselves. Interviews with directors and composers in Romney and Wootton's *Celluloid Jukebox* (1995) make this clear. Quentin Tarantino states: "I'm a little nervous about the idea of working with a composer because I don't like giving up that much control. Like, what if he goes off and writes a score and I don't like it? I don't like using new music that much because I want to pick what I know" (p127). Cameron Crowe also cites that particular experience when working with composer Paul Westerberg: "It's hard when you're a huge fan of your scoring artist. . . and he plays one of the great instrumental passages, and you as a fan love it, but you as the guy who made the movie know it's not right. It's hard to say, 'Paul, that's not quite right – but can you put it on a tape so I can have it myself?'" (p127). In the classic Hollywood system, perhaps composers actually had more autonomy. However, it is not necessarily the case that composers have lost their status – far from it. As KJ Donnelly (2003) claims, "Now there are even a few film composer superstars with names known by the general public, figures like Ennio Morricone, John Barry, Jerry Goldsmith, and Vangelis. The last of these composers had a Number One hit single in Germany" (p144).

The question, how does music work in Hollywood film, then, began to yield more complex results when applied to the pop score. Why exactly would a director choose a pop

score over a specially-composed score? Apart from commercial reasons, commentators in Chapter 2 who support this type of score suggest: its unique ability to evoke memory, instantly convey a time-period, ensure audience trust, communicate in a universal language, convey multiple meanings quickly, directly and simultaneously, add movement, and convey abandonment. While Claudia Gorbman celebrates the specially-composed classical score's flexibility and facility to travel incognito within a film, persuading us to a preferred perspective on the narrative, does it have the power to express those ideas cited as special qualities of the pop score? Can a pop score move and manipulate as subtly as a classical score? Do pop scores and classical scores have different functions? How can the musical language of a score based in the romantic period, featuring a large-scale symphony orchestra, be relevant to a contemporary audience? How can it possibly express contemporary urban experience?

As a starting point to address these questions, I asked which types of recent English-speaking films still employ predominantly traditional, romantic-style classical scores. Possible answers might be: mainstream family films such as the *Harry Potter* series, *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and *Toy Story* (2003); period films such as *Cold Mountain* (2003), *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003) or *Sherlock Holmes* (2009); action/thriller films such as the new James Bond films *Casino Royale* (2006) and *Quantum of Solace* (2008); or even the more futuristic *Terminator* or *Star Wars* series, which all reveal traditional ideologies expressing what it means to be 'good'. These claims may well need further research, asking for example: should a classical score always be appropriate for a historical drama? This question is not as obvious as it sounds – in my Masters dissertation, I had discovered that *A Knight's Tale* (2001), set in 14th century France, features Queen's *We Will Rock You* as the title track. So, another question might be: why should a pop score be restricted to films expressing contemporary experience? Of course, as we discover in Chapter 2, films from the 1950s onwards moved away from the large symphony orchestra to smaller ensemble or chamber groupings, introducing more atonal music as Adorno and Eisler had hoped, and later electronic instrumentation and popular song elements. However, these were still specially-composed scores commissioned for specific films, with classical objectives and conventions. Kathryn Kalinak summarises this well in *Settling the*

16

Score (1992). She states: "The force of these conventions transcended idiom (late romantic, or pop, for example), medium (symphony orchestras or jazz combos), and even style" (p203). However, I was beginning to wonder whether these conventions were really appropriate for new Hollywood films which did not offer clear perspectives on ethics, refused the boldly-etched ideologies of traditional meta-narratives often rooted in religion, and instead embraced diverse, challenging and complicated embodied experiences of individuals in the city.

These questions coincided with a developing interest in existentialism and humanism. I had begun to re-read the works of Scottish empirical philosopher David Hume, and his ideas on cause, effect and the connections between, which we assume to exist through "belief, bred by custom, habit and the operations of imagination"[12]. While written over 250 years ago, I found this interesting when applied to pluralist, post-colonial, postmodern life with wider choices of ethical position than the stark, causally-assumed correlations, for example, between committing a so-called sin and going to Hell. I was also reading a range of material on existentialism, finding Sartre's lecture 'Existentialism is a Humanism' of 1946 particularly bold in its presentation of theories. Certain ideas stood out: "The first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders"; our responsibility "concerns mankind as a whole"; all our choices are accompanied by "anguish, abandonment and despair" – anguish through the burden of responsibility, abandonment through the ultimate aloneness of our decisions, despair in our realisation we can count on nothing. It was at this point that I came across *Heat*.

Directed by veteran film maker, Michael Mann (b 1943), *Heat* (1995) represents an amalgam of Mann's previous projects concerning crime, modern masculinities, morality, urban existence, the fine lines between those on either side of the law and decision-making in challenging circumstances. Films such as *Jericho Mile* (1979), *Thief* (1981), *Manhunter* (1986), and the 1980s TV series *Miami Vice* illustrate such interests, and Mann's

---

[12] I was particularly re-reading *Theory of Knowledge*, containing 'An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding', first published in 1748 , this edition published Edinburgh, London, Melbourne and New York, Nelson, 1951. This quotation is an explanation of Hume's thinking written by the editor, DC Yalden Thomson, in his Introduction on page xvii.

subsequent films – *The Insider* (1999), *Collateral* (2004), *Miami Vice* (2006) and *Public Enemies* (2009) – continue to develop these themes. In addition, ground-breaking scoring techniques, such as the early self-conscious electronic score for *Thief,* and the prominent use of Jan Hammer's original synthesised music alternating with 'heard' contemporary pop tracks in the TV series *Miami Vice*, demonstrate the crucial role of music in Mann's work. Mann's continuing thematic interests, particularly those revolving around choices of action which bring us to who and where we are, appeared to suggest an engagement with existentialism, and this is examined most completely in *Heat*. I wanted to explore how music worked to interpret actions taken in a male-dominated environment, where tough facades and "warrior man" masculinities[13] are all-important. Modern decision-making in incessantly challenging conditions would hardly be straightforward – jobs, relationships, masculinities, image, power and sanity are all on the line. What kind of music might express such necessarily hidden angst? This became the central question for Chapter 3.

While the hybrid, eclectic, dark and unsettling score of *Heat* draws on the pre-existing music of the more experimental pop artists such as Moby, Einsturzende Neubauten and Brian Eno, it was the mostly 'unheard' specially-composed music by Elliot Goldenthal, featuring the Kronos Quartet, that I decided to focus upon. I wanted to find out if, how and why any classical scoring objectives might work in a film showing urban men under unabated stress. Goldenthal states that he aimed "to create a series of experiments . . . that were impressions of the film but weren't exact cues". To do this, he explored "strange combinations of sounds and sonorities"[14]. I found these words telling: they seemed to be connected with uncertainty, the unknown, insecurity, the chance, multi-dimensional elements of modern city life. A question was beginning to arise: if this impressionistic score was not aiding the narrative exactly, by either mirroring screen action or underlining ideologies; or persuading us to a particular and preferred perspective – what *was* it doing?

I selected five cues for consideration: *Heat* (the credit music), *Untitled, Of Helplessness, Coffee Shop*, and *Of Separation*, which are heard at significant moments in

---

[13] Barry McCarthy (1989) identifies four main attributes which constitute a culturally-ingrained ideal masculinity: physical courage, endurance, strength and skill, and honour.
[14] From the interview conducted with Goldenthal in *Into The Fire, Heat Special Features*, DVD, 2004

the film. I discovered that the cues entitled *Of Helplessness* and *Of Separation* mostly adhere to classical scoring techniques, but crucially, not completely. The scene featuring *Of Helplessness* underlines the drama: the body of a young prostitute murdered by the evil Waingro, and the anguish of her grief-stricken mother. As the music is explicitly foregrounded in this scene, where there is no dialogue and little movement, it becomes the chief narrative form, the only means of communicating a necessary ethical stance. The cue entitled *Of Separation*, on the other hand, confirms most expectations of a classical score, except for one vital point – it persuades us to empathise with both protagonists, but not one in particular.

The most "impressionistic" cues – *Heat, Untitled* and *Coffee Shop* – are heard during scenes of decisive actions and overt masculine bravado. The music destabilises these certainties by never finding relief in a tonal home, by including diverse and unexpected instrumentation, and by working both empathetically and anempathetically with screen dynamics, simultaneously. In addition to this, both protagonists, one on either side of the law, are connected through soft string and piano instrumentation. These gentle musical signifiers betray their warrior-man exteriors and confound expectations within such a gritty crime film. Such cues, which quietly subvert classical objectives, are able to convey unsettled, never-ultimately-definable interiorities. In creating a score which offers *signifiance*[15], enigmas are raised around the characters which are not expressed through visuals and dialogue. The analysis of Goldenthal's score was producing fresh ideas and questions about music in Hollywood film. It seemed to me that this composer was subtly disregarding the established narrative forms of visuals and dialogue, and in doing so exclusively revealing ambivalence, uncertainty, fragility, and angst, *through music*. This score was not what I had expected. It seemed to be operating like a classical score, with resistance and subversion. I began to wonder whether it might be true to say that this new

---

[15] In 'The Grain of the Voice' (1977), Roland Barthes argues that the "grain" has the power to "lay open *signifiance* in all its volume", ie it is capable of opening up meaning, rather than closing it down (p188). *Signifiance*, then, as opposed to significance, means resisting fixed meaning, avoiding ultimate definition or interpretation. *Signifiance*, according to Barthes "is inexhaustible" when the "grain" is present (p184). The concept of *signifiance* will feature in the chapters on *Heat, Magnolia* and *Moulin Rouge*.

type of slightly ambiguous score could more accurately express contemporary, confusing existence?

The specially-composed music in *Heat* quietly conveyed suppressed interiorities through a largely unheard instrumental score. This abstract, hushed instrumental music depicted the "anguish, abandonment and despair" of character action which was otherwise hidden from the exterior "man's world". The abstract qualities of the score ensured that interiorities were ultimately kept private and inscrutable. With reference to the philosopher Susanne Langer, Royal S Brown (1994) describes the musical symbol as having an "unconsummated nature", and suggests that a specially-composed score "consummates itself in the visual and, more often, narrative material of the movie it accompanies" (p92). It seemed to me, at this stage, that the specially-composed music in *Heat* was able to communicate more by being abstract yet impressionistic, and by therefore *never* quite consummating itself in the film.

Next, and in contrast to *Heat*, I wanted to explore how songs operate in a challenging contemporary film, where troubled psyches are laid bare. I wondered whether sung lyrics and a musical arrangement could move and work as flexibly or as subtly as an abstract classical score in a non-linear, multi-strand, time-compressed narrative, where characters continue to choose actions which result in intense anxiety and unhappiness. If Goldenthal's specially-composed music could communicate indefinable interiority at an impressionistic, non-judgemental distance, might songs with *ideas stated in words,* be more able to divulge, dissect and explicitly expose the psyche? These questions drew me to Paul Thomas Anderson's film *Magnolia* (1999) and the beginning of Chapter 4.

Magnolia is Anderson's third feature film, following the critically-acclaimed *Boogie Nights* (1997) and *Hard Eight* (1996). These first three films feature hybrid scores, with foregrounded songs, showing the director's regard for popular music as a significant film-making tool. However, Anderson's latest film, *There Will Be Blood* (2008), employs pre-existing classical music and a specially-composed score. In contrast to Michael Mann, Anderson (b 1970) explores an unpredictable range of topics, from the 1970's pornography industry in *Boogie Nights* to early 20th-century capitalism and religion in *There Will Be Blood*. The research into Aimee Mann's songs, heard in Paul Thomas Anderson's

20

Magnolia, revealed the sheer potency of song in contemporary film, and even how it can function similarly to a specially-composed score. The opening song *One*, for example, establishes the setting and tone of the film, provides unity by linking the characters psychologically, reinforces the main themes, and moves seamlessly across cuts and transitions between scenes. Indeed, this could be said of most song cues in the film. However, like the specially-composed music for *Heat*, it is in the subversive spaces where intimate, accurate and explicit insights into character psyche are made. *One*, for example, suppresses the dialogue, dominates the editing, works in counterpoint to the screen action, is self-consciously 'heard', and played in full, which in turn enables the sounds themselves to gain significance through repetition and variation. These techniques conspicuously reveal the ambivalence, the intense, painful and overwhelming feelings of the characters as they continue to choose self-damaging actions. In the drowning out of dialogue, and domination of visual elements, the music reinforces the view that these characters cannot and will not escape their predicaments.

The song *Wise Up*, on the other hand, finds its way into the diegetic space, taking hold of the film's structure, visuals and psychological states of the characters as they sing while it plays. The music is so dominant, as it passes from character to character, that it both generates and becomes the most significant multi-layered, pivotal action code in the whole film. The song in the non-diegetic space (through the grains of Aimee Mann's voice and her accompanying musicians) advises the characters to "wise up". In the diegetic space, the characters tell themselves to "wise up" as they sing. The causal effect of these action codes within the song results in all characters "wising up". Considering that this wising up is taking place several times over on three levels, the music functions in an extraordinarily powerful way, both classically in its linking of the characters, conveying emotion, and paving over the cuts and transitions between scenes; and innovatively as the dominant narrative form, seizing hold of all screen elements. The song utterly suppresses what we understand of narrative in classical cinema, and again as in *Heat*, individual choices of action accompanied by emotional ambivalence are emphasised and expressed exclusively through sung words and musical arrangement. Perhaps Siegfried Kracauer's

consideration, that "cinema comes into its own when it clings to the surface of things"[16] to reveal a new perspective on the world, is not always the case today. What if cinema "comes into its own" when it cleaves to music or sound and intensifies audience experience with *signifiance*? Is the soundscape now where more accurate perspectives on modern experience exist? These were the questions arising from analysis of *Wise Up*.

The final *Magnolia* cue, *Save Me*, also acts as narrative, to inform us of Claudia's psyche and its journey to more enlightened spaces. Indeed, Aimee Mann and the accompanying musicians perform *as Claudia*. The music also dictates this scene, which has little movement, and reminds us that we are watching a film – particularly at the song's bridge when Claudia turns to smile at the viewer, in postmodern, self-conscious style. These songs, then, resist categorisation in being not quite specially-composed and not quite pre-existing; and *Wise Up* and *Save Me* self-consciously blur the boundaries between diegetic and non-diegetic film space. The songs are employed innovatively and aptly in a film which, from the start, opens our minds to all eventualities through the happenstance scenes. Sung words appear to be able to explicitly convey the psychological, but still be flexible enough to aid character construction, move seamlessly between scenes, link characters psychologically and highlight main dramatic themes in the film. In addition, sung words can be undermined by a musical arrangement which works together and against the lyric. For example, while singing *Wise Up* with its assertive, direct lyrics, the characters struggle to pitch the notes. These physical difficulties confuse the meaning of the lyric, and explicitly reveal the ambivalence of the characters as they realise that the steps they must take to "wise up" will not be easy. However, this is not all. Employing heard, self-contained songs in full, enables music to stand out, draw attention to itself, present musical features such as repetition and variation within the song, and so make more powerful statements in those moments.

Dominic Strinati argues that postmodern popular culture is "concerned with collage, pastiche and quotation, with the mixing of styles which remain musically and historically distinct, with the random and selective pasting together of music and styles, with the

---

[16] Quotation taken from Kracauer, *Nature of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, London, Dennis Dobson, 1961, p285.

rejection of divisions between serious and fun"[17]. This could be an accurate description of *Moulin Rouge*, and it was to this film I turned next in Chapter 5, to explore how freshly-arranged, iconic, pre-existing songs might work in a film actually driven by music. *Moulin Rouge* (2001) is the third film in Baz Luhrmann's Red Curtain Trilogy, which begins with *Strictly Ballroom* (1992), followed by *Romeo and Juliet* (1996)[18]. In each of these films, songs feature prominently, but most of all in *Moulin Rouge*. In fact, Baz Luhrmann (b 1962) discusses the role of songs directly in this film, as they are intrinsic to his three Red Curtain Cinema rules of revealing the ending as the film begins, creating a heightened world, and reminding the audience that they are watching a film. Moreover, in drawing on film musical techniques from the 1930s, 40s and 50s, Luhrmann says that he managed to reclaim the "real artificiality" he sought by telling a tragi-comic historical story in "break out into song form"[19].

Further intentions of songs are evident from the production team's comments on the film. Musical Director Marius DeVries states: "We're going to take all musical influences to create this heightened world". Arranger Craig Armstrong claims that "the actual songs are structural devices through the film to push the storytelling". Director Baz Luhrmann says he managed to find "magnificent actors who could use their song to tell story", and that "music is there when words fail us"[20]. All these factors indicated that in *Moulin Rouge*, there would be a sustained film music narrative, unlike the other two case studies, which employed the device episodically. However, in analysing certain songs in this film, it soon became evident that Luhrmann achieved much more with his "break out into song form" than he was intending. In drawing from the back-stage musical, with its characteristic blurring of reality and fiction through song; and from the pop video or MTV aesthetic where " anything can happen" and images gain "in flexibility and play, as well as in

---

[17] Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1995, p225.
[18] *Australia* (2008) is Luhrmann's next (and most recent) feature film which marks out entirely new topical territory. Luhrmann's concerns with audience participation make his work quite different to that of Michael Mann and Paul Thomas Anderson. Indeed, the potential for participation that exists in music could be a reason why Luhrmann employs music so prominently in his work.
[19] Quotes and information from *Behind The Red Curtain, Collector's Disc*, 2006
[20] All *Moulin Rouge* film personnel quotes from *Behind The Red Curtain, Collector's Disc, 2006.*

polyvalence of meaning"[21]; and from the kaleidoscopic, ephemeral world of popular music culture, he was able to tell a vivid story to a highly media-literate audience with a range of ethical stances, offering "affiliating" and "assimilating" identifications, on a roller-coaster ride of oscillating hyper-real emotions, and *all at the same time*. This was a "timbrel text" with "vertical narration"[22] and more.

As with *Heat* and *Magnolia*, I selected the opening song for analysis first, as this is where setting and tone are established. The 'heard' song *Nature Boy*, which operates diegetically and non-diegetically and which Craig Armstrong describes as "opaque", functions as a self-conscious prologue, telling the whole story of the film "all at once", thus bringing attention to the film as construct from the start. The four strands of musical meaning – lyrics, voice, melody and instrumental arrangement – work together and in opposition simultaneously. This ambivalent sound is intensified, as the music is heard mostly in counterpoint to screen action. While the lyric expresses a rather dreamy, naïve attitude to life, the "grain of the voice"[23], the instrumentation and melody disagree. A central enigma, conveyed mostly through the music but also by Christian's doom-laden voice, is raised – was this love affair with Satine really worth it? The song also contains two leitmotifs which are heard at pivotal moments in the film to remind us of the tragic ending. Here we can see why this song is able to operate so powerfully in this film. In choosing sung lyrics which overtly expose the grain, to tell a story through a recognisable melody, accompanied by a fresh arrangement which is developed throughout the film, Luhrmann is able to sketch the outlines of a story directly and self-consciously, thereby leaving room for audience participation and *signifiance*. Luhrmann sells us a stark story outline through song, like a musical superstructure, and it is left to the audience to furnish that space. Through the "ecstasy of musicality"[24] he tells us a tortuous love story of decadence but also delusion, and as the music is specially arranged, much of it functions

[21] Carol Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video, Aesthetics and Cultural Context*, New York, Columbia University, 2004 px.
[22] Philip Brophy, 100 Modern Soundtracks, London, BFI, 2004
[23] Reference to Roland Barthes' term from his essay 'The Grain of the Voice' in *Image Music Text*, London, Fontana Press, 1977
[24] Quotation from Jean Baudrillard in Royal S Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994, p241.

like a 'heard' classical score, but more potently, because it *is* the narrative, and visuals and dialogue become its more malleable servants.

Resisting signification at every turn, the temporal mixing of an array of musical references enables all times, places and ethical beliefs to be included. In *Your Song*, the opera, Hollywood musicals, renaissance music and the classic Hollywood score itself are referenced overtly and excessively to emphasise the vulnerable human qualities of the young couple. In *El Tango de Roxanne*, there are allusions to the Argentinian Tango, white reggae, Lutheran church music, the brothel, the opera and baroque-style counterpoint, in order to heighten the opposing universal themes of love, jealousy, hate and revenge. Through musical excesses, the despair and alienation of characters are revealed in relief. Baz Luhrmann chooses to tell this story through song because the widest possible range of experiences can be communicated, *all at once*, and he is able to achieve his aim of creating the ultimate experience in audience participation cinema.

At the end of this research, I went back to read all of my notes for the case studies. It was clear that these three films were about secular embodied experiences in the city. They deal with characters in challenging situations, where choices of action are far from straightforward. These choices are always burdened with existentialist "anguish, abandonment and despair". In each film, it is the music which expresses this more than any other element. This is how I came to ask the final question which shaped the study. How does music in contemporary Hollywood film convey the complexities of urban existence?

Musical Milestones

Across the great divide . . .

"The study of film music has taken place in the margins of academia. While film scholarship has largely ignored film music as a problem it would rather not face, music scholarship has persisted in the prejudice that film music is somehow below the standard of absolute music" (2001, p1). This pithy quote from musician and academic, KJ Donnelly, aptly encapsulates the long-standing dichotomy, the way in which the academic musical landscape continues to be riven by cultural barriers. Traditional music academics in the west resent experts in music text analysis for showing interest in 'low culture', which includes, in their opinion, film music and popular music. Cultural and film studies scholars criticise musicological writings on film, including books by experienced film composers and music editors, who are charged with communicating in a dense metalanguage and avoiding the discussion of music within a filmic context. This is a thorny problem to resolve, and the search for common ground does not always produce mutually satisfactory answers.

Indeed, Robynn Stilwell's critical review of film music literature from 1980-1996 (2002), suggests that it lacks focus, and conveys a "marked tendency to try to be all things to all people". Too many books, she considers, reiterate the history of film music, and assume that readers have little, if any knowledge of music. She states: "While the intent may be to accommodate those in film studies who might be intimidated by technical musical discussion, the result is immensely frustrating to those in music and perhaps continues to alienate and antagonise the musicological establishment, which understandably expects some serious engagement with musical issues" (p20). These comments may be valid, but are perhaps a little harsh. Film music has only relatively recently gained status in the academy, spurred on particularly by the publication, in 1987, of Claudia Gorbman's seminal work, *Unheard Melodies*. So it is understandable that writers should refer to film music's historic pedigree in order to justify their existence.

Also, do readers, including musicologists, really want to read a musicological bar-by-bar and frame-to-frame analysis of a film extract? Questions of detail, language, and target audience interest are significant here, and I think we ignore them at our peril. This combination of ingrained cultural viewpoints, disapproval of brave but generalist attempts at solutions, and perhaps a certain lack of generosity, could explain both the haphazard history of film music writing in the academy, and until recently, its relatively low status.

However, there are more complex reasons at play. The study of music in higher education and for sixth-form music qualifications, such as A-Levels, commonly falls into three categories: composition, performance and musicology. Music students need to be competent in at least two of these areas, and all categories require fluency in the language of western music notation and the ability to translate that language into a competent performance. In contrast, film studies is an interdisciplinary field. Apart from the language of technical codes, there is no one preferred specialism and no insistence on film production competency. Indeed, how might an expert in film studies be defined? As film studies encompasses so many academic perspectives, eg sociological, ideological, psychological and semiological, this question is not easily answered. All perspectives are equally welcome within the academy, which suggests a liberal pluralist approach, and this is surely refreshing? But the co-existence of partisan views can be frustrating, snobbish and often counter-productive, as I will demonstrate in the film music literature to follow. Like competing religious leaders, specialists in one area consider themselves to be superior to scholars in another.

In the field of film production, music has become "elevated". Therefore, narrative is critical to the debate about film music and its subordinate status. KJ Donnelly (2002) argues that music is often foregrounded and more significant than before, and in this study, I show that in certain films, such as Baz Lurhmann's *Moulin Rouge*, the music *is* the narrative. Moreover, the film viewer can buy the song book, the soundtrack CD, watch the music video of *Lady Marmalade*, and indulge in all the "extras" which were cut from the film. In Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia*, the song *Wise Up* dominates the screen elements at one point, so much so that the characters *sing* the song and push it into the diegetic space simultaneously as it is heard non-diegetically. *Magnolia* also has a soundtrack CD, a music video of *Save Me*, and it is possible to download individual song

scores from certain websites. In these respects, a film can be considered as the central text, with the song book or scores, music video, soundtrack CD or downloads as ancillary, yet self-contained products. Equally, all creations spawned by *Moulin Rouge* or *Magnolia* tell different aspects of the same stories across various platforms. Most of all, film music, intended to be 'unheard' by past audiences[1], can now be considered as intrinsic, extrinsic and a combination of both. Sometimes the music itself emerges as the central platform in a film, as it does within *Moulin Rouge* or *Magnolia*. Musicology, therefore, must surely be added to the list of specialisms accepted within film studies, as it is now more pertinent than ever before.

So, what about the musicological perspective? A musicological perspective would involve a close analysis of the film score's pitch relations, musical consonance and dissonance, tonality, atonality, style topics, tonal design, employment of the leitmotif, timbre, musical form and instrumentation; and the significance of such elements within the film's context. A musicologist venturing into the world of film studies is required to be fluent in the languages of both music and film. So, why else has this specialism been marginalised? Jeff Smith (1998) considers that the "need to master two very different sets of nomenclature, theoretical concepts, and analytical traditions often proves a difficult obstacle to overcome" (p234). He suggests that this could explain the lack of film music study: "If very few music scholars have the background to perform close textual analysis of films, then still fewer film scholars have the specialised training required to analyse complex musical works" (p234). He may be right, but can the same be said for specialists in psychoanalysis or semiology with their discrete languages? Not so conspicuously, or historically, as these perspectives and corresponding specialist languages have become integral parts of film studies. The specialist language of music is a mixture of mostly notes and signs with occasional words (often Italian) to indicate mood, tempo and dynamics. Although it is possible to learn this language, there has been a resistance to it. In his article entitled 'Musical Meaning; Genres, Categories and Crossover' (2002), David Brackett argues that this is partly because of the "opacity of analytical metalanguage" and music's

---

[1] This concept comes from the title of Claudia Gorbman's seminal book on film music *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*, BFI, 1987 in which she argues that film music works most effectively when it goes unnoticed by an audience. This book will feature prominently in the study.

intimidating "abstract, non-representational quality" (p66). Unfortunately, this has resulted in an alienated, Cinderella status for musicology within film and cultural studies.

. . . towards a new musicology

This study sets out to examine the ways in which music operates in contemporary Hollywood film, using a film musicology, a new critical[2] musicology set securely within a film context. This allows for a more fluid discussion of all film elements as they work together, with and through music, to tell stories of challenging contemporary existence. By employing film musicology, it is possible to show not only how and why the film score is changing, but also how other film elements are reacting to it, and how important it has become. This musicology is not a 'watered down' version – far from it. The process will permit me to examine all those elements of traditional musicology I have detailed above, but in a language which is meaningful for all who are interested in the creative and aesthetic aspects of film music. A proper explanation of these musical components is required.

An analysis of **pitch relations** of music in film would entail consideration of melodic aspects, such as whether notes are rising, falling, moving by step, by leap, or chromatically; and whether these notes are related to one another in harmony. A pitch-relations analysis would also study patterns of notes, such as figures and motifs (the smallest musical units), or phrases short and long. Questions would be asked, such as: are some note patterns repeated, or heard in sequence, higher or lower? In such an analysis, I would be examining why particular bars are composed in the way they are. In a purely musicological analysis, responses might be: to provide contrast, add interest, establish a certain key, provide a transitory passage between one section or another, or even to showcase the talent of the composer or performer. When that musicological analysis is placed within film, these questions and responses become more complicated. With every

---

[2] Integral to any critical musicology is the idea of "continually rethinking music to avoid establishing new orthodoxies or grand narratives" (Beard and Gloag, 2005, p38). Critical musicologists embrace theories from other disciplines on aesthetics, and consider ideas on, for example, the body, feminism, class, subject position. Social meaning is also important. My critical musicology employs some traditional analysis of the musical sounds in the film, together with the lyrics, film narrative and film theory.

musical cue, there must also be consideration of each layer of film-world construction: the carefully crafted component parts of the mise-en-scene, camera movement, camera angle, pace and style of editing, sound, narrative progression, representation, and the embodied and intellectual experiences of an audience as the music and visuals unfold. This film musicology would take account of these multifarious strands in dynamic motion, so I might ask, for example, why a particular melody is composed for a particular scene, and why it progresses in the way it does. Reasons might be: to aid character construction, or change the mood, or remind us of times past, or forewarn us of events to come, or to provide a seamless cut. The study of pitch relations would unravel fine details of the score, which may be specially-composed, pre-existing or somewhere in between, and which may be largely concerned with the psychological, or simply underlining narrative action. This kind of study would also convey the range of challenges which face a film composer, such as creating cues which relate to screen dynamics but have to make musical sense; and composing cues which reflect the director's intentions, while communicating effectively with an audience who might also be interested in buying a soundtrack CD or download.

The **leitmotif**, a theme, usually short and striking, is also part of a pitch-relations analysis. In film, a leitmotif is employed to symbolise a character, an idea, a place, a situation or emotion. In classical Hollywood cinema, the leitmotif is standard practice, mostly specially-composed, and without words. However, this is not always the case. Arguably, in *Casablanca* (1942), the song *As Time Goes By* acts like a leitmotif to recall the past romance of Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman) and Rick (Humphrey Bogart). As the film unravels, composer Max Steiner changes the arrangement and character of the song by altering its key, the instrumentation, and by placing it in differing scenes, both diegetically and non-diegetically. From associations of happiness, the song develops to communicate additional feelings of bitterness, sadness and regret. In contemporary Hollywood film, songs are increasingly employed, and can function as leitmotifs, whether they are specially-composed or not, and sung words, whether repeated or changed, can add further strands of meaning. Contemporary specially-composed film music, which resists or modifies classical Hollywood techniques, may or may not employ the leitmotif device at all. A search for leitmotifs would reveal more details of how and why the film score is changing. The absence of a traditional leitmotif might indicate the presence of a new model, and the

contemporary score's potential to communicate ever-widening possibilities of meaning and experience.

In film music analysis, a study of **harmony** is crucial. I will be asking whether a piece is tonal (ie composed more or less in fixed keys) or atonal (not in any fixed key), and considering the effects of such choices upon the film as a work of art, and upon the audience. Consonance (harmony created from the diatonic employment of notes) and dissonance (harmony created from chromatic, or to western ears 'clashing' notes) are part of this examination. Why, for example, would a film score move from consonant harmony to dissonant harmony? Is it to reinforce contentment, changing to unrest? Is it to enter the true interior recesses of a character who is presenting a brave face to the world? The technique of creating opposing music and visual elements is confusingly (for musicians) known as 'counterpoint', and often the music is suddenly foregrounded. In older films, this compositional method was employed in scenes involving nightmares, for example – a peaceful, sleeping face, accompanied by wild, dissonant music. Indeed, in 1940, composer Marc Blitzstein, advanced a theory of "four musical relationships to film", calling this particular technique "counterpoint foreground".[3] However, in my three contemporary films, characters are often choosing actions which, on screen, appear to be positive, or which give them momentary pleasure, and it is the music which reveals a different perspective. An examination of musical harmony, in relation to film and other musicological elements, would enable us to explore and find out more about a character, for example, and uncover the nature of their psychological condition.

In classic Hollywood cinema, the leitmotif is also employed to contribute to the musical structure of a film, which will be related to the film form. Traditional story forms, which include the Todorovian classic narrative of 'equilibrium – disruption – new equilibrium', are often rejected in contemporary films. An examination of **musical form** and film form will show the increasingly central part music plays in, for example, non-linear and multi-strand films, which may not always offer satisfying solutions to narrative enigmas raised. Studying the way the smaller musical units such as phrases, cadences, and themes are employed, and questioning how, or indeed if, they are resolved, would tell us whether music is reinforcing screen action dilemmas, or whether, in fact, the music is

---

[3] From 'A symposium of Composers', *Music in Films*, Volume 1, No 4

offering separate, or even unconnected inferences. Such a study would reveal potential audience engagement via the score alone. If film narratives are left unclear, might the music provide a resolution? If the music is unresolved, then what effect does this have on an audience? My film musicological analysis of Elliot Goldenthal's specially-composed, impressionistic and mostly unresolved cues in *Heat*, for example, not only reveals that the music relentlessly communicates underlying character ambivalence, but that it intensifies those feelings of ambivalence in the audience. As Goldenthal's cues manipulate and move us this way and that, without musical resolution, the audience is obliged to make challenging, morally-testing, uncomfortable judgements of their own.

Instrumentation and particular **timbres** (sound qualities, or tone colours) would also be considered. The rich-sounding, large romantic orchestra of the Hollywood golden era is still employed, particularly in mainstream action and family films. As part of my film musicology, I would be asking why 19th-century instrumentation is still able to communicate ideas to a contemporary audience? In my analysis of *Heat*, I ask why Elliot Goldenthal chooses to employ a string quartet, a grouping associated particularly with the classical era of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven? In *Moulin Rouge*, I ask why arranger and composer Craig Armstrong chooses to arrange Elton John and Bernie Taupin's *Your Song* for full symphony orchestra and tenor voice? Why should he take an iconic pop song from the 1970s and place it in an arrangement which is redolent of the past and high culture? Some of the reasons I discover are to break down time, space and cultural divides; and to provide, in conjunction with the visual dynamics, Frederic Jameson's notion of audience "intensities". Some of those "intensities" are experienced via dramatic rhythmic choices in my three films. In *Moulin Rouge*, particularly, the seductive rhythms of the tango fan audience emotions into a frenzy as they accompany, and reinforce torrid emotions of rage, jealousy, hate and fear on screen. A close analysis of rhythm, in conjunction with film movement, can reveal more about both the structure and the content of a film.

The traditional musically-notated score will also be used in this study. While the music score might be perceived by classical musicians as the elitist touchstone of the music academy, it is nevertheless the best tool to examine the fine details of pitch relationships, links between lyric and melody, dynamics, rhythm, instrumentation and form. A trained musician can read or play a song score, for example, but a non-musician can still view and

understand the time signature, the rise and fall of pitch, the flow of the lyric, the chord patterns and changes, added guitar fingering, the musical form; and of course, information about the composers, copyright and ownership.

David Neumeyer and James Buhler (2001) resolutely argue for a musicological methodology, set within a film context. In their joint article, 'Analytical and Interpretive Approaches to Film Music (1): Analysing the Music' they express a "commitment to an historically and critically informed analytic practice that at the same time avoids positing any single account of film (or music) history as central". They consider that "traditional modes of analysis are nevertheless indispensable for a thorough musical understanding of individual cues and the higher level structuring of groups of cues" (p19). These writers refresh traditional musicology by affirming that it can be applied to any music, in any film context. Interestingly, the score is employed in the works of theorists Claudia Gorbman (1987), Kathryn Kalinak (1992) and Royal S Brown (1994). These influential writers are not musicians, but are unquestionably, film music experts. They have chosen to call upon the notated score to enable all types of reader to glean as much detail of the music as possible.

This is also an apt point at which to clarify what I mean by the word 'score'. When I use the words 'notated score' together, I refer solely to the signs and symbols of western music notation printed on manuscript paper. The study of the notated score alone offers all the important information described above, but it does not inform upon or describe the "grain" of the musician's playing or singing, the range of human emotions experienced, the way the music manipulates an audience, the ephemeral quality of music in motion. So, when I talk generally of the film score, or simply the score, or sometimes a musical cue (a particular segment of a score), I mean the study of the notated score in conjunction with the study of the sounds of the music as it is positioned in film. This way more information can be extracted and communicated, with the score employed to give "written evidence".

The central question I am asking in this study is: How does the music of contemporary Hollywood films express the complexities of urban existence? In my three case studies, *Heat*, *Magnolia* and *Moulin Rouge*, characters lead complicated, challenging lives within the city. In *Heat*, the focus is on the fast-moving criminal

33

underworld of Los Angeles. In *Magnolia*, characters expose their inner turmoil in the streets, bars and television studios of the San Fernando Valley. In *Moulin Rouge*, the tortuous love story of Satine and Christian unfolds on stage and behind the scenes at the iconic "kingdom of night-time pleasures" in Paris. Across the three films, characters react to the particular pressures of city living – the faster pace of life, claustrophobia from inhabiting confined spaces, a wide spectrum of available ethics, alienation and isolation, noise and air pollution, subcultural rivalry, and easy access to quick-fix, mind-altering substances. Such themes and experiences are the fabric of postmodernism, and as Edward Soja and Fredric Jameson call it, the 'post-metropolis'.

In Hollywood, the city has always fascinated film makers, and my three case studies appear at the end of an arc of storytelling about urban dwelling. In 1939, the glimmering Emerald City represented Utopia in *The Wizard of Oz*. This was the "somewhere over the rainbow", far away from Dorothy's drab abode on a Kansas farm. However, the American Dream prevailed as Dorothy followed the Yellow Brick Road in order to reinforce the film's ideology "there's no place like home". The inter-war and post-war periods were to change the pattern of such cosy classic Hollywood narratives in which the old values were never questioned. By the late 1940s, the Emerald City had become *The Naked City* (1948).

My chosen films have antecedents in film noir such as John Auer's *The City That Never Sleeps* (1953), Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* (1956) and Alexander Mackendrick's *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957). Edward Buscombe (2003) describes *The Wrong Man* as "one of the bleakest pictures Hitchcock ever made" (p335). Set in New York City, it relates a real case of mistaken identity, and genuine locations are shot in documentary style, and black and white, to convey the starkness of urban alienation. *Sweet Smell of Success*, also set in New York, presents ambiguous ethics and an early examination of celebrity culture, the media and the NYPD. Such themes and production values are evident in the case studies.

In the 1960s and 1970s a more adventurous Hollywood cinema developed, with influences from European art cinema. *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) follows Texan dishwasher Joe Buck to New York City, to the song *Everybody's Talkin' At Me*. His

34

dreams of wealthy women and sex are soon replaced by desperate isolation in a city squat shared with "Ratso". Again, location filming enhanced the verisimilitude of harsh city life. Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973) and *Taxi Driver* (1976) continued the theme of challenging urban living, and by the 1980s the thread of dystopia was clear, in films such as *Blade Runner* (1982), offering Ridley Scott's joyless version of Los Angeles in 2019, with acid rain falling on neon-lit, overcrowded streets. A decade later, *The Fifth Element* (1997), and more recently *The Matrix* trilogy, promoted a similar ethos. My three case studies, therefore, represent the opposite end of the "rainbow", where life in the city is portrayed as complicated and stressful. Indeed, in *Moulin Rouge* we can arguably see the glowing, constructed artifice of the Emerald City upturned and mocked, as a replicated Paris is presented as a place of decadence and delusion.

In *Heat, Magnolia* and *Moulin Rouge*, characters who are often under pressure in the city choose to act in ways which result in psychological turmoil and damaged relationships. My central question, therefore, can be articulated in another way: How does music express ambivalence? I interpret the word 'ambivalence' to mean a co-existence of opposing emotions in an individual when faced with challenging choices of action, whether they be in the past or present. In this study I am asking: what do scores of ambivalence sound like? I am posing the question on three levels. Firstly, I am exploring how and why music might convey the mixed feelings characters experience. Would this music also contain co-existing opposing elements? One striking example is the song *Wise Up* which reflects character ambivalence diegetically *and* non-diegetically. While the characters sing assertive words, they struggle to pitch the notes and adhere to the time values. Meanwhile, off screen, Aimee Mann's vocal functions as a wise, confident mentor but is heard against tentative piano playing, resisting the main pulse, and never wholly in the key of D or G. Such contrasting and uncertain musical ingredients combine to underpin the ambivalence in this scene, in addition to the strands of *signifiance* offered by the various vocal grains.

Secondly, I am considering how music might work to invite ambivalent audience responses to screen action. In *Heat,* Elliot Goldenthal's soft string music

35

invites us from the start to empathise equally with the two protagonists on either side of the law. Towards the end of the film when Hanna closes in on McCauley, the impressionistic cue *Of Separation* persuades us this way and that but to no particular perspective, by operating in part-counterpoint to the screen dynamic while drawing on several classical scoring techniques. The audience is invited to experience ambivalence as we wish and do not wish for McCauley to be captured and possibly killed.

Lastly, I am also interested in how music operates to create an ambivalent relationship between the music and the film material it accompanies. In the love-making scene in *Heat*, the soft, *Untitled* music conveys ambivalence untold by screen dynamics, by employing expected romantic string and piano instrumentation playing unexpected slow, sighing intervals and notes which never quite find their tonal home.

However, these three strands of enquiry connected to music of mixed feelings underpin another question. How is this music different to conventional film music which always serves narrative, and manipulates us to a clear, preferred perspective? If this music of ambivalence is not entirely serving narrative, what is it doing? Is it, indeed, the new narrative? These questions cut to the heart of the contemporary film score, and our understanding of how stories are told in film.

Five scholars who work at the interface of film and musicology are Claudia Gorbman, Anahid Kassabian, Michel Chion, Philip Brophy and Rick Altman. Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies* (1987) marks the first film and cultural studies academic examination of Hollywood film music since Hans Eisler and Theodor Adorno's *Composing for the Films*, published in 1947. KJ Donnelly describes *Unheard Melodies* as "perhaps the most enduring analysis of film music . . . it provides a lucid introduction to the theoretical ideas tied to music in the cinema, yet persists in containing sophisticated and relevant debates" (2001, p5). Indeed, most film music scholars, be they from musicology or film studies, refer to this text, and with considerable respect. Robynn Stillwell (2002)[4] argues, for example, that *Unheard Melodies* is "undoubtedly the most important and influential

---

[4] 'Music in Films: A Critical Review of Literature, 1980-1996, *The Journal of Film Music*, Volume 1, Number 1, pp 19-61. However, Stillwell is critical of Gorbmans's lack of musical discussion.

book yet written on film music"(p33). Kathryn Kalinak goes even further, stating that the text "extends the terms" of Eisler and Adorno's *Composing for the Films* and "reinforces their conclusions" that "music is defined by its ideological function"[5]. In *Unheard Melodies*, Gorbman argues that all film elements work to aid the narrative in classic Hollywood cinema, and that specially-composed music works most effectively when it is unnoticed, or "unheard". In order to examine whether the functions of original scores have evolved as film has evolved, and how music addresses increasingly confusing contemporary adult life, I will be testing Gorbman's model, entitled 'Classical Film Music: Principles of Composition, Mixing and Editing', which as far as I am aware, has not been tested before. Gorbman's model is a result of research obtained from the study of Max Steiner's film scores and a range of industry publications available during the classic period of Hollywood cinema. Her method moves musicology closer to film studies: she does not shy away from discussions of music, and makes every attempt to understand production conditions. This further ensures that all musicological analyses are conducted strictly within the film production context of the times. A more detailed explanation of her model is given towards the end of this chapter, and I employ it to show its continuing relevancy for contemporary film, especially when subverted. When conventions are undermined or upturned, complexity can escape. The application of Gorbman's model (chiefly concerned with specially-composed scores drawing on romantic musical traits), to cues comprising modern electronic instrumentation and songs, reveals how and why modern film scores are able to express contemporary existence with more accuracy and pertinence.

In relation to Gorbman's theory, I will be referring to Aaron Copland's five-part paradigm of film music functions, which was created from a composer's perspective, and which offers interesting additional points on the classical composing objectives of the late classical Hollywood period. This paradigm was first published in an article for the *New York Times* in 1949[6], and was part of Copland's mission to bring film music to the attention, not only of the audience (as the title suggests) but also of his fellow classical composers who were disparaging of the commercial film industry, and, therefore, any music composed for film. While Gorbman is concerned with theories of 'unheard' film

---

[5] Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film*, 1992, p35
[6] 'Tip to Movie Goers: Take off Those Ear-muffs' *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, 1949, Nov 6th

music of classical Hollywood in the 1930s and 1940s, and was writing at an objective distance in the late 1980s, Copland, as a composer working in 1949, was writing with recent hindsight and experience that came from composing his first Hollywood film score for *The Heiress* (1949). As an internationally-acclaimed composer of ballet, symphonic and chamber music, he was concerned with the quality of film music, and with its development. He wanted to prove that equally innovative scores could be written for film as for the concert hall, and indeed that film scores could become concert hall pieces. Copland rejected the large romantic orchestra employed by Max Steiner, Erich Korngold and Franz Waxman, introducing smaller instrumental forces and more experimental harmony. Copland's style and thinking on film music influenced future composers, and it is for these reasons that I include his theories in relation to those of Gorbman, and that I outline his model later in this chapter.

The work of Claudia Gorbman permeates this study, even in unexpected places, as will be revealed. However, I also call upon the work of Anahid Kassabian, Philip Brophy and Rick Altman to examine the role of the pop score in expressing complicated contemporary existence in film. I employ Anahid Kassabian's theory of "assimilating" and "affiliating" identifications from her inspirational book, *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (2001). Kassabian argues that specially-composed scores condition "assimilating identifications" which limit and direct the viewer to accept dominant identities and ideologies, some of which may be quite alien to their experience. Audiences may find themselves unconsciously positioned "sledding down the Himalayas, for instance – and with anyone – a Lithuanian sub captain, perhaps, or a swashbuckling orphan peasant"[7] with no relationship to their own histories and identities (2001, p2). In contrast, Kassabian considers that pre-existing popular scores enable "affiliating identifications", which allow film goers to enter much wider psychic fields, with possibilities of more individual, meaningful interaction. These types of score are more flexible and malleable for contemporary audience needs, and Kassabian's ideas reinforce the increased importance music has in film, for directors and audiences. This text moves wholeheartedly away from traditional thinking on the film score, which centres

---

[7] In the films *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *The Hunt for Red October* and *The Mask of Zorro* respectively.

around the work of mainly European male composers. Indeed, Kassabian argues that compiled scores for Hollywood films are often selected by women, and that they offer a gendered identification process.

However, I will also be forging a critique of Kassabian's theory of "assimilating" and "affiliating" identifications as I examine the scores of my chosen films *Heat*, *Magnolia* and *Moulin Rouge*. Elliot Goldenthal's specially-composed cues for *Heat* offer open-ended impressions of scenes which do and do not manipulate the viewer into prescribed, narrow ideological perspectives. Aimee Mann's not quite pre-existing and not quite specially-composed songs in *Magnolia* also refuse to steer us towards fixed views of character psyches. The freshly-arranged, pre-existing songs in *Moulin Rouge* are experienced anew in a film that revels in compressed times and spaces. Kassabian's theories do not account for such situations and innovations. Also, the two opposing theories, one of assimilating identifications and the other of affiliating identifications, are arguably not intended to work together. However, in this study they do, and I will apply her ideas to illustrate that such a mix enables ambivalence to be communicated and experienced.

To further aid the understanding of songs in my case studies, I apply ideas from Rick Altman and Philip Brophy. Rick Altman's work is mostly focused on aspects of Hollywood film musicals. In *Genre: The Musical* (1981), for example, Altman argues that the film musical is a collective, experimental, self-conscious and complex "gesamtkunstwerk, an art form more total than even Wagner could imagine" (p7). Such comments are particularly apt for *Moulin Rouge*, which draws heavily on "backstage musicals" techniques, the pop video and live entertainment forms. Audience participation is invited from the moment the opening credits begin, when we are alerted to the art of film construction. Altman discusses the blurred dichotomy between art and reality in *The American Film Musical* (1987), and I develop this to show how and why songs, more than the specially-composed cues in *Magnolia* and *Moulin Rouge*, and more than the other film elements, are able to convey confusing reality most accurately.

More concerned with contemporary film music is Philip Brophy, particularly in his book *100 Modern Soundtracks* (2004). One idea, expressed in the introduction, is that all modern elements in cinema are the result of "technological, metaphysical and existential inquiry", and that this is reflected in the modern soundtrack, which acknowledges the

"mutated state of being which arises from decentred and deconstructed audiovisual distribution" (p4). This idea is significant to the study, as it is relevant to all the restless, alienated characters in my case studies and the music which tells their stories. In addition, I employ and then develop a theory expressed in Brophy's analysis of Paul Thomas Anderson's film *Boogie Nights* (1997). Brophy argues that the film "reaches a height of 'vertical narration', where everything is told – as songs do – 'all at once'. Bypassing literary models, this film is a timbrel text which must be listened to in order for it to be read" (p50). Here is an inkling of music as narrative, and in *Moulin Rouge* particularly, I show how and why such a film tells its whole story through songs which can express a range of experiences "all at once".

      Seamlessly bridging the gap between popular and classical scores is the work of Michel Chion. This experimental composer and short-film director has written four books on film sound: *La Voix au Cinéma* (1982), *Le Son au Cinéma* (1985), *La Troile Trouée, la Parole du Cinéma* (1988) all published by Cahiers du Cinema; and *Audio-Vision, Sound on Screen* (1994) edited and translated by Claudia Gorbman. In *Audio-Vision, Sound on Screen*, Chion aims to "demonstrate the reality of audiovisual combination – that one perception influences the other and transforms it. We never see the same thing when we also hear; we don't hear the same thing when we see as well" (pxxvi). In the introduction to the book, Chion outlines certain "tenets" of sound and hearing, and I employ two in particular, which were first developed in *Le Son au Cinéma*. Chion argues that music can "create a specific emotion in relation to the situation depicted on the screen", in two ways. The first is with "empathetic music", where "music can directly express its participation in the feeling of the scene, by taking on the scene's rhythm, tone, and phrasing". The second is with "anempathetic music", where "music exhibits conspicuous indifference to the situation, by progressing in a steady, undaunted, and ineluctable manner" (p 8). According to Chion, music can therefore offer "added value", which works to create a "definite impression" of any given moment in a film. In my three case studies, where situations are complicated and challenging, and where ideologies are not clear-cut, I employ and develop his ideas to show what happens when "empathetic" and "anempathetic" music are heard simultaneously, revealing how music still "adds value", but with rather different effects.

Before turning to other ideas which have influenced this project, I want to mention one more author who is working at the interface of film and musicology. Annette Davison, Senior Lecturer in Music at Edinburgh University, seeks to address the gap in the study of soundtracks in films, made outside or on the margins of Hollywood, in her book *Hollywood Theory: Non-Hollywood Practice – Cinema Soundtracks in the 1980s and 1990s*. Davison states that since the mid 1970s, there has been a resurgence of interest in classic Hollywood scoring as an important and provenly successful ingredient for blockbuster movies. Throughout the book, Davison argues that the Hollywood score has operated to "form a dominant ideology in relation to which alternative scoring and soundtrack practices may assert themselves" (2004, p6). To illustrate this argument, she conducts a film musicological analysis of Jean-Luc Godard's *Prénom: Carmen* (1983), Wim Wender's *Der Himmel Über Berlin* (1987), Derek Jarman's *The Garden* (1990), and David Lynch's *Wild at Heart* (1990). Davison argues that in "each of these films, a different relationship to classical scoring and soundtrack practice is uncovered" (p7). In *Prénom: Carmen*, classical scoring practices are exaggerated, revealing their constructed nature. In *Der Himmel Über Berlin*, there is a negotiation between classical and alternative scoring and soundtrack practices. In *The Garden*, music is "liberated from slavery to the image track". In *Wild at Heart*, David Lynch creates a soundtrack in which "sounds and dialogue are used in musical ways" (p7).

Ostensibly, there are some similarities with my own project. Firstly, in the early chapters, Davison draws on Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov's *Statement on Sound* of 1928, Adorno and Eisler's *Composing for the Films* (1947), commentary from the Russian music critic, musicologist and composer Leonid Sabaneev, Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies* (1987), Anahid Kassabian's *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (2001), Kathryn Kalinak's *Settling the Score* (1992), and KJ Donnelly's article 'The Classical Score Forever? Batman, Batman Returns and Post-classical Film Music' (2003), as I do, to trace a developing model of scoring practices in Hollywood. Secondly, in her case studies, Davison is concerned with film scores which differ from conventional Hollywood

41

practice, as I am. Thirdly, she draws on the notated score to illustrate certain moments in the films discussed, as do I.

However, there are many more differences, which also mark out the reasons I do not employ her work in the rest of my study. Firstly, although Davison draws upon the authors cited above, she does not critique or apply their theories in the case studies. In addition, this is a relatively small pool of authors – she does not include the rich array of contributions from Hollywood composers who, as Fred Steiner stated, "represented the first groping efforts towards the formulation of a theory of film music" (1989, p84), or other practitioners such as directors, for example.

Secondly, while Davison and I are both concerned with alternative scoring practices, her book focuses on films outside or on the margins of Hollywood between 1983 and 1990, whereas my discussion highlights innovative film scores *within* Hollywood from 1995 to 2001. Thirdly, Davison has wider interests than the film score itself – she draws upon Karl Marx, Walter Benjamin, André Bazin, Jacques Derrida, Fredric Jameson and others to reinforce her argument that scoring practices "operate as signifiers of institutional difference" (p196). My concerns are not institutional or political. I am interested in how music works in Hollywood film to convey ambivalence in the city, and I argue in contrast to Davison that these musical spaces reveal compositional creativity, development, experimentation and opportunities for audience reflexivity. Fourthly, while Davison does mention popular scores, it is the pre-existing classical elements which are privileged. There is not a single notated score of a song or any extended analysis of a popular cue, which brings me to a fifth point of difference. While we both incorporate notated scores, Davison includes these at a distance from the discussion and without close explanation. My project includes extended musicological analysis of all types of score, whereas Davison makes it clear that "the case studies are not intended to offer detailed insights into every musical cue" (p8). Lastly, Davison is concerned with the whole soundrack, or soundscape – I am concerned solely with the music. Overall, Davison is interested in scores which represent an anti-Hollywood perspective, whereas I am interested in the music itself, and how innovative techniques might more accurately convey increasingly complicated urban life.

42

Postmodern thought permeates the study. Dominic Strinati[8] states: "Postmodernism rejects the claims of any theory to absolute knowledge, or of any social practice to universal validity . . . the diverse, iconoclastic, referential and collage-like character of postmodern popular culture clearly draws inspiration from the decline of metanarratives". Peter Brooker and Will Brooker[9] claim: "The body in postmodern times is transformed, augmented spectacularly by implants, or in routine ways by the microchip and computer as it was in an earlier age by the driving wheel and telephone. The result, so it is said, is loss of boundaries and borders and thus the erosion of common grounds for discrimination and critical distance. Everywhere there is difference which makes no difference". The works of Roland Barthes (1977), Judith Butler (1990), David Harvey (1990), Hugh Silverman (1990), Frederic Jameson (1991), Glenn Ward (2003), Philip Brophy (2004), and Dominic Strinati (1995, 2000), among others, have informed my thinking and inspired many ideas. However, there are certain themes of postmodernism, noted mostly by Strinati, Jameson and Brophy – namely the city, morality, alienation, fragmentation, identity and the remodelling of the body – which characterise contemporary existence, and which, I am arguing, have provoked changes in the film score. Some of these changes are subtle, such as the gradual introduction of electronically-produced scores with studio-sampled sounds of the metropolis, and the demise of the symphony orchestra and established tonalities. Others are more conspicuous, through the rise of the "technological democratisation of the soundtrack"[10], as Brophy calls it. The inclusion of "heard", pre-existing songs, emphasising the grain of the voice and the "MTV aesthetic", where visuals are dominated by the pulse of the music, is upturning traditional narrative forms, providing more relevant, accurate and expressive possibilities of conveying contemporary urban angst.

In one sense, these alterations are barely perceptible: arguably, scores are still subservient to narrative in certain mainstream films, and some scores remain mostly 'unheard', eg Goldenthal's specially-composed music for *Heat*. The main difference is that these scores operate less explicitly in their creation of ambivalent sound. Such scores allow

---

[8] From Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture*, Routledge, 2000, p227
[9] From Peter Brooker and Will Brooker, *Postmodern After-Images: A Reader in Films, Television and Video*, Hodder Arnold, 1997, p1-2
[10] In Philip Brophy, *100 Modern Soundtracks*, BFI, 2004, p9

the audience an ambivalent relationship to the meaning of the film, as the music permits and invites audience contemplation here, there, and in polarised spaces, where no relief, or fixed perspectives are offered, and no "theory to absolute knowledge or of any social practice of universal validity" is confirmed[11]. The study, therefore, does not set out to comprehensively examine the concept of postmodernism, but only those themes of relevance to the human condition, as expressed in the film worlds of *Heat, Magnolia* and *Moulin Rouge*. I will be demonstrating that these themes provoke scores of ambivalence, and that this is a new, core component of my research. Music which reflects and expresses uncomfortable human relationships, articulating the fine lines between ecstasy and heartbreak, excitement and fear, sanity and insanity, intensifies the screen dynamic, and in turn, audience experience. By employing a critical film musicology, which gives equal consideration to film and music, I aim to reveal some film and musical ingredients which have so far gone unnoticed, which are communicating multi-faceted tensions within multi-dimensional lives.

In the rest of this chapter, I will be developing two complementary strands: a) an overview of the history of film music from the silent era (the early 1900s) until 1950; and b) a literary review of periodicals, articles and books, from the early 1900s to the present time, which focus upon the development of the classical score in the first half of the 20th century. As we go, I will identify the various functions that have been ascribed to film music (often indirectly) by writers in the fields of musicology, film studies and popular music studies. In other words, I will be asking: How is music seen to work in film in the first half of the 20th century? What was it intended to do? To ponder these questions, I include, unusually, the often-ignored comments from directors, composers and music editors. Together, these writers will provide a mix of historical and contemporary comment, mostly on the development of the classical Hollywood film score until 1950. It is important to do this for two reasons. Firstly, we will discover how and why the film score developed in the way it did. Secondly, this information will provide us with a checklist of comparison points for the analysis of contemporary film music.

---

[11] From Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture*, Routledge, 2000, p227

In addition, four interesting strands will become evident: the wide variety of different approaches to film music analysis; the persistent cultural divides which continue to inform those perspectives; the cross-fertilisation of ideas and methods recently brought together, for example by KJ Donnelly (2002) and Kay Dickinson (2003); and the increasing amount and sheer liveliness of film music literature. Indeed, composer Fred Steiner considers that drawing these strands together might begin to generate "a formulation of a theory or philosophy of music for motion pictures". According to Steiner, a number of key questions need to be addressed: "What is the fundamental nature of film music? How does it function in relation to the cinematic entity? How does it influence the emotions and reactions of the spectators? What should music contribute to a film? What are its duties and obligations towards the total filmic entity?". Steiner argues that his questions have not been satisfactorily answered by film composers and music directors. We might ask whether it will ever be possible to answer these questions. Steiner hopes that someday "the literature of film music may yield the equivalent of an Eisenstein, a Bazin, Kracauer, or Sarris – those men who, with varying degrees of success, have attempted to discover and analyse the essential nature and language of the cinema" (in Thomas, 1991, p268).

First Flickerings: Literary review of the classical score, 1900-1949

The Silent Film

Music has been intrinsic to film from its earliest flickerings. From the late 19th century, lantern-slide shows with music, Thomas Edison's kinetophone and Sigmund Lubin's 'song films' all signalled a clear message: "the emerging film industry was as much concerned with sound – music, dialogue and effects – as it was with visual images" (Mundy, 1999, p14). In the silent era, the earliest moving picture shows were far from a silent experience. Following the traditions of lantern-slide shows, live music was crucial to the film experience. Solo pianists, violinists and even small orchestras were employed to play to audiences during a film screening, although some owners of the early nickelodeons bought automatic instruments instead, such as the piano roll, the orchestrion and eventually the photoplayer, to save money. Initially, music existed to entertain audiences, and to mask the

whirring noise of the projector and the street sounds outside, and could be anything from familiar classical pieces to popular tunes of the day. In 1912, Max Winkler, a clerk at the Carl Fischer Music Store in New York, realised that if the film was viewed in advance, 'cue sheets' could be created, with more sympathetic and appropriate selections of music, with additional guidelines for interpretation, precise entry and exit timings, and synchronisation. A further standardisation process began to take hold via 'fake books', which contained notated music for a wide variety of dramatic situations. The most well-known of these were *Kinobibliothek* by Giuseppe Becce, *The Sam Fox Moving Picture Music Volumes* by JS Zamecnik, and *Motion Picture Moods* by Erno Rapée. Meanwhile, film production companies, keen to ensure proper presentation of their work, began to supply sheet music for specific films. Later, full film scores were commissioned. In 1914, 'dream palaces' replaced nickelodeons, but music continued to be a crucial component for the spectator. Spaces were created for sizeable orchestras and organs, indicating a further development in film music: the reliance upon a mix of original composition and compilations of existing, often classical music. Gradually, but assuredly, the latent classical non-diegetic score was beginning to unfold (in Davis 1999, Mundy, 1999, Altman, 2001, KJ Donnelly, 2001).

The earliest examples of film music literature appeared in three forms: trade paper advertisements, letters, articles, and editorials often pleading for improvements in the quality of film music; cue sheets (as described above) comprising lists of musical possibilities for sequences in a picture; anthologies of music for film accompaniment. In 1900, for example, publicity for the Optigraph projector stated that "the noise is so great that, as a rule, it is necessary to keep a piano or other musical instrument going while the motion pictures are being shown, to prevent annoyance to the audience"[12]. In the silent period, the masking of projector noise was debated in the trade press, and so was silence itself. Some commentators advised the selective use of silence for films, while others advocated musical continuity throughout. In 1910, *Moving Picture World* started a regular column on film music to coincide with the dramatic rise in popularity of the motion picture. All of these publications, including those of a practical nature, were concerned with aesthetics. In 1912, *Moving Picture World* advised that a maximum of 10 seconds of

---

[12] Quoted in Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p2

silence should ever be used[13]. Organist Dennis James reported that his instrument unfortunately broke down while he was playing live for a silent Harold Lloyd comedy. A member of the audience later praised him for introducing such a surprising and dramatically powerful silence![14] Musicians were the principal contributors to these publications and soon they were joined by film makers and theorists, who offered increasingly detailed comment. According to Clifford McCarty (1989), "these materials were read and used by musicians from lowly nickelodeon pianists to conductors of large theater orchestras" (pix).

Tim Anderson, a more recent writer on music in early silent cinema, in his 2003 article, 'Reforming "Jackass Music": The problematic Aesthetics of Early American Film Music Accompaniment', describes the concerns of film critics' with the "uplifting" of film music for its greater appeal to middle-class audiences. Critics advised musicians to provide a mix of classical and popular music to ensure the liveliest possible audience experience, but not at the expense of narrative clarity. These comments are interesting in two ways. Firstly, we can determine the emerging role of music as supportive and subservient to narrative, which was to become an established objective in the decades to come. Secondly, we can observe that film makers were also trying to entertain their audiences with pre-existing music, just as they do today.

In 1920s America, two new publications on film music appeared: *Modern Music* (from 1924 to 1946) and the journal *Close Up* (from 1927 to 1933). *Modern Music* published articles by composers and theorists, and in 1936, George Antheil, a member of the avant garde, was invited to write a regular column on film music. Although Antheil left after four years, the film music column continued until the magazine closed in 1946. *Close Up*, published in New York, allocated considerable space to sound in film, and particularly to Dorothy Richardson's theories on the music score. Richardson's contributions, always entitled 'Continuous Performance', tackled the perceived intentions (and, indeed, problems) of live film music accompaniment. In Volume 1, she highlights the merits of the piano versus the orchestra: "Though a good orchestra can heighten and deepen effects, a piano played by one able to improvise connective tissue for his varying themes is

---

[13] In Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, p49
[14] In Clifford McCarty, *Film Music 1*, Garland, 1989, pix

preferable to most orchestral accompaniments". For Dorothy Richardson, "Music is essential. Without it the film is a moving photograph and the audience mere onlookers. Without music there is neither light nor colour, and the test of this is that one remembers musically accompanied films *in colour* and those unaccompanied by music as *colourless*" (1927, p61). Perhaps unconsciously, Richardson identifies several film music objectives here: to enable audience interaction through improvisation; to ensure audience appeal; to provide liveliness. Luckily, an ideal accompanying pianist performed at Dorothy Richardson's local picture palace. She remarked: "If the film were good he enhanced it, heightened its effect of action moving forward for the first time. If it were anything from bad to worst his music helped the onlooker to escape into incidentals and thence into his private world of meditation or of thought" (1927, p59). Again indirectly, Richardson alludes to intentions of propelling the narrative (early indications of the classical score), and the much more recently noted contemporary function of enabling personal intellectual space for reflection. In conclusion, Richardson theorises that "the musical accompaniment should be both continuous and flexible. By whatever means, the aim is to unify" (1927, p61). These last comments were to form a common theoretical thread, advanced by classical film score writers and classical composers themselves in future publications.

Much later, in 1961, Siegfried Kracauer was to apply his own theory to the employment of music in silent film. He states: "No doubt musical accompaniment breathes life into silent pictures. But it resuscitates them only to make them appear as what they are – photographs". Kracauer's theory takes Dorothy Richardson's comments a stage further. Instead of music restoring "mute spectacles to full reality by adding sound to them", Kracauer theorises that "it is added to draw the spectator into the very center of the silent images and have him experience their photographic life" (p135). He also argues that the vital aim of music in early silent cinema was to "adjust the spectator physiologically to the flow of images on the screen" (p133). Kracauer and Richardson's theories link the visual and musical with the mind and body, suggesting that it is music, more than any other film element, which activates an audience physically and intellectually. Once activated, an audience is enabled to bring their own experiences to the known and unknown sights and experiences of the moving photographs.

A *Close Up* writer with a different perspective was Oswell Blakeston. In an article entitled 'Disconnected Thoughts on Music and the Cinema' in Volume 3, 1928, he rails against musical accompaniment, and its infringement on the personal enjoyment of a film. The audience, he claims, "are not given the chance to say if they prefer to see their films without these elaborate appurtenances" (p40). He complains that musical accompaniment can foster audience inertia. These statements sound rather purist, if not contradictory. On the one hand, Blakeston is arguing that musical accompaniment is distracting and unnecessary, which would suggest a more active audience forced to consider musical meaning as well as visual. On the other hand, he is arguing that the music induces a passive audience because it tells them what to think. Certainly, these comments foreshadow Adorno's scathing attacks on film music and the spectator, some twenty years later, in *Composing for the Films* (1947). However, Blakeston's views are also relevant to current debates about audience segmentation, audience participation and synergy, most notably present in the works of Jeff Smith (1998), Mark Kermode (1995), Anahid Kassabian (2001, 2002) and Simon Frith (2002), to be discussed later[15].

In August 1926, Warners presented their first sound feature, *Don Juan*, followed by *The Jazz Singer* in 1927. In fact, *The Jazz Singer* was really a singing film, as the dialogue was viewed as intertitles. Also in 1927, *Wings* was the first film to win an Academy Award for best picture. The film's music and effects were played variously in theatres on either sound-on-disc, sound on film, or with live accompaniment (Robert Slar, 1993, p180). At this time, there was much heated debate on the value of synchronised sound. Documentary maker, Paul Rotha, complained: "The attempted combination of speech and pictures is the direct opposition of two separate mediums, which appeal in two utterly different ways"[16]. He warned that sound might take precedence over visuals. Béla Balázs predicted that sound films would "destroy the already highly developed culture of the silent film", and that they would cause "a catastrophe, the like of which had never occurred before in the history of any art"[17].

---

[15] I refer here to discussions about niche marketing, fragmentation and cross-promotional opportunities.
[16] Paul Rotha writing in 1930, and quoted in Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music*, Cambridge University Press, 2008.
[17] Quoted in Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, and taken from Béla Balázs, *Theory of Film: Character and Growth of a New Art*, Roy, 1953, p194-5

In 1928, Russian film maker and theorist, Sergei Eisenstein, and co-writers Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori Alexandrov, were concerned with the impact of sound on the "culture of montage". They signed and published their 'Statement on Sound', outlining a possible philosophy for the future. They stated: " . . . every mere addition of sound to montage fragments increases their inertia as such and their independent significance; this is undoubtedly detrimental to montage which operates above all not with fragments but through the juxtaposition of fragments" (p361). Instead, Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov claimed: "The first experiments in sound must aim at a sharp discord with the visual images. Only such a 'hammer and tongs' approach will produce the necessary sensation that will result consequently in the creation of a new orchestral counterpoint of visual and sound images" (in Braudy & Cohen, 1999, p361). The idea of film music's capacity to produce "the necessary sensation" predates contemporary debate on cinematic embodiment and engulfment, and the term 'contrapuntal' frequently recurs in discussions of music in film today, even if it is confusing for musicians[18]. Already, this early literature is yielding dividends in its bold discussion of film music and its intended effects.

It is also interesting to note that major film companies did not embrace new sound technologies immediately. Already making a profit in silent films, they were not inclined to refurbish studios and retrain staff at vast expense (in Davis 1999, Allen & Kuhn 2007, Cooke 2008). For musicians, the introduction of synchronised and recorded sound was devastating. Many had made careers for themselves in theatre bands, and in the UK, 80% of all professional music making was centred around the silent film[19].

The Talkies

By the early 1930s the classical non-diegetic score was established, and the use of live orchestral or piano accompaniment began to fade. Kathryn Kalinak, author of *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (1992) states: "Cinema history encompasses a variety of practices which developed to settle the relationship between

---

[18] For musicians, counterpoint, or contrapuntal music, means the combination of two or more melodies or parts to make musical sense. Thus, one melody (A) is said to be in counterpoint to melody (B) etc, for example in a fugue.
[19] In Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music*, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

music and image. The most powerful of these became institutionalised in the Hollywood system during the first decade of sound production" (pxiv). As with all elements of the film-making process in the classical Hollywood era, music served to highlight the narrative. It did this in various ways: by privileging the dialogue; by illustrating narrative content with appropriate instrumentation, both explicitly and implicitly; by synchronising with narrative action, aka 'mickey-mousing'; by ensuring structural unity, for example via leitmotifs; and by controlling the preferred reading of the film, the technique Michel Chion (1994) describes as giving 'added value'.

This brief synopsis of classic Hollywood film music functions reflects some of the objectives we can identify today in the works of Claudia Gorbman (1987), Kathryn Kalinak (1992), Royal S Brown (1994), John Mundy (1999), KJ Donnelly (2001), and others – albeit in hindsight. On the ground and at the time, composers had a variety of concerns regarding the film music score. Composer Fred Steiner's essay (1989) entitled 'What Were Musicians Saying About Movie Music during the First Decade of Sound? A Symposium of Selected Writings' aims to "tell us how people from the musical world perceived the functions of music" through those writings that "represented the first groping efforts towards the formulation of a theory of film music" (p84). Film makers and composers had two main concerns regarding the non-diegetic classical score: the role of music as a psychological and emotional element in film, and the urgency of their need to develop new form and style. We can trace the intentions of the emergent classical score through the following quotes cited in Steiner's essay, harvested from a selection of writings and lectures.

One prominent writer quoted is Russian music critic, musicologist and composer Leonid Sabaneev. In 1935, he argued that music in film should not "sacrifice the principles governing its form: no matter what is happening on the screen, the music must have its melodic structure, its phrases and cadences" (p92). When we consider the current popularity of the film score as a 'tie-in', ie an integral part of the film but also an independent commercial product, these comments not only make sense, but seem surprisingly contemporary. Craig Armstrong, score composer and arranger for *Moulin Rouge*, stresses that the music had to be strong and independent to match the powerful visual artistry of Luhrmann's work. Each of the films I am discussing in this project has an

accompanying soundtrack CD comprising the full cues which were edited down in the film. All cues, therefore, are complete musical pieces, meaningful in their own right. According to Sabaneev, music should express "the general mood of the scene . . . and should not be required, except in a few instances . . . to follow the events in detail, otherwise it is untrue to its nature and becomes anti-musical" (p93).

In contrast, Maurice Jaubert, who originally published his article entitled 'Music and Film' in WFN, volume 1, 1936, states: "Film music should never, so to speak, reveal its own musical nature". He argues that if the music "has pursued strictly musical ends, and if those ends have been achieved, thanks to the gifts of the composer, we shall be tempted to *listen to it*. And then it will detach itself from the image – a danger which increases in proportion to the inherent value of the music" (p96). This theory underpins Claudia Gorbman's book *Unheard Melodies*, and is directly in line with what we now know of the classic Hollywood system – all cinematic elements serve the narrative. However, other comments in this article Jaubert's article indicate much more. He wants "music to give greater depth to our impressions of the visuals. We do not want it to explain the visuals, but to add to them by differing from them. In other words, it should not be expressive, in the sense of adding its quota to the sentiments expressed by the actors or the director, but decorative in the sense of adding its own design to that proper to the screen". Now, this is not so far away from one of Eisenstein's theories on film music and montage. In his book, *Notes of a Film Director* (1946), Eisenstein states: "Just as a scene photographed from one angle is plastically 'flat' and 'lacking depth', so is 'illustrative' music trivial and expressionless if it is presented 'from one angle', that is if it illustrates some one aspect, one element of what is present in the music" (p161). Eisenstein particularly admired Prokofiev's talent for film scoring, and his ability to be flexible and insightful. In Eisenstein's view he enabled "the screen to reveal not only the appearance and substance of objects, but also, and notably, their peculiar inner structure. The logic of their existence. The dynamics of their development" (p163).

Steiner's essay also draws upon comments made by composer and author Kurt London in 1936. London theorised that contemporary composers aimed to provide "the rhythm and basic psychology of the film" as opposed to a purely illustrative score (p94). Similarly, Virgil Thomson is quoted in the essay with the view that music should "establish and

preserve an atmosphere, a tone of augmenting or unrolling drama. It should envelop and sustain a narrative" (p88). Steiner uses Maurice Jaubert again to expand on this argument: "music brings an unreal element which is bound to break the rules of objective realism . . . . Its presence will warn the spectator that the style of the film is changing temporarily for dramatic reasons. All its power of suggestion will serve to intensify and prolong the impression of strangeness, of departure from photographic truth, which the director is seeking" (p95). These comments support Eisenstein's, Pudovkin's and Alexandrov's pleas, cited earlier in this chapter, for a "counterpoint of visual and sound images" (1999, p361).

All of these statements in Fred Steiner's essay, made in the first decade of sound, appear especially prescient when we consider Kracauer's *Nature of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1961). Kracauer theorises that "cinema seems to come into its own when it clings to the surface of things" (p285). Such concern with detail can reveal a version of human existence through cinema in a new mode, with a fresh perspective. "In recording and exploring physical reality, film exposes to view a world never seen before, a world as elusive as Poe's purloined letter, which cannot be found because it is within everybody's reach" (p299). When we consider Kracauer's theory, we can begin to understand how profoundly affecting, complex, intense, deep, elusive, abstract and strange film music is. Unlike the "surface of things" which we know to be our "physical reality", music expresses the unseen, the intangible, the innermost dreads and joys which make it perhaps the most powerfully seductive and manipulative element in the cinematic experience. Music literally expresses what is overlooked, unnoticed, and unfelt. In this project, I am proposing that musical affect can be employed to intensify viewer experience in contemporary film by inviting us to consider a range of emotional extremes, then compounding such experiences by resisting the satisfying relief of any one conclusion or perspective.

The conclusion of Fred Steiner's chapter reveals that composers openly discussed emergent classical score functions. There was some common agreement that film music should: provide an overall form and rhythm for a film; sustain the psychological and emotional tone of a film; be unobtrusive but maintain its musical integrity; aid the narrative by adding to dramatic elements; herald changing styles and situations in a film; reveal the film's inner logic and the "inner structure" of objects within the frame; and create

counterpoint with the visuals by intensifying the difference. Dorothy Richardson's preferred 'continuous performance' was cast aside in favour of more complex musical cues. However, perhaps most interestingly of all, these ideals mostly contradict the "established practices" cited by contemporary film theorists, which came into being after the first decade of sound. Instead, these brave composers, working during those exciting but tumultuous times, prefigured film scores of the present.

Meanwhile, other publications appeared in the 1930s: *Etude, Musical Quarterly –* which ignored film music for the entire decade, and *Pacific Coast Musician. Etude,* America's most popular music magazine[20], often carried news of film music, and was most concerned with identifying pre-existing classical music in films rather than discussing original scores. In 1940 a new quarterly entitled *Films* appeared, and lasted for just four issues. In Volume 2, 1940, Kurt London commented on the challenges of composing for documentaries, and presenting musical works in 'concert films'. He stated: "Sound is now, of course, an integral part of every picture, but as soon as it dominates the visuals there is a misuse of the fundamental elements of cinematography" (p43). The final issue carried a symposium on film music with eleven participants. These were: Benjamin Britten, Paul Bowles, Aaron Copland, Hans Eisler, Dmitri Shostakovich, Virgil Thomson, Lev Schwarz, Karol Rathaus, Marc Blitzstein, Henry Cowell and William Grant Still. The composers replied in writing to an internationally circulated questionnaire, and bearing in mind the European War was underway, it is remarkable that so many composers participated. Not all responses were published, and, in truth, the symposium does not offer the depth and breadth of comment evident in Fred Steiner's chapter noted above.

Nevertheless, the comments of Marc Blitzstein are significant to the development of film music. Firstly, he questions the convention of composing 'unheard' music, while simultaneously making a remarkably modern comment on the role of song: "A song sometimes actively promotes the dramatic action, but once the characters stop their song and begin to use speech the music beats a hurried retreat to the background and hides there, hoping no-one will notice it. This half-disappearance of the music is suicide for it, aesthetically and as a medium. Better use no music" (p9). Secondly, he advances a theory of four musical relationships to film. These are: *harmony foreground* ("promoting action as

---

[20] According to Clifford McCarty, *Film Music 1*, Garland, 1989

above or as in a song sung to cover the escape of the singer's lover"); *harmony background* ("following the action, as in a chase"); *counterpoint foreground* ("as in a sleeping face and the wild music of nightmare"); *counterpoint background* ("in the 'night-walk' of fight for life where the young doctor's mental storm is not accompanied but *heightened* by Joe Sullivan's jazz"), (p10). Blitzstein expresses a resistance to established views of the score by promoting foregrounded music as much as background, by identifying the role of song as a component of narrative form, and by considering pre-existing popular music as a potential aid to character construction. In comparison to other art forms, Blitzstein argues that "Music for films has all the functions that it has in other dramatic art forms, *plus one*: to complete, to vitalise, to wake to life, to galvanise; Copland says to 'warm up'" (p12). Such views are at least as radical as those expressed by Adorno and Eisler in *Composing for the Films* seven years later. In contrast, Benjamin Britten was clearly uncomfortable with composing film music. In response to a question regarding the importance of maintaining musical sense, he says: "If the music is free of the fetters of synchronisation it can be more interesting *qua* music – but that is not so important, as I don't take film music seriously *qua* music anyhow" (p10).

In 1941 *Film Music Notes* became the first and most enduring periodical devoted entirely to film music. Composers often reviewed the music of current films and provided musical illustration, and other content included articles, bibliographies and news items. *Hollywood Quarterly* was launched in 1945, and this lasted until 1951. Lawrence Morton, orchestrator and critic, was its most prominent contributor on film music, and he provided the first extended analysis of a film score published in America entitled 'The music of *Objective: Burma*', in July 1946. In this analysis, Morton places music firmly within its film context at all times, employing the notated score (often a reduced orchestral version) for illustration of points made. Morton examines the two-dozen "separate compositions" which comprise the score, educating the reader on the art of creating meaningful musical themes. He informs us that these discrete compositions "are the unifying elements of the score. They must therefore have individuality, so that they are easily recognisable in repetition; they must be versatile, that is, amenable to alteration and manipulation; and they must have instrinsic musical value, for upon this depend both individuality and versatility" (p378). Morton stresses the need to evaluate scores in their contexts, that the notated score

is insufficient illustration on its own, and that harmonic texture is an important element in assessing the quality of a score. The language of this analysis is technical at times; for example, there is a bar-to-bar analysis of a battle scene, using chord details alone. Nevertheless, in conducting such an in-depth musicological analysis he promotes film music as equal to other types of so-called serious music. In reading this today, there is a freshness and enthusiasm to the writing which is respectful, celebratory and informative. During this same period, Morton also contributed eighteen articles to *Film Music Notes*, including a special issue on Copland's *The Red Pony* (1949). However, in 1953, Morton commented on film music literature: "It is far from comprehensive, it is scattered throughout a great number of periodicals, it is therefore not as accessible as it ought to be, and if the truth be told, it is not very distinguished" (in McCarty,1989, pix).

Theodor Adorno and Hans Eisler rectified this with their book *Composing for the Films*, first published in 1947. Graham McCann, in his 'New Introduction' to the book, states that its co-authors "represent two of the most significant traditions in twentieth-century Marxism: Eisler Brechtian artistic practice, Adorno Critical Theory". Both authors, he argues, transcend rigid academic boundaries and so freely engage with "aesthetic, economic, sociological, political and philosophical issues and concerns" (pviii). These cultural theorists were also trained musicians: Eisler attended the New Viennese Conservatory in 1919, then studied privately with Arnold Schonberg during the transition from atonal to serial music; Adorno studied with Schonberg's famous pupil, Alban Berg, then later became director of the Frankfurt Institute set up by Marxist philosopher, Max Horkheimer. Eisler's difficult experiences of composing for Hollywood films impelled him to write impassioned critiques of movie music. Adorno's interests and experience edged him towards testing theories on music and popular culture. Together, Eisler and Adorno made "musicians take note of politics, and political theorists take note of music" (McCann, pxxxix). It is interesting that these authors do not directly apply musicology to any film texts, choosing instead to discuss general musicological issues, albeit within a limiting Marxist framework. Perhaps this text is an early example of critical musicology?

Composing for the Films is a simultaneously frustrating and stimulating read: frustrating in its derisive attitudes towards popular culture, the musically uneducated and their corresponding preference for melody and diatonic harmony; stimulating in its

discussion of film music functions. Firstly, Adorno and Eisler find fault with the aim and interpretation of the leitmotif in classic Hollywood films. They argue: "The Wagnerian leitmotif is inseparably connected with the symbolic nature of the music drama. The leitmotif is not supposed merely to characterise persons, emotions, or things, although this is the prevalent conception. Wagner conceived its purpose as the endowment of the dramatic events with metaphysical significance" (p5). Adorno and Eisler state that there can be no "place for it in the motion picture, which seeks to depict reality" (p5). This purism has negatives and positives. Their elitist comment that leitmotifs "have always been the most elementary means of elucidation, the thread by which the musically inexperienced find their way about" suggests that clear and simple musical expression panders to the popular, the commercial, the low-brow and so is consequently of less value (p5). It also assumes that most movie-goers are passive, docile subjects with no facility for creating their own meanings or pleasures.

However, Adorno and Eisler are also regretting that the 'true' leitmotif cannot be used because it is unable to reach "its full musical significance in the motion picture"(p5). This remark is interesting when we consider the contemporary film score, and in particular the use of pre-existing popular and classical cues which are occasionally stated in their entirety. In these films, our attention is often directed towards the music we recognise, sometimes at the expense of other filmic elements. Far ahead of their time, Adorno and Eisler question the need for music to be unobtrusive: "One of the most widespread prejudices in the motion-picture industry is the premise that the spectator should not be conscious of the music"[21] (p9). Adorno and Eisler assert: "Music thus far has not been treated in accordance with its specific potentialities. It is tolerated as an outsider who is somehow regarded as being indispensable, partly because of a genuine need and partly on account of the fetishistic idea that the existing technical resources must be exploited to the fullest extent" (p9). These theories are astoundingly modern for their times, and provide a fiery contrast to Claudia Gorbman's 1987 book some forty years later. However, the authors' pedantic purism, preference for 'art music', and lack of regard for the collective and commercial film-making process, seem to suggest that any kind of film music is

---

[21] These comments look forward to the music in films by Baz Luhrmann, Paul Thomas Anderson, Quentin Tarantino or Spike Lee, which can dominate, structure and style a narrative, and even dictate the editing.

prostituted, compromised, contaminated and of little value. These comments show a remarkable disregard for the talent it takes to write film music that will communicate to an audience. Decades later, composer Frank Waxman stresses how unhelpful such cultural snobbery is for film music. He states: "We need critics who will recognise that music can be of the highest artistic standards and still be enjoyed by millions, that music is not necessarily good only if it can be understood by the few" (in Thomas, 1991, p43).

Comments on melody and harmony in *Composing for the Films* are also ahead of their time. Adorno and Eisler argue: "The demand for melody at any cost and on every occasion has throttled the development of motion-picture music. The alternative is certainly not to resort to the unmelodic, but to liberate melody from conventional fetters". Avant-garde music, they suggest, "has opened up an inexhaustible reservoir of new resources and possibilities that is still practically untouched. There is no objective reason why motion-picture music should not draw upon it" (p18). Thirty years later, composers such as Richard Rodney Bennett (*Figures in a Landscape*, 1970), Jerry Fielding (*Straw Dogs*, 1971) and Jerry Goldsmith (*Chinatown*, 1974) began to create sparser, more discordant scores, reminiscent of the concert hall. They exemplified the views of Adorno and Eisler, and abandoned the large romantic symphony orchestra to achieve different effects. In their conclusion, Adorno and Eisler questioned the following traditions of the classic Hollywood score: unobtrusiveness, tonality, reliance on the romantic symphony orchestra, the use of the leitmotif to ensure unity and clarity. In doing this, they questioned the core values of classic Hollywood scoring and anticipated contemporary developments.

In contrast, on 6th November 1949, internationally-acclaimed composer and conductor Aaron Copland published a piece entitled 'Tip to the Moviegoers: Take Off Those Ear-Muffs' in *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*[22], outlining the ways in which music serves the screen. The headline is a provocative one. Copland encourages film viewers to *listen* to film music and note its importance as it "will be enriching both their musical and their cinema experience". This appears forward-thinking for the time, and, like Adorno and Eisler, contradicts the commonly-held view that film music should be unnoticed. In this article, Copland, like Morton, promotes film music as an art form equal to any other.

---

[22] Quotes are taken from Copland's original 10-page typescript (pencilled corrections included), held in the archives of the US Library of Congress.

He states: "film music constitutes a new musical medium that exerts a fascination of its own. Actually, it is a new form of dramatic music – related to opera, ballet, incidental theatre music, in contradistinction to concert music of the symphonic or chamber music kind. As a new form it opens up unexplored possibilities – or should" (p2). His five-part paradigm is, as I have explained, a useful additional model to consider alongside Gorbman's. Copland argues that music serves the screen by:

1) *Creating a more convincing atmosphere of time and place.* In contrast to many other composers at the time, Copland regards this as important. He argues that, too often, scores are "interchangeable, a thirteenth century gothic drama and a hard-boiled modern battle of the sexes gets similar treatment" (p5).

2) *Underpinning the psychological ideas of characters.* Music, Copland says, can "play upon the emotions of the spectator, sometimes counterpointing the thing seen with an aural image that infers the contrary of the thing seen" (p5).

3) *Providing a kind of neutral background filler.* Copland states that this is "really the music one isn't supposed to hear, the sort that helps to fill the empty spots between pauses and conversation". This music, he argues, is able to enliven and "make more human the deathly pallor of a screen shadow" (p5).

4) *Building a sense of continuity.* Copland says: "the picture editor knows better than anyone how serviceable music can be in tying together a visual medium which is by its very nature continually in danger of falling apart. One sees this most obviously in montage scenes where the use of a unifying musical idea may save the quick flashes of disconnected scenes from seeming merely chaotic" (p6).

5) *Underpinning the theatrical build-up of a scene and rounding it off with a sense of finality.*

In addition to this paradigm, Copland observes how "the innumerable examples of utilitarian music – off-stage street bands, the barn dance, merry-go-rounds, circus music, café music, the neighbour's girl practising her piano. All these, and many others, introduced with apparent naturalistic intent, serve to subtly vary the aural interest of the sound track" (p6). While Adorno and Eisler attempt to discover a *philosophy* of film music, Copland discusses the *practicalities* of film music, its intentions as they exist in the

industry, while simultaneously offering ideas to develop them. All three writers debate the future potential of film music, which is why their work is still sharply relevant today.

Second Reel: Post-1950 literary review of the classical score

Aaron Copland's article of 1949 hints at a turning point in film music history. As the 1950s began, fresh ideas were taking hold: on orchestration, compositional style and the role of music in films. However, interest in the original classical score of the golden Hollywood era continued unabated. In 'Second Reel', therefore, I move this review forward, to look at literature published between 1950 and the present day, which focuses mostly on the specially-composed classical score for films from the 1930s and 1940s.

In 1952, *Films in Review* initiated a column entitled 'The Sound Track', a surprisingly modern choice, seeming to anticipate future debates on sound design! In 1957, Manvell and Huntley published *The Techniques of Film Music*, and suggested that music "points, underlines, links, emphasises, or interprets the action, becoming part of the dramatic pattern of the film's structure" (in Thomas,1991, p268). The emphasis on the psychological, so prominent in the writings of composers, is absent here. In the 1960s, Elmer Bernstein's short-lived *Film Music Notebook* was launched, and included interviews with leading film composers and close analyses of specific film scores. According to Clifford McCarty (1989), the journal "was actually the adjunct of a record club, the principal incentive to membership being the opportunity to purchase recordings produced exclusively for members" (px). *Pro Musica Sana* was published in 1972 by the Miklos Rozsa Society, with an emphasis on Rozsa's work. Amateur society newsletters and annuals, featuring such composers as Jerry Goldsmith and Bernard Herrmann, also began to flourish. In 1979, *Cinema Score* published a mixture of in-depth interviews, filmographies and amateur writings on film music (in McCarty, 1989).

In the 1980s, film music and popular music studies began to acquire status in the academy. The launch of *Popular Music*, the academic journal, and the establishment of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music secured this new standing for

popular music, and by the 1980s a multi-disciplinary approach to the field was common[23].

Indeed, Simon Frith and Jon Savage argued that the ideal pop criticism would consist of "anthropology, archetypal psychology, musicology . . . which has a grasp of pop both as an industrial and aesthetic form" (Griffiths, 2001, p51). Musicologists began to search for ways that would communicate meaning in music to non-musicians, and began to react against their formalist training, particularly the insistence in western art music education on traditional notation being the desired method of communication. Musicologists, in acknowledging that the study of popular music is not only about sound analysis, also realised that with their expertise, meaning of the social could be extracted from the music text. Critical musicology was born, championing the status of popular music and film music and embracing ideas from other academic disciplines.

The same multi-disciplinary approach was emerging within film studies. While most of the literature, so far, has been written by musicians, composers, and musicologists, new perspectives began to appear from film and cultural studies. Widely acclaimed as making a serious contribution to film music philosophy, and founding a new status for film music within the academy, is Claudia Gorbman's seminal work, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* of (1987). As the title suggests, Gorbman is concerned with the narrative-serving, unobtrusive music in the classical Hollywood film. Her comments on the classical score remain pertinent to any analysis of contemporary films, as her work provides a framework, a springboard from which to theorise. In my view, *Unheard Melodies* is as important a volume as Adorno and Eisler's *Composing For The Films*, and one which as I have said, edges film studies closer to musicology. She provides a close examination of the score as it is heard in classical Hollywood film, moving between film studies and musicology with ease.

Gorbman theorises that music functions on three different levels in a film: through *pure musical codes* (ie what music itself communicates independently); through *cultural musical codes* (which operate while our eyes are drawn elsewhere, eg while the credits unroll, music can reveal elements of the style and tone of a film); and *cinematic musical codes* (which refer directly to the film's diegesis). An understanding of the flexibility of music in

---

[23] In Hesmondhalgh and Negus (eds), 'Introduction, Popular Music Studies: Meaning, Power and Value', *Popular Music Studies*, Arnold, 2002

film, Gorbman argues, is essential to establishing the range of music functions. She states: "Significantly, the only element of filmic discourse that appears extensively in nondiegetic as well as diegetic contexts, and often freely crosses the boundary line in between, is music" (p22). This notion of flexibility is evident in most of her comments on functions. In the chapter entitled 'Why Music? The Sound Film and its Spectator', she theorises: "Film music is at once a gel, a space, a language, a cradle, a beat, a signifier of internal depth and emotions as well as a provider of emphasis on visual movement and spectacle. It bonds: shot to shot, narrative event to meaning, spectator to narrative, spectator to audience". However, she makes a general claim that there are two "overarching roles of background music", which are "semiotic (as *ancrage*) and psychological (as *suture* or bonding)" (p39). This last sentence is important: *ancrage* and *suture* are terms associated with the fixing of meaning. Here, we are reminded that while music is fluid, and expressive of practically anything, it is largely employed 'unheard' in classical film to manipulate a viewer into a preferred ideological position.

Flexibility is also something Gorbman encourages us to apply to her model of 'Classical Film Music: Principles of Composition, Mixing and Editing'. While the words 'functions', 'objectives' or 'intentions' are nowhere to be seen here, the model, on close inspection, does actually provide a list of possible film music functions. Indeed, the word 'principles' is arguably interchangeable with the words 'function', 'objective' and 'intention'. Gorbman studies the films of veteran Hollywood composer Max Steiner, and draws from a range of industry publications on sound recording, mixing and music composition to formulate these principles. However, the model "describes a discursive field rather than a monolithic system with inviolable rules". I reproduce Gorbman's macro-level model here as it is so pertinent to this study.

1) *Invisibility*: the technical apparatus of nondiegetic music must not be visible.

2) *'Inaudibility'*: Music is not meant to be heard consciously. As such it should subordinate itself to dialogue, to visuals – ie to the primary vehicles of the narrative.

3) *Signifier of emotion*: Soundtrack music may set specific moods and emphasise particular emotions suggested in the narrative, but first and foremost, it is a signifier of emotion itself.

4)   *Narrative cueing*: a) *Referential/narrative*: music gives referential and narrative cues, eg indicating point of view, supplying formal demarcations, and establishing setting and characters; b) *Connotative*: music 'interprets' and 'illustrates' narrative events.

5)   *Continuity*: music provides formal and rhythmic continuity – between shots, in transitions between scenes, by filling 'gaps'.

6)   *Unity*: via repetition and variation of musical material and instrumentation, music aids in the construction of formal and narrative unity.

7)   A given film score may violate any of the principles above, providing the violation is at the service of the other principles. (p73)

When compared to Aaron Copland's five-part model, however, there is only one obvious similarity – the intention of providing continuity. Other intentions may be similar, but are expressed in different ways. For example, Copland's function of creating "atmosphere", could be the same as Gorbman's "*narrative cueing*" as cited above. Copland's function of providing "neutral background filler" might also chime with Gorbman's definition of "continuity". Copland's model promotes the points made by composers. For example, one function, "sustaining tension and then rounding it off with a sense of closure" could refer to a series of unresolved chords, finally brought to rest through cadences, particularly, as Copland says, "the music that blares out at the end of a film" (1949, p6). Copland also lists the function of highlighting the "psychological states of characters", which is a central concern of composers. Gorbman does not mention the word 'psychological' at all. Both writers see music as an intrinsic part of the film communication system, but Copland is not concerned with music's "inaudibility". As a musician, Copland highlights the importance of music in film whether or not it is 'unheard'. Both models take account of the film world and film production process, and so place musical discussion firmly within a film context. Both Copland and Gorbman, therefore, like Adorno and Eisler (1947), write across cultural barriers and link musicology, film studies, and cultural studies together in a successfully fluid way[24].

---

[24] In 1990, William Darby and Jack Du Bois, co-authors of *American Film Music: Major Composers, Techniques, Trends, 1915-1990*, published an in-depth history of film music, containing interviews with composers such as Max Steiner and Bernard Herrmann. Musicological analyses are applied to specific film scores, certain moments of which are notated, enabling readers of all types to glean copious musical details. Other books in this mould are: James Limbacher's *Keeping Score: Film and Television Music*,

Meanwhile, interest in the film score continued within film and cultural studies. In Robynn Stilwell's opinion, Kathryn Kalinak's *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (1992) deals with music even more explicitly than *Unheard Melodies*. Certainly, Kalinak devotes a substantial chapter to explaining musical terminology to non-musicians, and uses "a straightforward musical semiotics, unencumbered by unnecessary theoretical constructs" for her film analyses (Stilwell, 2002, p34). Stilwell also approves of Kalinak's use of different types of notated score, from single-line lead scores to graphics. Kalinak tests her theory that the classical model persists today, even if instrumentation and style have changed. Early on in the book she cites the functions of the classical model: "First and foremost, music served the story, and the classical score was generated from a set of conventions which ensured unobstructed narrative exposition" (pxv). On page 79, she argues:

"These conventions included the use of music to sustain structural unity; music to illustrate narrative content, both implicit and explicit, including a high degree of direct synchronisation between music and narrative action; and the privileging of dialogue over other elements of the soundtrack. The medium of the classical Hollywood score was largely symphonic; its idiom romantic; and its formal unity typically derived from the principle of the leitmotif".

This model echoes Claudia Gorbman's closely, and Kalinak tests her model on films as diverse as *Laura* and *The Empire*, drawing her conclusion: "The classical score is defined ultimately by its structural conventions, a set of practices that evolved for the use and placement of music in Hollywood films. The force of these conventions transcended idiom (late romantic, or pop, for example), medium (symphony orchestras or jazz combos), and even personal style (the characteristic sound of a Herrmann cue versus the sound of a Korngold fanfare) to exert a controlling influence on what audiences heard when they went to the movies" (p203). Kalinak considers that the classical model persists today and her book applies the model to films from the 1930s to the 1980s. To summarise, both Gorbman and Kalinak give status to the film score within film studies, and film within musicology;

(1980-1988), Earle Hagen's *Scoring For Films: A Complete Text* (1977), and *The Art of Film Music* (1994) by George Burt, aimed at the would-be film composer. [24]

and both focus on non-diegetic classical scoring in Hollywood. Gorbman offers more philosophy, and Kalinak tests a theory.

Also concerned with largely non-diegetic scores in cinema is Royal S Brown's book *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (1994). "It is the interaction between the various classical scores and their films that will be the principal, if not the sole, subject of this book" (p37), he writes. Brown focuses on three types of film score: those which challenge traditional relations between music and film, and become "heard" melodies; those which produce "subtexts rich in the broader mythic implications", and those evident in contemporary films that "integrate music into a postmodern, imagistic gestalt to produce a strange kind of inversion that might be called 'Apollonian tragedy'" (p37). Royal S Brown's interests in films are wide ranging, and he draws equally from Hollywood and Europe. He also employs film studies and musicology seamlessly. Three theories are of particular interest for this project. Firstly, Brown argues: "It stands to reason that the dialectical tension between the musical and the cinematic symbol will be increasingly tightened the more the music remains on an abstract level. And so the classical, nondiegetic film score has, throughout the cinema history, remained fairly free of the human voice and almost totally free of lyrics" (p40). Contemporary films, as already discussed, use songs increasingly frequently, and contrary to Brown's assertions, I will be arguing that "dialectic tension" is actually increased rather than decreased when song accompanies visual in *Magnolia* and *Moulin Rouge*. A second theory concerns the use of pre-existing classical music scores in film. Brown says: "the excerpts of classical music compositions that replace the original film score no longer function purely as backing for key emotional situations, but rather exist as a kind of parallel emotional/aesthetic universe . . . Put another way, the music, rather than supporting and/or colouring the visual images and narrative situations, stands as an image in its own right, helping the audience read the film's other images as such rather than as a replacement for or imitation of objective reality" (p239). Brown's work suggests that music itself has become a central platform of communication within film, and this "image in its own right" is increasingly louder, dominant and heard separately both in and out of the cinema.

Perhaps most interesting of all is an idea which comes late in the book. In the last few pages, Brown looks to the future and envisages a time when films (particularly

commercially available copies for home consumption) will begin to lose their "illusory aura of permanence" and "their deceptive status as a kind of inviolable icon in which there is a firmly established place for every segment". He imagines that the "fixed objet d'art for passive consumption" will be a thing of the past and that audiences will have access to "filmic materials as a kind of software package, a collection of shots and/or sequences subject to manipulation" (p266). Prescient as this may be, Brown theorises in a depressed tone, as if this is all tragic breaking news. In fact, his comments sound rather old fashioned. One could argue that for some time, audiences have been able to manipulate elements of film soundtracks at will, by playing CD versions at home in any order they choose, and before the development of CDs, selected bits of video tape. They can also enjoy ancillary music videos, and use song books to create entirely new versions and meanings of the music heard in the film. Moreover, sheet music has always been available to the general public – even in the silent era. All of this is surely positive?

While Brown discusses the "parallel emotional/aesthetic universe" of music in film and its life outside the cinema, Simon Frith (2002), veteran rock writer and Tovey Professor of Musicology at Edinburgh University develops ideas of how music works in film. Indeed, he addresses the functions of specially-composed film music directly and admits that "technical analysis for our understanding of how film music works is incontestable" (p107). In Frith's view, music operates in film rather as it does in opera. Firstly, "musical meaning is constructed as structurally internal to a work" (p113). For example, music may signify a character, or it may reinforce links of narrative and musical structure "so that musicological notions of tension, thrust, climax, dissatisfaction, and so forth are given a narrative translation through the stage or film plot" (p113). Secondly, film music meaning "may be constructed symbolically". This means music may represent a theme or aspect of the plot "in a way that is not necessarily coherent in terms of the soundtrack's overall musical structure" (p113). However, Frith notes that in opera, musical logic reigns supreme whereas in film, narrative logic presides. Amusingly, Frith, who never takes the 'tasteless' view states: "the great operas are precisely the ones in which musical and narrative logic, structural and symbolic meanings are integrated, as in Wagner" (p113).

In *Performing Rites*, Frith is mostly concerned with popular music, but considers that film music has been "oddly neglected". Through its neglect, he argues, film music has yielded "some of the most interesting and subtle academic accounts of how music works" (p110). From these writings, Frith summarises elements that are most relevant for the analysis of popular music. He divides these into three sets of codes: *emotional* codes, which "concern the ways in which music is taken to signify feeling" (p118), *cultural* codes which "tell us where we are" (p120), and *dramatic* codes which "use music for its narrative effect, to propel the action forward or hold back" (p122). Emotional codes have two aims: "to tell the audience how to feel" and to tell the audience "what the characters in the film are feeling" (p118). Frith summarises emotional codes by indirectly noting two functions: "Through the use of emotional codes, film music has taught us how to see, while film images have taught us how to hear" (p120).

On stark analysis, Simon Frith is saying nothing new here. All of these points on film music coding have been made before and many times since. However, Frith adds a fresh take, which in turn enriches the philosophy of film music. His closing comments on film music make this clear. "We are left with a wonderfully circular process: scorers bring sound *to* films, for their everyday semantic connotations, from their roots in Western art music and musicology; listeners take musical meanings *from* films, from the cinemas in which we've learned what emotions and cultures and stories sound like" (p122).

However, when music in film is classical and pre-existing, does this "circular process" stop? Philip Brophy[25] takes the unusual tack of exploring the relationship between a compilation classical score and animation, in *Fantasia* (1940) and *What's Opera, Doc?* (1959). Brophy highlights the unappreciated inherent musicality of animation and the high-art/low-art dichotomy. In *Fantasia*, the classical score is revered, he claims, and it has a special objective: "*Fantasia* is not just an homage to a body of baroque, classical, romantic and early 20th-century compositions, but also an honouring of the organic life of music to which the trickery of animated imagery could only inspire" (p133). Brophy argues that Disney "exploits one of the quintessential marvels of music: how its relationship with

---

[25] Philip Brophy is a film director, film composer and instigator in Soundtrack Production at Media Arts, RMIT University, Melbourne. I refer to his book *100 Modern Soundtracks* (2004) frequently in this study.

time is never comparative but always relative" (p133). The film, Brophy says, investigates musical form and celebrates quality music.

In contrast, according to Brophy, Warner Bros cartoons employed music as a social tool "to absent any cultural clash in musical differences" in films such as *Make Mine Music* and *What's Opera Doc?* Usefully, Brophy outlines the way Warner Bros "textually evidence an anti-symphonic/anti-operatic sensibility". Musicological antagonism is achieved by placing: "the music score in conflict with its performance; the performer's body in conflict with its being; a character in conflict with another character; a musical style in conflict with another musical style; the cartoon narrative in conflict with the music narrative, and the music score in conflict with its realisation" (p140). These analyses, which reveal a social function of film music, highlight Disney's and Warner Bros' sharp awareness of the power of the compilation score. This type of score was to flourish in the decades to come, and in the next chapter, we shall see how innovative directors, such as Kubrick and Tarantino, employed the compilation score in sometimes shocking ways.

The question I have asked throughout this chapter is: what are the objectives of the specially-composed classical score? In other words, how does music work in classical Hollywood cinema? What are its functions? Some possible answers to these questions came from composers, music editors, musicologists, and academics from film and popular music studies. The question draws from critical musicology in its focus on music within a cultural context, in this case film. In my film musicology, I embrace what traditional musicology has to offer – the gleaning of information on musical sounds – and then transport this knowledge into the worlds of moving images and dialogue. I am involved in the process of "continually rethinking music to avoid establishing new orthodoxies or grand narratives" (Beard and Gloag, 2005, p38). This question regarding the objectives of film music will be employed again in the next chapter to uncover how and why the film score changes from the 1950s onwards; and we will hear additional comments from directors, marking a significant shift in how music is perceived and selected in film. As we move towards more modern film scores, this question will be refined to: How does the music of contemporary Hollywood films express the complexities of urban existence? This question will launch the chapters on my three case studies.

By the 1950s, the classical Hollywood film score had reached its pinnacle. Composers continued to employ the large romantic symphony orchestra to create iconic themes for films such as *The Big Country* (1958, score by Jerome Moross), *Ben Hur* (1959, music by Miklos Rozsa), and *North by Northwest* (1959, with music by Bernard Herrmann). However, more experimental scores incorporating dissonance were also emerging, such as Leith Stevens' music for *The Wild One* (1953). The popular music score, meantime, was gathering momentum. It became a key diegetic component in genre films, such as the western, screwball comedy and film noir, and often appeared on the soundtrack via musical performance (eg Dooley Wilson singing *As Time Goes By* in *Casablanca*, 1942), source radios or record players. With the advent of rock 'n' roll, film directors seized the chance to appeal to a new generation of young film goers, who had their own music and subculture. Upheavals in society were taking place. This was to have a profound effect on the film score.

Let's Rip it Up!

Eclectic, electric and wild

The middle decades of the 20th century marked a turning point in the development of the film score, and saw the emergence of a new commercial dimension. After this time, the foregrounding of music within popular culture was to change the film industry and our understanding of the film score. "Since the late 1950s, with the advent of rock 'n' roll and the saturation development of the record market, there has been a proliferation of tied-in songs in films" states KJ Donnelly (2003, p144). However, tie-ins have been in existence since silent cinema, when publishers jostled to promote their songs; and songs were so important during the studio era that they affected film form and "spawned the musical film"[1]. Since the 1960s, new technology has enabled even more tie-in musical products, from singles and soundtrack LPs to CDs and downloads.

These developments, in conjunction with the fragmentation of the Hollywood studio system, have had an enduring effect on contemporary film music. As Donnelly says: "There is no more film music 'production line', where there were rosters of composers, arrangers and musicians all under one roof" (p144). Now there is 'synergy'. In *Celluloid Jukebox, Popular Music and the Movies Since the 1950s* (1995), Romney and Wootton argue that "it is comparatively rare these days for an entire movie to be scored by one composer, when so many parties – producers desperate to get a film financed, record companies hoping to push an artist, publishers anxious to squeeze more mileage out of a one-time hit song – stand to profit from using a ready-made repertoire of recorded profit" (p4).

As a result of these influences, three main scoring practices emerge in the second half of the 20th century: the specially-composed score, similar to those described in the previous chapter, but with additional developments in style and orchestration; the

---

[1] In KJ Donnelly, 'The Classical Film Score Forever? Batman, Batman Returns and Post-Classical Film Music, in Steve Neale and Murray Smith (eds), *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, London, Routledge, 2003

compilation score, using pre-existing music; and the hybrid score, the most commonly employed combination of both specially-composed and pre-existing music. The compilation score may be a pop score, comprising a selection of existing popular music, mainly in song form; or it may sometimes be a classical compilation score, using pre-existing classical music.

The 1950s marked a period of indelible change for popular culture. A new, post-war generation sought to break away from parental influences, and create a new identity for themselves, expressing their rebellion in their clothing, hairstyles, and choice of music. "The cultivation of a quiff, the acquisition of . . . a record or a certain type of suit . . . a gesture of defiance, or contempt, in a smile or a sneer" all signalling "a Refusal"[2]. Two young actors, Marlon Brando and James Dean, both products of Lee Strasberg's Actor's Studio in New York, articulated these aspirations in films dealing with alienation, disaffection and the new phenomenon, teenage deliquency. In the cult classic, *The Wild One* (1953), Marlon Brando played Johnny, a leather-jacketed motor-cycle rebel, who invaded a sleepy Californian town with his biker gang. The film was banned for 14 years by the BBFC[3], partly because the young bikers directly questioned authority, but mainly because there was no retribution. In 1954, Brando played failed boxer Terry Malloy, and uttered some of the most memorable lines in Hollywood history: "I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender. I coulda been somebody, instead of a bum, which is what I am, let's face it". Elia Kazan's *On The Waterfront* (1954) introduced Hollywood to a tough, new social realism, and Brando, with his brooding frustration and honest, naturalistic performance, was the exemplar of this new style. His intense, magnetic screen-presence spoke directly to a fresh, restless generation. James Dean was another 'method' actor, with charisma and undeniable talent. In Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), he played a confused, vulnerable and tormented young man, betrayed by all those who should have protected him.

In popular music, rock 'n' roll was breaking sexual and racial taboos, and forcing its way into teenage consciousness (in Pascall, 1978). Although segregation was still rife,

---

[2] In Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Routledge, 1979, p3 where he defines subculture as "always in dispute", forever challenging conformity.
[3] In Tim Dirks, *The Wild One*, www.filmsite.org

white DJ Alan Freed risked playing banned black R'n'B music on his weekly radio show, *Moondog's Rock 'n' Roll Party*. The term rock 'n' roll was coined subversively, in order for black musicians to have access to a white teenage market, and vice-versa. In 1955, *Rock Around the Clock*, performed by Bill Haley and the Comets, was played over the credit sequence for *The Blackboard Jungle*. This song caused such teenage uproar, seat-slashing and wild dancing in cinemas across Britain and the US, that questions were asked in the House. Jonathan Romney and Adrian Wootton (1995) argue that *Rock Around the Clock* managed to "appeal directly to the viscera, bypassing the viewer's cultural judgement" (p4). The song went straight to number one in the US charts and stayed there for 22 weeks. Other hits for Bill Haley and the Comets included *Shake, Rattle and Roll*, *Rip It Up* and *See You Later, Alligator*.

Meanwhile, a young truck driver by the name of Elvis Presley, from Tupelo, Mississippi, was singing black music with a raw passion. After his first minor hit *That's All Right (Mama)*, Presley developed a provocative performing style which was shocking in the 1950s, and is still widely imitated by fans and impersonators. Gyrating the hips, curling the lips, shaking his head so that his long hair fell over his face, and grinning and leering at the girls were all part of the act. The combination of these raunchy moves with a sultry singing voice thrilled the new generation, and other hits soon followed, such as *Hound Dog, Blue Suede Shoes, Jailhouse Rock* and *All Shook Up*. Presley opened the floodgates for other rock 'n' rollers to make their mark. These included Jerry Lee Lewis with *Great Balls of Fire*, Chuck Berry with *Sweet Little Sixteen*, *Johnny B. Goode* and *Roll Over Beethoven*, Buddy Holly with *That'll Be The Day* and *Rave On*, and Eddie Cochrane with *C'mon Everybody* and *Summertime Blues*. Little Richard shocked the older generation with the opening line of his song *Tutti Frutti*: 'A-bop-bop-a-loom-op-Alop-bop-boom!' What did it mean? No-one knew, not even Little Richard. Only the sound mattered to teenagers, who at long last had music to call their own (in Pascall, 1978, Romney and Wootton, 1995, Strong, 1996).

Encouraged by the commercial success of these chart-topping rock 'n' roll performers, a few opportunistic film makers rushed to produce a series of low-budget offerings, to satisfy this new teenage demand for pop music. These teenpic films, mainly in black and white and with tenuous story lines, were designed to showcase a ready supply of

rising stars, some of whom went on to become popular music legends, and they usually included an extended dance hall or nightclub sequence that allowed the performers to parade their chart successes. Examples include: *Rock Around the Clock* (1956), and *The Girl Can't Help It* (1957)[4]. The assorted songs used for these films were readily transposed to vinyl for the record-buying public, and these ephemeral soundtracks might even be considered as early examples of the pop compilation score.

Also during the late 1950s and into the 1960s, composers such as Henry Mancini, John Barry, and Ennio Morricone began to write film scores with attractive melodies, song forms and jazz/rock arrangements, managing to achieve both structural unity within the film, and a wider popular appeal. These discrete musical components were also ideal for pop and rock album tie-ins, and record producers were not slow to realise the commercial potential of such accessible soundtracks. So, by the early 1960s, audience acceptance of these scores, and their easy familiarity with a wide variety of popular music, encouraged a more democratic and eclectic approach to scoring. For many contemporary film makers, the availability of an expanding catalogue of popular and easy listening music, from which a knowledgeable director or musical arranger could select, marked the arrival of the compilation score, and increasingly, this was to become a *pop* compilation score (in John Mundy, 1999, KJ Donnelly, 2001, Kay Dickinson, 2003, 2008).

An interesting early example of this type of score can be found in Kenneth Anger's film *Scorpio Rising* (1964). In her article, 'Cultural Bolshevism at Capital's Late Night Show: Scorpio Rising' (2003), Rachel Moore argues that Anger exhibits an "arcade of displays", which includes the 1950s compilation score Anger bought outright. The songs are presented in full, untainted by editing, to reinforce their cultural price and appeal: "The film glows in the glitter of the kitsch value they now evoke" (p75). Pitched against close-ups of film stars and the polished curves of a revered motorbike, the music operates to emphasise the transcendence of the commodity into the "symbolic expression of the collective's dream" (p77). Kim Newman (2003) suggests that Anger's score greatly influenced the work of later directors, such as Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973) and David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986). Indeed, Newman claims *Scorpio Rising* is even "oddly

---

[4] In Keir Keightly, 'Manufacturing Authenticity: Imagining the Music Industry in Anglo-American Cinema, 1956-62', in Kay Dickinson (ed), *Movie Music The Film Reader*, Routledge, 2003.

accessible on an MTV level" in the way it shows the potential for songs in cinema: "They can be illustrated, undercut, and lent greater depth by apt or even wildly inapt images" (p430). However, in the following decade, two films in particular encouraged the success of the pop compilation score: *The Graduate* (1967), directed by Mike Nichols, featuring songs by Simon and Garfunkel, and the budget movie *Easy Rider* (1969), directed by Dennis Hopper and drawing on the music of Hendrix, The Byrds and Steppenwolf to create a counter-cultural viewing experience.

In the 1960s, as if vying for attention, there was also a shift in the use of pre-existing classical music. Films such as *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961), *The L-Shaped Room* (1963), and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) employed works from the classical canon. Pre-existing classical scores have, of course, been employed before and since these films. In the Dream Palaces of the silent era, a mix of original composition and pre-existing classical pieces were played by the large orchestras. In 1930, Buñuel challenged the high/low culture divide with a score featuring the music of Wagner, Debussy and Schubert in his film, *L'Age d'Or*. This bold choice of music shocked middle-class sensibilities at the time.[5] Where Philip Brophy (2003) described how Disney in *Fantasia* (1940), and Warner Bros in *What's Opera Doc?* (1959) employed classical compilation scores to broaden audience appeal for a cartoon, Strinati (1995) identifies such erosions as signals of postmodern popular culture "which refuse to respect the pretensions and distinctiveness of art" (p225). Stanley Kubrick notoriously used classical compilation scores in his films *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) to shock, to challenge established thinking about the score, and to provide extreme counterpoint of image and sound.

A Clockwork Orange, in particular, has inspired several commentaries and debates. Krin Gabbard and Shailja Sharma are somewhat critical in their article 'Stanley Kubrick and the Art Cinema' (2003), considering that Kubrick "seeks to place his work among those revered cinematic texts that are self-conscious and self-referential" (p87). They

---

[5] In Priscilla Barlow 'Surreal Symphonies': *L'Age d'Or* and the Discreet Charms of Classical Music, in Wojcik and Knight (eds), Duke University Press, 2001. Barlow argues that in order to shock the bourgeoisie, Buñuel juxtaposes "the known and familiar with the dreamlike and strange. By using music that his highly cultured audience could be expected to know, Buñuel in effect bridged the supposed gap between serious and popular music" (p32).

argue: "The sensation of shock, so important to the avant-garde and modernism from surrealism to the noveau roman – both in cinema and other arts – is an integral part of Kubrick's project, even as he foregrounds the music of high romanticism. But for all its shocking violence and classical music, the film presents a reactionary nihilism along with its aestheticism" (p88). In one sense, rather like Buñuel, Kubrick employs pre-composed classical music to challenge the high/low art dichotomy, to convey a European artistic tradition and to reject the convention of "unheard" music. In another sense, Kubrick enacts something far more sinister. He demonstrates that classical music can be made to accompany extreme violence, and in doing so, challenges the effectiveness of 1950s cinema rebels, Brando, Dean and Presley, who do not change the status quo. Robert Kolker's article, entitled 'A Clockwork Orange . . . Ticking' (2003) focuses on the way in which Kubrick employs music to bring attention to the filmic process. Kolker describes one moment in the film when Alex de Large, teenage gang leader of the 'droogs', knowingly whistles to the soundtrack. He says: "Alex exists on the image track; the music exists on the sound track. Both tracks are artifices, synthetic creations of light and sound, and here they merge, Alex aware of both at every turn" (p31). This subtle self-consciousness is ground-breaking for the time, and even for today.

In Gene D Phillips' edited volume, *Stanley Kubrick Interviews* (2001), a variety of interviewers question Kubrick on *A Clockwork Orange*. In a conversation with Penelope Housten in 1971, Kubrick comments on the stylised violence in the film and how music helps to convey this impression: " . . . most of the violent action is principally organised around the Overture to Rossini's *Thieving Magpie*, and, in a very broad sense, you could say that the violence is turned into dance" (p111). The music, therefore, dissipates the violence, and possibly provokes guilty pleasures in the audience as we follow and enjoy the familiar, uplifting classical music. Kubrick argues: "In cinematic terms, I should say that movement and music must inevitably be related to dance, just as the rotating space station and the docking Onion Spaceship in *2001* moved to *The Blue Danube*" (p111). Even though Kubrick's films tend to deal in harsh subject matter, he emphasises the aesthetic function of pre-existing classical music to provide an audio-visual dance and collision.

In *Kubrick's Cinema Odyssey* (2001), Michel Chion focuses on the soundtrack of *2001*, arguing that "the music is exhibited, and is rarely mixed with sound effects, more

rarely still with dialogue; it refuses to melt in or make common cause with other soundtrack elements" (p46). This is an interesting point, which questions whether image itself is only one communication platform among many, or whether film can still be seen as a central platform with ancillary products. In *2001*, I would argue that Kubrick employs music as a separate communication platform actually within the film. As the music is not mixed in, viewers are more conscious of its existence, and so can choose to link that music to the screen dynamics, or not. Kubrick's innovative technique is increasingly employed today. Indeed, I suggest that within contemporary film, music has become a central communication vehicle which can also be seen as intrinsic, extrinsic or both to a film. Later Chion states that "it is only with *The Blue Danube* that Kubrick produced culture shock – even while denying it, as he claimed that the young audience would bring to this waltz no historical association whatsoever" (p91). This objective, to invoke shock, is further developed into something more insidious. Chion considers that *The Blue Danube*, heard against triumphant scenes of grandeur but also of violence and destruction, "wordlessly narrates all the ambivalence Kubrick wished to convey; for him, in this tableau of evolution, the exaltation of life and joy of destruction are inextricably linked" (p92).

Also known for his innovative use of compilation scores is Quentin Tarantino. In contrast to Kubrick, much of the music he employs is from the 1970s popular canon. Tarantino much prefers the pre-existing pop score, and often employs it in an ironic way. Indeed, in the process of creating a new film, he will "immediately try to find out what would be the right song to the opening credit sequence" well before considering a script (p130). Tarantino is tentative about working with a composer as he "doesn't like giving up that much control" (p127). Instead, this director chooses music he knows, rather like Kubrick. An interesting function of the pop song in Tarantino's films is revealed in his comments on *Reservoir Dogs* (1992): the film "wouldn't have benefited from a score, it would have broken the real-time aspect of it" (p127). This is intriguing: on the one hand the real-time duration of a song can reinforce the fictional real-time in the film; on the other hand, as so many of Tarantino's selected songs are from the 1970s, they could also convey a sense of "time-space compression". Tarantino argues that, for him "music in movies is one of the most cinematic things you can do . . . action movies are to movies what heavy

metal is to rock. They're not very respectable, but they totally give you just pulsating thrills" (p121)[6]. This spicy, peppy quote discloses two further interesting objectives of the pop score; to provide pure embodied enjoyment for the audience and to highlight the cinematic aesthetic experience. Arguably, Kubrick also achieves these objectives: the viewer's enjoyment of Beethoven and Rossini in *A Clockwork Orange*, for example, perhaps lessens the impact of the brutality portrayed on screen while simultaneously drawing our attention to the art and craft of film.

Reservoir Dogs contains one of Tarantino's most infamous uses of pre-existing music. The ear-severing moment is enacted to the danceable *Stuck in the Middle With You* by Stealer's Wheel, and arguably the song is employed to shock, to provide irony and to convey a sense of comic-book violence. Certainly, it is an other example of well-known pre-existing music connected to violence and a self-conscious filming style. Phil Powrie analyses the use of the song in his article 'Blonde Abjection: Spectatorship and the Abject Anal Space' (2005), and seeks to counter the common view that the song only operates anempathetically[7] during the notorious ear-severing scene. He says: "The song also works in harmony with the image track: what you see and what you hear may be incongruous, but they are congruent. On the other hand . . . there is counterpoint, but it is not between what you see and what you hear; it is between the act of hearing and the act of seeing. The disarray into which the sequence throws spectatorial affect forces us to confront ourselves as spectators, in the act of spectating" (p100). So far, no film music literature has mentioned this innovative directorial intention, although again it is possible to argue that Kubrick had already demonstrated such effects with his classical compilation score in *A Clockwork Orange*. When Alex and the droogs brutally rape a "weeping young devotchka" to Rossini's jolly 'Overture' from *The Thieving Magpie*, the audience are also invited to "confront themselves in the art of spectating", and feelings of acute discomfort are induced. This idea of a knowing spectatorship is increasingly notable in contemporary films, and I argue that it is foregrounded music which often reminds an audience that they are watching a human creation, a constructed artefact.

---

[6] Tarantino quotes taken from Jonathan Romney and Adrian Wootton, *Celluloid Jukebox: Popular Music and the Movies Since the 50s*, London, BFI Publishing, 1995.
[7] This term is employed by Michel Chion to describe music which works in counterpoint to the screen. Chion outlines the definition of empathetic and anempathetic music in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, Columbia University Press, 1994 on pages 8 and 9.

Tarantino also employs the pop compilation score to define character in innovative ways. Ken Garner (2001) discusses this in his article, 'Would You Like to Hear Some Music? Music in-and-out-of-control in the Films of Quentin Tarantino' (2001). The focus of the piece is Tarantino's aesthetic choice to foreground character control of the soundtrack. Garner argues that "what is different about the use of such diegetic music in Tarantino's films is that this act, the actors appearing to take control of the score, is explicitly celebrated. It is the choice of this-music or that-music in these particular circumstances, its switching on and off – rather than just the music itself – which is made indicative of character or situation" (p189). This device is especially common in the films *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Jackie Brown* (1997), and Garner argues that this creative technique can serve several functions. For example, Jackie, the central character in *Jackie Brown*, selects the song *Didn't I Blow Your Mind* for another character, Max, to hear. According to Garner, this track functions to: signify memories for Jackie of a specific time in her life; convey "a performative act of display of identity" for Jackie; reinforce personal details of Jackie to Max, "the record and her reaction signifies to him that this is indeed a woman with a particular identity and past"; and emphasise Max's relationship with Jackie to the audience, via the "subsequent frequent replaying of the song in his car" (p190). The song can also function to provide "ironic humour". When we see Max, a middle-aged white man "digging old Philly soul", we "laugh with nervous relief, and at our own taste-culture prejudices" (p190). In true postmodern style, however, the song's meaning is never fixed, and cultural barriers are dissolved.

The character of Jackie Brown reverses established gender roles and is empowered through music. Similarly, Tarantino's aesthetic choices enable Mia to control the "aural environment" in *Pulp Fiction*. When Vincent visits Mia for the first time, he and the audience are initially denied permission to glimpse her face. This carefully-edited scene "emphasises Mia's desire to exercise remote control" over the first moments of their meeting. Close-ups featuring Mia's *Dusty in Memphis* LP, her music technology, her close-circuit security camera, and later her cocaine-snorting implements of razor blade and mirror "present music as just another social stimulant, depressant or technology for taking the up-close tension out of sexual encounters" (p200). Nevertheless, Mia is in charge through her specially-selected foregrounded sound track, *Son of a Preacher Man*, and her choice to

78

remain invisible at this stage. These are examples of music "in control". For music "out of control", Garner refers to research conducted by Zillman and Gan in 1997, and Christenson and Roberts in 1998. These writers suggest that "music listening is the most popular leisure activity of older adolescents, used by them most commonly to alter mood and enhance emotional states; and that this listening is primarily a solitary activity" (p201). Garner argues that young audiences are able to view characters mirroring their own musical uses and gratifications in Tarantino's films, and that the act of buying a Tarantino soundtrack CD may well reflect a typical Tarantino film character – "in control enough to choose; yet choosing music which just might drive you out of control"(p203). Clever as all this is, arguably Kubrick pipped Tarantino to the post by over twenty years with *A Clockwork Orange*. Alex De Large selects the music of Beethoven, which drives him so much out of control that he loses his ability to choose to be evil. Kubrick claimed that the moral of *A Clockwork Orange* "hinges on the question of choice, and the question whether man can be good without having the choice to be evil, and whether a creature who no longer has this choice is still a man" (in Siskel, p122, 1972). The film continues to be shocking today, forcing us to confront scenes of violence and rape but encouraging us to empathise with Alex's point of view. Arguably, the main way the film achieves this uncomfortable ambivalence is with its clever, anomalous use of classical music.

Robert Miklitsch's article 'Audiovisual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema in *Jackie Brown*' (2004), aims to "demonstrate how audiophilia is a manifest, constitutive aspect of the film's 'musical imaginary'" (p287). In other words, there are opposing functions of diegetic and non-diegetic music in the film, which reflect "the dynamic relation that obtains between the look and the gaze or between, in the sonic register, 'listening' and 'being audited'" (p287). Diegetic music, the author suggests, is aligned with the look, whereas non-diegetic music is connected to the gaze and audition. Two interesting opposing functions are unravelled here which have not been noted before. Tarantino's artistic musical choices create a distinctive style, and enable unusual musical functions, such as to convey a sense of real time, to place a character in control of the screen and aural environment, to draw attention to film as constructed artefact, or an audience to the act of viewing and listening. Traditional music-image dynamics are challenged and made complex, by subverting, for example, the classical Hollywood scoring objectives to serve

narrative and be 'unheard', and both Tarantino and Kubrick manage to erode the cultural barriers between popular and classical music. From a 21st-century perspective, the music of Beethoven and Rossini represents popular classical works, and the music of Dusty Springfield and Gerry Rafferty, classic popular songs. The boundaries here are blurred, and they signal a significant shift from the mainly specially-composed classical scores reviewed in the first chapter. This breaking down of boundaries enables different, more complicated, more extensive ranges of contemporary experience to be communicated.

As a result of the impact of popular culture from the 1950s onwards, the specially-composed classical score, featuring the large-scale romantic orchestra, was in decline by the 1970s. More discordant, sparsely-written scores appeared, reminiscent of the modern concert hall, by such composers as Richard Rodney Bennett for *Figures in a Landscape* (1970), by Jerry Fielding for *Straw Dogs* (1971) and by Jerry Goldsmith for *Chinatown* (1974). In 1979, Tony Thomas published the first edition of his book, *Film Score: The Art and Craft of Movie Music*. Jerry Fielding, who died in 1980, specially wrote an essay for this book and observed: "Music has a crucial and critical function as part of a conglomerate, but it is not always a necessary increment in picture making". He cites Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* (1972) as an example: "There is no written music in it, but the way dialogue and sound are used in that picture is in itself a form of music. That film is a work of art" (p283). This comment pre-dates contemporary debate on sound in the cinema, by suggesting that sound and dialogue can be musical, that music in the conventional sense is not always required. Sound and dialogue can provide that music.

While such free-thinking views were offered on specially-composed music and sound, the rise of popular music in film provoked some criticism. Jerry Goldsmith, working in the 1970s, argues in Thomas' volume that "the serious composer is likely to be able to make statements more precisely and economically than the musician from the pop field" (p291). While Jerry Goldsmith and Jerry Fielding were ahead of their time as film composers in the 1970s, it is clear that the central purpose of a specially-composed score was still to underline the narrative and persuade an audience to a preferred ideological perspective. Tarantino did not aim for this at all. Commenting on Oliver Stone's political films, he explained: "He wants every single one of you to walk out thinking like he does. I

don't. I made *Pulp Fiction* to be entertaining. I always hope that if one million people see my movie, they saw a million different movies" (in Branston and Stafford, 1999, p246). Arguably, music has the same range of intentions in Tarantino's films. Goldsmith also underestimates that a contemporary knowing, highly media-literate audience can spot a commercial pitch, and enjoy it nonetheless. Moreover, directors and writers will be discussing, later in this chapter, how well popular music can express fine details, particularly those associated with historical or contemporary times and subcultures.

In the 1980s, the term 'synergy' came into vogue, describing the simultaneous promotion of franchised products to create a composite package, and this system continues today. KJ Donnelly (2003) summarises this well: "The fragmenting of the Hollywood studio system had a significant effect upon the production of music for films, and there have also been important changes in film music due to cultural developments outside the cinema" (p153). These developments include the pop video and MTV, and the increasingly sophisticated use of technology, enabling people to listen to music of all kinds in multiple ways. Indeed, KJ Donnelly argues, and I agree, that: "Music's status in films has become elevated and this has removed the orchestral music from the alleged position of 'inobtrusiveness' which it occupied in classical cinema and into a more conspicuous position" (p153). Geoff King (2002) defines synergy as "the idea that complementary activities can be brought together to create something more than just the sum of their parts: one-plus-one in the right combination includes a magical extra ingredient that makes the total add up to three" (p71). He cites Will Smith as an example of internal synergistic success. Smith's career as a rap artist and actor was relaunched with the title song to *Men in Black* (1997), which provided considerable extra revenue and important marketing for the film. The film, the song and the soundtrack album were chart successes, and each item was able to promote the other. The song's hook "here come the men in black" planted the film title in the minds of popular radio and record listeners, boosting potential audiences for the film. Geoff King argues that music videos "represent an especially privileged marketing location, designed to sell the music but also foregrounding the films through the use of images and extracts that turn them into hybrids between the world of MTV and the traditional movie trailer" (p165). In these situations, music is seen as increasingly

significant in and out of the cinema: as a marketing tool, self-contained artefact, as an important strand of meaning in a film, or the element which dominates the style and content of a music video.

At the beginning of this chapter I described the three film music-scoring practices currently available, and along the way, various directorial preferences have been identified. The discussion of synergy suggests that, in some ways, current film music practices reflect the segmented and fiercely competitive nature of the film and music industries themselves. It is these three options that we now need to consider in greater detail to explore their effect beyond that of a changing industrial market.

The 21st century musical menu

The breakdown of the specially-composed option

The rise of MTV and new technology have subtly, and sometimes radically, influenced the look and sound of films. For example, the distinctive MTV style of fast-paced editing to the beat of fore-grounded pop music, is increasingly appearing across moving-image media. Indeed, Kay Dickinson (2003) argues that "the 'MTV aesthetic' is now a pervasive stylistic element of television, of adverts, and in particular, of feature films" (p144). While the phrase 'MTV aesthetic' seems to suggest an ideology of style over substance, this is actually rather misleading. In his book *Why I [Still] Want My MTV*[8] Kevin Williams reminds us that the "narrative development of a single-feature film . . . was always already multiple and condensable". He argues that pop video and "segmented literary" works such as films are "multidimensional". "The segments interconnect rhizomatically rather than linearly or hierarchically. We do not have to 'read' across or 'up and down'; we can read intertextually, extratextually, contextually, and, most importantly for music videos, musically" (p96). These developments invite more complicated story telling in condensed forms, which are more appropriate for a contemporary audience educated in MTV stylistics.

---

[8] Full title of this book is: *Why I [Still] Want My MTV: Music Video and Aesthetic Communication*, Hampton Press, Inc, 2003

This complexity is also enabled by the fluidity of content in music videos and similarly-constructed moving image texts. In her book *Experiencing Music Video, Aesthetics and Cultural Context* (2004), Carol Vernallis claims that "videomakers have developed a set of practices for putting image to music in which the image gives up its autonomy and abandons some of its representational modes. In exchange, the image gains in flexibility and play, as well as in polyvalence of meaning"(px). Vernallis likens these practices to a music mixing board where any one element or combination of elements "can be brought forward or submerged in the mix" (px). When incorporated into film, these practices open up further possibilities for communicating wider experience because visuals are less burdened with representations and responsibility for creating narrative, and music is often placed centre stage. This is because, as Vernallis states, music videos "derive from the songs they set. The music comes first – the song is produced before the video is conceived – and the director normally designs images with the song as a guide" (px).

The radical changes to the idea of a sound track are traced by Philip Brophy. Indeed, he finds the phrase 'film music' problematic. In *100 Modern Soundtracks* (2004), he is concerned with the whole sound track, which he defines as a "chimera of the cinema. It is sound *and* noise; noise *and* music; music *and* speech; speech *and* sound. At no point can it be distilled into a form which allows us to safely state its essential quality" (p1). In examining 100 modern soundtracks, he shows how different the modern soundtrack is in comparison to that of the classic Hollywood film. Brophy theorises that all modern elements in cinema are the result of "technological, metaphysical and existential inquiry. Cinema's modern audiovisuality, therefore, has less to do with the enlightened classical arts of literature, theatre, painting – even music; it has more to do with endoscopic exploration, plastic surgery, chemical alteration, electroshock therapy and nerve stimulation" (p4). Brophy argues that the modern soundtrack reflects these elements and acknowledges the "mutated state of being which arises from decentred and deconstructed audiovisual distribution. These are the films that are textually filtrated with the voices of Glenn Gould, Phil Spector, Luigi Russolo, John Cage, Roland Barthes, Link Wray, Erik Satie, Kraftwerk, Yoko Ono, Harry Partch, Jimi Hendrix and Karlheinz Stockhausen among others" (p4). Brophy's view is that there are certain characteristics which define a modern soundtrack: different approaches to the nature of recorded sound; 'bombastic'

employment of sound effects; spatialisation of atmospheres and environments; 'orchestral collapses and interiorisations' (ie rejection of the large romantic symphony orchestra used for traditional underscores, and the introduction of more atonal, experimental music or popular music styles); celebration of electricity in scoring; the 'weaving and threading' of songs and the foregrounding of the voice. Modern soundtracks focused on the grain of the voice are either those "that employ the voice not as a tool but as an *instrument*, or those that utilise speech not for content but for its *orchestration*" (p14).

Brophy is attempting a philosophy of film music, and his Introduction could be expanded to an entire volume. His comments on instrumentation are apt: composers currently have an infinite palette of possibilities, ranging from traditional orchestral-family instruments to specially-created instruments to electronic manipulations of noise music, particularly that of the city. These sounds enable us to understand and explore ideas on contemporary urban existence. He creates an argument about the decentring affects of music, which offer individuals wider opportunities for identification, personal reflection and ethical positions. His discussion of the embodied effects of music is also pertinent. Louder scores resonate more directly with the body, particularly when that music is expressing contemporary themes related to embodiment, such as plastic surgery, drug enhancement, depression and anxiety.

I would argue that the cinematic experience is increasingly an embodied one, and I will be discussing this in the chapter on *Moulin Rouge*. Writers concerned with the body as "a source and producer of lived experience, for example through singing, speaking, dancing or musical performance"[9] are suddenly pertinent to a study of music in film. Such writers include Roland Barthes (1977), Phillip Tagg (2000) and Richard Middleton (2000). However, Brophy's assertions about the soundtrack are at times generalised. His argument that music, speech, sound and noise are inextricably linked is valid. Certainly, they are each one of several elements of the soundtrack, often heard or linked together, and all offer shades of meaning which may or may not directly relate to the screen dynamic. Nevertheless, I would argue most strongly, that it is important to focus on the music as a discrete area for study within film, particularly when that music is foregrounded, and sold separately as sheet music, on CD or other digital forms, or as a dominant component part of

---

[9] An idea quoted in David Beard and Kenneth Gloag, *Musicology The Key Concepts*, Routledge, 2005, p29

a music video. To overlook music's unique contribution to a film is to ignore a communication form which increasingly engages an audience both in and out of the cinema, unlike cinematic sound, speech and noise. The combination of all four, without the screen visuals, is mostly not for sale outside the cinema. Moreover, Brophy's viewpoint undermines the value and unique skillset of the film music composer: not all composers are 'sound designers', and there might be an argument for treating these aspects separately.

Employment of new technology is important to David Toop, a pop musician and curator of Britain's largest Sound Art exhibition at the Hayward in 2000. In his article entitled 'Falling into Coma: Wong Kar Wai and Massive Attack' (2005) Toop discusses the effects of a new form of film music composition – remixing. In Wong Kar-Wai's films, Toops suggests that "an interlocking takes place, through which the song becomes an invisible character, enmeshed within the complex ambient soundscape of its contextual scene yet utterly plausible as a transferable inner voice" (p156). To prove his point, Toop analyses an obscure remix of Massive Attack's hit *Karmacoma* by Tricky, set against Doyle's 'dub camerawork' in Wong Kar-Wai's film *Fallen Angels* (1995). The music, Toop argues, is of "fractured emotional lives negotiating alienated urban spaces", which grows from city sounds of passing traffic, sirens, and echoing subways and car parks (p161). Tricky's mixing style is strongly influenced by Jamaican dub, which "transforms an original source through echoes and other effects" (p161). In Toop's view the music "mirrors the dub camerawork of Doyle. Just as every echo delay in the music undergoes a subtle difference, every view seen through Doyle's lens has a variation of colour, texture, speed or angle" (p161). This characteristic soundscape without dialogue serves to communicate that missing element as inner character voice. In their introduction to this article in *Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema* (2005), editors Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley suggest that Toop draws our attention to "a new type of dialogue we are only just opening our eyes to", and I would add – a new musical function enabled by aesthetic choices. Music which expresses "fractured emotional lives negotiating alienated urban spaces" communicates an underlying theme of ambivalence, mixed feelings and uncertainty. Scores which incorporate electronically manipulated city sounds, or break away from fixed perspectives on instrumentation, or use compositional techniques such as mixing, communicate such complexities more accurately and precisely than traditional

alternatives. These developments break down the division between pre-existing music, specially-composed scores and independent composition. The emergence of new multi-disciplinary techniques, and their ambiguous by-products, offer more spaces for the audience to examine and experience personal and character interiority, which is infinitely flexible, unique, and resistant to fixed meaning. Such *signifiance* enables multiple and fluid identifications, nameless feelings in addition to articulated thoughts, and the acute, unique pangs of alienation to be fully experienced, to be totally embodied.

While we are becoming more aware of film music in the cinema, it has increasing appeal out of the cinema. Specially-composed and compilation scores are commonly available on soundtrack CDs or as digital downloads. The film's life is, therefore, extended and diffused into places other than where the film is experienced. In addition, the viewer can enjoy full versions of pieces which feature only fleetingly as short cues in the film, and appreciate the art of the film composer separately. Film music is, therefore, privileged, savoured, and acknowledged as a dominant force in its own right. It has become a central platform of communication both in and out of films, and it is a platform for audience interaction. Within the multimedia environment, narratives are put into circulation through music, and in the process become re-worked and recreated. For instance, the music may literally be reversioned and adapted by playing it, or life stories may be edited to a CD soundtrack, rewriting its meaning. Not only that, film-goers can play this music wherever, whenever and however they choose. Film music, then, has become a more significant factor within and beyond the film. It is louder, more important as a communication vehicle, and increasingly appreciated and sought out by audiences. Miklos Rozsa said of this increased presence of music: "The composer's task is great and his responsibility is enormous. Music in films reaches a wider potential audience than music in any other form. The quality of that music is something with which we should all be concerned" (in Thomas, 1991, p30).

The increased importance of music in the film-making hierarchy means that certain theoretical perspectives on the specially-composed score have to be questioned. Claudia Gorbman's theory of 'unheard melodies' is still maintained by some composers and directors, but increasingly ignored by other directors, music editors and sound mixers, (as in *Milk*). Anahid Kassabian's theory that classical scores condition "assimilating

identifications" also needs to be challenged. Her premise that original scores "draw perceivers into socially and historically unfamiliar positions", encouraging "unlikely identifications" (p2, 2001), is not necessarily the case for contemporary films. If scores are increasingly foregrounded and 'heard', it could be argued that audiences are invited to listen to that music as a separate entity, or to focus more on music as narrative, than on action and dialogue. It is also possible to argue that music is increasingly exhibited in cinema, just as it was in Chion's discussions of Kubrick's *2001* and *A Clockwork Orange*. If that music is then for sale on the internet and in music shops, intentions of manipulating audiences to preferred ideological perspectives or "unlikely identifications" are increasingly weakened. In fact, it could be argued that specially-composed scores are becoming more like pop scores in their potential for opening up meaning, instead of fixing it.

Yet in *The Spectre of Sound* (2005), Donnelly claims that specially-composed music in films and television "might be construed as insidious. It masks the way it works, functioning subliminally", acting as a "subtle medium of manipulation" (p1). He considers that film and television music is "all-pervading and aims to control the audience in its psychological processes, its symbolic undercurrents and through its status as one of the most potent forms of non-verbal communication" (p2). He refers to Tia DeNora's theory of music serving to "organise its users", and to "elicit associated modes of conduct" (p4). He also agrees with Philip Tagg, who asserts that manipulation is far more likely if we are unaware of our competence to respond to music in everyday situations. He supports this argument further by referring to Claudia Gorbman's book, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (1987), and the classical Hollywood composer David Raskin, who claims: "the purpose of film music is not to be noticed for itself. Its greatest usefulness is the way in which it performs its role without an intervening conscious act of perception. It is most telling when the music registers upon us in a quiet way, where we don't know it's actually happening" (p7).

These comments directly reflect the views of most composers and film music theorists in Chapter 1 (apart from Adorno, Eisler, Blitzstein and Copland), and they all make perfect sense. However, if we also consider Donnelly's own observation in an earlier work (2003) that "music's status in film has become elevated . . . into a more conspicuous

position" (p153), a problem is encountered. Most would agree that music manipulates more when it is 'unheard', particularly in classic Hollywood cinema. The music may attempt to persuade us this way or that, but if we are made aware of the music with its elaborated range of objectives, then we are reminded that we are watching a construct, and that we can possibly participate as individuals. In addition, if that music refuses to tonally resolve in any particular direction, are specially-composed scores loosening their grip on audiences?

In Kathryn Kalinak's view, the classical score continues to be a dominant force in mainstream Hollywood films, and this is evident, for example, in *Road to Perdition* (2002) and *Cold Mountain* (2003). She argues that its main objective – to serve the narrative – is still the case today. The musical techniques employed to ensure this, such as dipping the music to privilege the dialogue, "mickey-mousing", composing leitmotifs, and providing continuity, remain. She suggests that the dominance of these conventions transcends "idiom (late romantic, or pop, for example), medium (symphony orchestras or jazz combos), and even personal style (the characteristic sound of a Herrmann cue versus the sound of a Korngold fanfare)" (1992, p203). This may be true of Hollywood films dealing with historical times or themes aimed at family audiences, such as *A Knight's Tale* (2001), or *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003). However, music reflecting and exploring contemporary urban existence and its adult complexities, is not so straightforward. Music expressing ambivalence cannot be expected to conform to rules and regulations.

Also, if specially-composed music is increasingly foregrounded, or brought to our attention, then audiences are invited to participate via embodiment. By the term embodiment, I mean the relationship between mind, emotion and the body. Lisa Blackman defines embodiment in reference to the "'lived body' – the notion that the body and one's biological or even psychological processes are never lived by the individual in a pure and unmediated form" (p210). In her book *Hearing Voices: Embodiment and Experience* (2001), Blackman asks for a "radical rethinking" on the employment of the term biology, suggesting that we consider it as "one of the processes, alongside the historical and social, which together produce the possibility of experience" (p8). She argues that terms such as biology, social and psychology are not constants, that they are always located within moving contexts of individual and discursive practices. In film, Kathryn Kalinak states that

88

"the most obvious way in which music or any type of sound can elicit a direct response is through its dynamics, or level of sound. Volume reaches the nervous system with distinct impact, increasing or decreasing its stimulation in direct proportion to its level" (in Dickinson, 2003, p18). This comment seems simplistic against Blackman's definition of embodiment but from this we can understand the rich impact of music in film. Embodied experiences, as described above, are individual, unique and ever-changing, so embodied musical experiences will generate infinite meanings and effects. Film music communication then can be seen as fluid and open-ended rather than fixed, opening up spaces for audience reflection and personal engagement[10]. So far, we can ascertain that the clear-cut operations of specially-composed scores in classic Hollywood cinema are subtly softening. The colours on the director's musical palette are beginning to run.

The popular compilation score option

When we consider the pop compilation score, a score comprising pre-existing popular music, it could be argued that such a musical practice might bludgeon the subtle dynamics of the musical and visual relationship. Claudia Gorbman (1987) certainly thinks so: "Songs require narrative to cede to spectacle, for it seems that lyrics and action compete for attention" (p20). Gorbman overlooks three points here: the change in directors' views on how music operates in film; the power and potential of the pop score; and the construction of narrative via the pop song. Anahid Kassabian, author of *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (2001) directly opposes Gorbman's argument. She theorises that specially-composed Hollywood film music has an objective to "track paths of identification" (p119), or to condition *assimilating identifications* which persuade us into "a single subject position that does not challenge dominant ideologies" (p138). Pop compilation scores, however, enable *affiliating identifications* which "can accommodate axes of identity and the conditions of subjectivity they create. They can permit resistances and allow multiple and mobile identifications" (p139). Kassabian argues that assimilating identifications "try to narrow the psychic field"

---

[10] Richard Middleton's theory of gesture is also concerned with embodied experiences of music which include "affective and cognitive as well as kinetic aspects" in his article entitled 'Popular Music Analysis and Musicology: Bridging the Gap' in Middleton (ed) *Reading Pop*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p105. Middleton, like Blackman, avoids the more simplistic essentialism v constructionalism debate.

while affiliating identifications "open it wide". These contrasting experiences are "at the heart of the filmgoers' relationship to contemporary film music" (p2). In the light of Kassabian's comments, Gorbman's observation that "lyrics and action compete for attention" indicates that she is missing the point of much pop music in films.

I want to begin with some comment from directors and composers themselves on how and why pop music works so effectively in film. Hollywood director, Martin Scorsese argues: "Popular music has the potential to give movies a forceful, dynamic edge . . . it has the power to bring entire sequences to life" (p1). This declaration, quoted from his preface to *Celluloid Jukebox – Popular Music and the Movies from the 1950s* (1995), signifies an important shift in the philosophy of film music. It reminds us that there are now three main choices for directors: the pop (or classical) compilation score; the specially-composed score, or a mixture of the two, the hybrid score. Scorsese mostly employs a hybrid score, and from these comments, we can see how important the pop cues are to his films.

Director Allison Anders argues that "popular music is the only cultural reference we hold in common any more . . . it's the new myth" (p119). She later refers to the pop score for her film, *Gas Food Lodging* (1992), as exhibiting ideal functions in a film: "It brought out the emotions without knocking people over the head – which I think rock musicians can do so much better" (p126/7). This is interesting for two main reasons. Firstly, Anders does not want music to manipulate audiences, and secondly, her choice of rock instrumentation suggests that this type of music can express things the classical score cannot. Alan Rudolph develops the point. He states: "An audience will trust music before they will trust narrative, before they will trust actors. When they hear music it's something they're comfortable with. I think we are starting to think in soundtracks . . . With movies you are sort of trusting something else, but with music it's yours. It's the people's art and it makes everyone more dynamic" (p119). Rudolph mentions several interesting functions here: to make an audience "comfortable"; to evoke more dynamic interactions between audience and film; to encourage "trust" in the audience and, therefore, belief in the film; to enable the audience to partly create their own film through their existing knowledge of the film music. On the surface, these functions seem quite different from those associated with the classical score. On closer inspection, they are not so far away from Kracauer's theory

that human existence is most readily understood through cinema, and that music is central to enabling the viewer to experience the "photographic life" and the "physical reality" of silent images. Now, Kracauer (1961) was mostly discussing the specially-composed score, music unheard before a film's release. When we consider Alan Rudolph's comments on the pre-composed pop score, a score which is already a "reality", an "experience" in our lives, then we could argue that this form of spectatorship provides an even sharper understanding of human existence.

Another director who favours the popular score is Bob Last, as it has the potential to express a "universal language" and add textures to a film. He also talks of popular music as being "a condensed form" because "you can very effectively bring a lot into something". By this, I think he means that multiple layers of meaning are able to be communicated instantly. Contemporary directors naturally employ a compilation score, he says, because "they have been surrounded by popular music from their youth, and it is very resonant for them" (p120). Another reason is because "pop genres are so tightly defined that where you do break them, you can be completely wild and uncontrolled in a way that classical composition will never allow". Conveying total abandonment is perhaps a uniquely-held ability of the pop score, but if we consider the increasing hybridity of music genres heard within increasingly hybrid genre films, this might not always be the case.

Of course, not all composers/musicians approve of the pop score, Ry Cooder (guitarist and independent film director) for one. He argues: "When they start putting these pop songs into films . . . everything goes crash unless the film is about pop song. I've worked on some films that have pop songs and they weren't good, they hurt the film even though they were thematic . . . The trouble with rock and roll is it's so much about that phoney heroism. I really mistrust that" (p121). Curiously, this statement opposes the views of all other commentators so far in this section. Ry Cooder also offers some notable points on the difficulties faced by composers who are "not orientated visually too much. Because you're working with your own emotions and your own focus . . . so to look into another person's image bank is not the typical day in the life of a typical musician in a creative sense" (p129). These comments prompt the rather subtle music function of conveying the mixture of composer and director's views on any given situation or character. They also

expose the high degrees of collaboration, mediation and compromise involved in the film making process, sometimes resulting in mixed feelings about the final outcome.

However, "The worst sin you can do with music and movies is where the music says exactly what is happening on the screen" warns composer Amos Poe (p136). This comment on "mickey-mousing" certainly reflects views held by classically-trained composers and musicologists discussed in the first chapter. Related to this, Allison Anders claims: "Film has become so coded now that you don't need as much for the emotions to come through" and suggests that "there is little place any more for the classic film scores" (p137). Can this really be true when contemporary directors as diverse as Spike Lee, Baz Luhrmann, Kevin Costner, Michael Mann, Martin Scorsese, Tim Burton to name but a few, continue to employ composers for their films?

The film critic and journalist Mark Kermode advances several operations of the pop score in his article 'Twisting the Knife'. He states: "More than any other art form, pop music is a disposable, transient product which reflects, mimics and occasionally shapes the zeitgeist. As such, pop music can serve as a film's memory, instantaneously linking it with its audience, tapping into a nostalgic past, or fixing the film firmly in the present" (p9). Within this quote, several subtle functions are evident. Firstly, Kermode's use of the verb "to reflect" could mean that the popular score is capable of mirroring and/or contemplating the zeitgeist. The word "mimic" also has two meanings in this context: to mock a given moment in time, or to simulate a specific period. Kermode's assumption that popular music can occasionally fashion the zeitgeist is particularly notable, even questionable, but then music in films such as *The Blackboard Jungle* (1955), *American Graffiti* (1973), *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) and *Boogie Nights* (1997), quickly springs to mind. Kermode's final sentence in this quote echoes some of Bob Last's comments reviewed earlier: the "condensed form" of pop music enables fast and direct communication with an audience. In an instant, historical or current time can be conveyed with all associated images and emotions. Indeed, the title of Kermode's piece was inspired by a comment made by film producer Steve Woolley: "Pop music . . . is like a knife. You twist it and nostalgia comes pouring out". Woolley combines practicalities with musical function in another theory: "Pop music is the cheapest form of period scenery, or 'wallpaper', available to a film-maker: if you can't afford the sets, slap on a distinctive period tune and the audience will

imagine the rest" (in Kermode, 1995, p12). This last comment demonstrates how film makers expect audiences to participate in contemporary film, by adding their own imaginative thoughts. While Kermode considers pop music to be disposable, he also recognises its power in film to evoke memory. This would suggest that pop music has a lasting impact on an individual.

While agreeing with comments on the potency of popular music in film, Jeff Smith, in *Marketing Popular Music* (1998) sees its strengths and weaknesses: "The compilation score sacrificed a formal elasticity when underscoring individual scenes, but it compensated for this loss through a shrewd use of musical association and allusion to reinforce aspects of setting, characterisation, and theme" (p231). Smith is saying, I think, that the classical specially-composed score is still best for conveying fine detail for very specific moments. However, most writers on the classical score, such as Gorbman, would argue that the very flexibility of such music enables it to reinforce anything at all. Indeed, there could be a counter-argument for every single function of the pop score mentioned so far.

Popular music is often added to convey movement on screen. However, KJ Donnelly (2001) observes that pop music "rarely matches the dynamics on the screen directly . . . due to its own strong rhythmic and temporal schemes, which means that it is often foregrounded when used as non-diegetic music in a sequence"(p2). When used in this way, pop music "regularly energises the filmic narration . . . it provides kinetic forward movement for the image track, and in the absence of anchoring diegetic sound converts the image track to an energetic play of shape, texture and movement" (p2). This is true, but in recent times images are often edited to a pop track, and this is an important development in contemporary film music. As I have mentioned before, MTV is having an indelible effect on popular culture, particularly film and television. Kay Dickinson's article, 'Pop, Speed, Teenagers and the "MTV Aesthetic"' (2003) explores how MTV attributes are present in films which demonstrate "submission of editing to the customary tempi of popular music, a presentation of shots which defies the standard broadcast rhythm of around three seconds minimum each" (p143). Certainly Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* could be perceived as one long pop video – the music drives the editing and the story. In fact, the music *is* the story, and there is much fast-paced editing in time to the musical beat. Kay Dickinson suggests

that perhaps "narrative or even traditional visual tropes may not feature as highly on film's agenda as they used to" (p146). While conventional interpretations and combinations of narrative and visuals are changing and dissipating, new ideas are taking their place. In *Moulin Rouge*, this is certainly the case, where music is a dominant force.

It is my argument that music in film is the new narrative, which is usurping action, dialogue and visuals from their long-established hegemony. In this governing role, music suppresses the status of other film elements such as editing, dialogue and visuals, causing them to take on the former subservient role of music so common in classical Hollywood film. Now elements such as editing, dialogue and visual elements can be seen to reinforce, underline or add to the messages communicated by the music, and as these messages are expressed in musical form, they are consequently more wide-ranging, multi-layered and open-ended. Therefore, not only is there a breakdown occurring between pre-existing pop or classical scores and specially composed scores, there is also an erosion of what we have come to understand as film narrative. Images are also riddled with intertextuality and infinite connotations, which all provoke a knowing and active audience, who revel in this new world of polysemic visual symbolism. Philip Brophy's analysis of the pop compilation score in Paul Thomas Anderson's *Boogie Nights* (1997) supports my argument. He believes the pop score has objectives to "culturally locate a story", to convey ambivalence (particularly when song placement is in mismatched settings), to "conduct the characters' emotional energies", to define a character more deeply. Brophy states: "More than a film that 'uses' song, it is a film that knows song . . . it reaches a height of 'vertical narration', where everything is told – as songs do – 'all at once'. Bypassing literary models, this film is a timbrel text which must be listened to in order for it to be read" (p50).

So, what are the main differences in the ways specially-composed classical and pre-existing pop scores work? Rick Altman attempts to address this question in his article, 'Cinema and Popular Song' (2001). He presents an analysis of the different characteristics of 'classical' music and popular song, and examines their effects on an audience. Altman inserts quotes around the term 'classical' to indicate the style of music commonly found in "through-composed sound cinema" and late silent film (p23). He argues that in order to provide a comparison between classical music and popular song, we should "recognise the fundamental muteness, indeterminancy, inconspicuousness, and expansibility of 'classical'

94

music, along with the effects that these characteristics have on listeners" (p23). Altman defines each of these qualities, and I give a brief summary here: *muteness* (classical music's ability "to achieve audiovisual matching by generalised parallelism between the emotive connotations of particular musical textures and the content of specific image sequences, rather than through verbal content"; *indeterminacy* (classical music's facility for linking images to situations without resorting to words); *inconspicuousness* (similar to Gorbman's notion of "unheard melodies" which are processed differently to songs); and *expansibility* (classical music's endless capabilities for variation, modulation, development, diminution, etc) (p23).

In contrast, popular music enables: *linguistic independence* (in Altman's view titles and lyrics "so dominate public evaluation of a popular song's emotive or narrative content that a song rarely signifies separately from its linguistic content"); *predictability* ("popular songs privilege repetition and regularity"); *singability* (they are commonly written in an accessible range); *rememberability* (songs are "composed of short, standardised, repeated components"); *active physical involvement* (the audience can sing, toe-tap, hum or whistle along to songs which are "predictable, singable, rememberable, apparently reducible to melody and lyrics, and often based on familiar dance rhythms"), (p25). The utter flexibility of classical music, foregrounded in the works of Gorbman, Kalinak and Brown earlier, is evident in Rick Altman's model, so he is not saying anything new. For popular music, one could argue that Altman simply expresses a common, rather fixed perspective. In fact, his comments are reminiscent of Adorno's article 'On Popular Music' from 1941. Adorno cites "standardisation" and "non-standardisation" as the key differences between popular and classical music. "In popular music," he says, "position is absolute. Every detail is substitutable; it functions only as a cog in a machine" (p303). As we have seen, and as we shall discover in the next three chapters, popular scores are able to operate in complicated ways; and certainly, songs can signify separately from lyrical content, as they do in the films of Tarantino. However, Altman's emphasis on audio-spectator embodiment is important, although it slightly overturns his theory. The word embodiment, as I have discussed, suggests the individual synthesis of physical, intellectual and emotional responses to texts, which arguably means that each audience member will respond

differently to songs in films. In these cases, popular scores have the potential to be more flexible and subtle than Altman acknowledges.

The pop score can be surprisingly informative in film. Early in this chapter I noted Ken Garner's (2001) comments on the way Tarantino's characters control the soundtrack with their choice of music. This technique aids character construction, and demonstrates how detailed and precise a well-chosen pop track can be. Ian Garwood is interested in the employment of the classic pop song in contemporary romantic comedies in his piece, 'Must You Remember This? Orchestrating the "standard" pop song in *Sleepless in Seattle*' (2003). He demonstrates how such a song commonly operates to define and help us to understand characters. For example, more unusually, Garwood notices how a respected song from the popular music canon can also act as a guide, "suggesting what the viewer should be feeling in relation to a particular moment" (p109) but also "as a type of counsel for the characters whose romantic adventures it soundtracks" (p110). When the music functions in this way, Garwood argues that a degree of distance is created, enabling the music to have another function, as voice-over. Three subtle changes in the development of film music are discernible here. Firstly, this song is operating like a specially-composed cue in "suggesting" a particular ideological position to the audience. Secondly, if the song is counselling the characters, then it must also bring attention to itself and the film as human creation. Thirdly, the song as voice-over suggests a new form of storytelling – through song. This has always been the case in musicals, but the technique is increasingly the case in films, as mentioned above, and now television programmes such as the soap opera, *Hollyoaks* (Channel 4), and recent dramas such as *Blackpool* (BBC, 2004), *Red Riding* (Channel 4, 2009), *Casualty* (BBC1), *Holby City* (BBC), etc. Boundary break-down is taking place on several levels: traditional understandings of narrative and the role of music in films are being eroded, as they are in a range of television and radio genres.

Garwood points to the general perception "that older songs engage more transparently and expressively with the idea of romance than more modern, and cynical cultural forms", which he says "goes some way to explaining the recurring association of standard songs with romantic scenarios in contemporary cinema" (p109). However, it is also interesting that the director, Nora Ephron, selected new versions of most of the classic songs in the film. Garwood says that "The musical numbers in *Sleepless in Seattle* are

generally marked by an effort to renew them, to allay their canonical status with a freshness of arrangement that gives them a distinctive narrative resonance" (p112). Here we have another blurring of boundaries: a pre-existing melody with particular "affiliating identifications" for individuals, mixed in with a fresh arrangement which may make the sound more relevant to modern morality and mise-en-scene, yet encourages "assimilating identifications". We can see here that Kassabian's theory is not accounting for these new developments. I would also argue that it is in these 'not quite' hazy spaces of musical technique where an underlying theme of ambivalence is communicated and experienced.

Another writer concerned with the classic romantic ballad song is Morris Holbrook. In his article, 'The Ambi-Diegesis of *My Funny Valentine*'(2005), he discusses functions of this iconic song in two films: *The Fabulous Baker Boys* (1989) and *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999). However, in Holbrook's analysis, it is the director's creative decision to employ the song ambi-diegetically, which is of most importance. The term 'ambi-diegetic' is used by Holbrook to describe music which blurs the normally clear-cut boundaries between diegetic and non-diegetic scores. More specifically, Holbrook's term refers to "a cinematic situation in which a character actually performs a tune or song on camera (within the image) in a way that adds depth to that character by forming persona-related associations, that elaborates on thematic aspects of the plot, or that advances relevant symbolic identifications so as to enrich the meaning of the scene . . ." (p48). Holbrook examines how *My Funny Valentine* firstly develops the character of Susie Diamond, played by Michelle Pfeiffer, as a "sexy saloon singer" in *The Fabulous Baker Boys*; and secondly, the character of Tom Ripley, played by Matt Damon, as a "self-absorbed, sociopathic, sexually ambivalent wastrel" in *The Talented Mr Ripley* (p49). In addition, Holbrook emphasises the richness and complexity of the song's life and times: the tragic life of its composer, Larry Hart, and the six hundred versions of the song, performed by artists as varied as Ella Fitzgerald and Miranda Sex Garden. All of these elements and associations present tough challenges to any performer, but intensely personal resonating signals to the listener. Multiple possibilities of "affiliating identifications" are offered. On the other hand, we can discern this song operating like a specially-composed cue: it is aiding the narrative and persuading us to think and feel in a certain direction.

The special vocal timbre of a particular singer can offer an audience utter *signifiance* in film. In 'Always Blue: Chet Baker's Voice' (2005), John Roberts examines the grain of the famous jazz musician's singing voice. He analyses Baker's vocal performance of the song *Always Blue* in the documentary *Let's Get Lost* and concludes that this musical moment offers the audience a pure pleasure zone. In addition to this, the grain of Baker's voice gives expression to new masculinities, particularly those represented in the cinema by Marlon Brando and James Dean, during Baker's popularity in the 1950s and 1960s. John Roberts argues that "while Baker was always dismissive of the homoerotic reception of his music – violently sometimes", his music nevertheless created a subjective space which "evoked other worlds, other feelings, other desires, than those on offer in the hyper-conformist US of the 1950s" (p123). This special function, of opening up spaces for male reflection, is particularly interesting when they revolve around the grain of the voice, rather than the combination of melody and lyrics. Roberts suggests that the film uses the "forlornness and sweetness" of Baker's voice to "structure our emotional response to his life and music . . . Baker the trumpeter and virtuoso musician is a secondary presence here" (p125). The grain of the voice is unusually foregrounded in this documentary. Normally, music plays a low-ranking fiddle to voice-over and narrative structure. Bruce Weber, however, chooses to shoot Baker in "close-up, mouth pressed to the microphone, for the duration of the song". The video for Sinead O'Connor's song *Nothing Compares 2 U* springs to mind. Roberts theorises that "Almost Blue grounds the emotional truth of the film, just as the form of the song carries the biographical content of the narrative" (p125). Here again, we can see a blurring of boundaries. While on the one hand Chet Baker's grain offers us Barthes' notion of *signifiance*, perhaps even *jouissance* as discussed in *Image Music Text* (1977), but on the other, the melody and lyrics operate as narrative, providing us with detail within a structure. This unclear scoring practice, in my view, opens up a further space to express ambivalence, and usurp traditional film narrative forms.

Taking a core theory on the classical film score to task is Miguel Mera in his article 'Reap Just What You Sow: Trainspotting's Perfect Day' (2005). Central character Mark Renton, is a heroin addict and Lou Reed fan. In playing *Perfect Day* on the film's non-diegetic soundtrack as Renton endures a heroin overdose, director Danny Boyle also evokes associations with Lou Reed in the minds of the audience. Mera argues: "By

98

bringing the character of Lou Reed into the foreground narrative, the filmmakers deliberately eschew one of the fundamental concepts of film scholarship, namely the principle of musical 'inaudibility'" (p86). In *Trainspotting* (1996), Mera theorises that *Perfect Day* provides the form of the heroin overdose sequence, and it closely mirrors narrative content. In addition, the song conveys the film's ambivalent ideology on drug taking, particularly through its "unconventional harmonic structure" of two alternating chords: "The simple alternation of two chords . . . allows Reed to create a deliberately ambiguous harmonic situation from the very outset of the song" (p94). The musical detail Mera provides here enables us to see that the functions of the pop score can have some of the same objectives as the classical score. It is also interesting to note that the theme of ambivalence emerges again, and this is, of course, central to my three chosen films. Here, in *Trainspotting*, the well-known structure, melody, vocal grain, arrangement and associations of *Perfect Day* help to define narrative, form, character psyche and ideological detail, even if that ideology is one of ambivalence. I would add that, in my opinion, *Perfect Day* is not particularly foregrounded in *Trainspotting*, so the music is able to operate more like a classical underscore.

A strong sense of irony is, nevertheless, communicated through the song *Perfect Day*, and Jeff Smith (a musicologist working within film studies) claims that this has become an "ever more important part of cinematic signification" (p408). Indeed, he argues: "The use of songs as ironic commentary may be viewed as a particular configuration of postmodern culture, where a very self-conscious mode of textual address is situated within a larger network of intertextual references" (p407). Another form of humour Smith refers to in this article is the musical pun. He theorises that "the relationship between musical puns and comedy can be assessed according to three criteria, namely the musical pun's perceptual saliency, its narrative function, and its bisociative qualities" (p414). In Smith's view, "musical puns, like gags and verbal jokes, can function as 'throwaways' in the sense that they engage a brief affective response but may be forgotten as soon as they are heard" (p415). No other writer has mentioned this musical function of a song in the whole array of film music literature. Musical puns, he says "more commonly juxtapose two different ways of interpreting the song's title: that of the original scenario described or implied in the lyrics of the songs and the more immediate situation represented in the cinematic text"

(p417). Smith proposes that the incongruity required for the success of a musical pun is actually made possible by a "semiotic ambiguity evident in the phrasing of a song title or lyric." The ambiguity, Smith says, commonly falls into four categories: "pronomial ambiguity, syntactic ambiguity, semantic ambiguity, or the juxtaposition of the literal and figurative" (p419). Jeff Smith both identifies a previously unnoticed music function in film, informs us of its potential modes of address, and shows us how complex a pop score can be – perhaps even more so than a specially-composed score.

The hybrid score option

The hybrid score, comprising a mix of specially-composed and pre-existing music is currently a common choice for directors. Indeed, most films mentioned in this chapter have this type of score. So far, I have offered a simple definition of what is meant by a hybrid score, but as we move into very contemporary film, the word hybrid takes on a multi-layered meaning. In most Hollywood films with hybrid scores, there is a specially-composed classical score, drawing on romantic orchestration; together with pre-existing popular music. However, other types of hybrid score may have specially-composed music drawing on electric instrumentation or world music, and a mixture of pre-existing popular music from particular places across the globe. Hybrid scores, therefore, often erode the differences between pop and classical, high and low culture, traditional and contemporary, past and present. Directors such as Scorsese or Boyle circumvent established barriers by kicking over, slipping under and breaking through, as Strinati says, any "pretensions and distinctiveness of art" (2000, p225).

The hybrid score, and its links with 1980s 'synergy' are the focus of KJ Donnelly's article 'The Classical film score forever? Batman, Batman Returns and Post-classical Film Music' (2003). Donnelly asserts: "The first two Batman films demonstrate two strata of contemporary Hollywood's musical strategies. *Batman* exhibits a cohabitation of orchestral score and tied-in pop songs, while *Batman Returns* uses only one tied-in song and a large-scale score inspired more directly by the music of classical cinema. They both use classically-inspired forms recast by more recent procedures" (p153). Donnelly describes

100

how music drives the visual and narrative logic in *Batman* (1989), rather as in a musical. It challenges the backseat nature of the classical film score. Donnelly states: "It is not unreasonable to suggest that the dual function of music – as both film element and object in its own right – has had an effect upon the character of music itself. Music's status in films has become elevated and this has removed the orchestral music from the alleged position of 'unobtrusiveness' which it occupied in classical cinema and into a more conspicuous position" (p153). Donnelly also claims that the scores of both films[11] assume culturally sophisticated audiences who can interpret their subtleties. He touches on the important functions of the soundtrack CD which provide "a space for the plenitude of music; what may have been a few seconds and hardly noticed in the film can be enjoyed as an aesthetic object in its own right, its own logic undiluted by the exigencies of the film" (p145). Donnelly makes many significant observations about the changes in both pop and classical scores. First and foremost, today's highly media-literate audiences are wise to the language of film music. They know when scores are traditional, modern, foregrounded, or referencing MTV with a nod and a wink by dictating the pace and structure of a film. Not only that, the audience are promised further musical pleasures through the soundtrack CD, sheet music, DVD, or download which they can savour at any time and in any order they choose.

The feigned-friendliness of a knowing nod and a wink to the audience is what concerns Dave Beech. He pleads for a warmer welcome from cinema in his article 'Garibaldi Fought Here: I'm Your Man/Dear Diary'. Referring to Derrida's theory of hostility within hospitality, Beech argues that most Hollywood films smile at their audiences, but with secret loathing. Beech, a curator and contemporary art commentator, cites Hank Williams' radio show as the welcoming ideal. Introduced by a continuity announcer with the same cosy words 'Howdy neighbours', Williams always showed respect for his audience by only playing music they wanted to hear. To the indignation of his band members, he would instruct them to play the music 'vanilla', without ornamentation or showing off. Beech says: "Every line and every chord said 'howdy', as they welcomed the audience on its own terms and in its own voice" (p16). Leonard Cohen's song, *I'm Your Man*, has this welcoming function in the film *Dear Diary* (1993).

---

[11] *Batman Returns* was exhibited in 1992.

Beech theorises that it is important to pay attention to "how culture greets us, rather than reducing cultural engagement to the binary logic of high and low, or the illogic of pluralism, postmodernist or otherwise" (p17).

These comments are at the heart of this thesis. I am arguing that we need to break away from cultural barriers, free ourselves from partisan, fixed views on musical quality and any connections to high or low culture, and associated constructed hierarchical values. With this in mind, we must consider all types of score with equal respect if we are to have any understanding of contemporary film music. I will be wholeheartedly adopting W Brooks' (1982) concept of "tasteless" listening. He states: "To espouse tastelessness is to assert, essentially, that all music is equally valuable . . . It follows that all music can be approached . . . with interest and without prejudice. And 'all music' must mean, in fact, exactly what it says: all music, from all cultures, at all times" (p13). I will be applying this belief-system to film music, which has held the Cinderella position in film studies for far too long. Brooks argues: "Those of us with extensive musical training have a chance to probe more deeply", providing we do not open the "cumbersome old sea chest filled with weights, measures and all the other appurtenances of *judgement*" (p10). With the film musicology method I outlined in the first chapter, which is no less detailed than traditional musicology and set strictly within the film context, I will probe the contemporary film score and contribute to film studies by examining it with more musical precision. I will be demonstrating how hybrid and eclectic film music has become in the last decade, and how ambitious and creative directors are able to be with an inexhaustible musical palette. Modern film music may be specially-composed, pre-existing, a mixture of the two, or, in the case of two of my subject films, not quite one, and not quite the other. The close study of the film score is more important now than ever before. This is because music has become more prominent in film, and in some films it is primary, particularly when it dictates narrative, style and editing, or indeed functions as the narrative itself. Today, music is working differently in film and we need to know how and why.

Views expressed in the first chapter focused on the specially-composed classical score, which drew upon the language of the large romantic symphony orchestra. A wide

array of viewpoints on the functions of such scores, up until the 1950s, was taken from composers, music editors, film studies academics and musicologists. Each of these camps expressed a variety of opinions, but we were able to discern the gradual growth of musical practices that became established in the great Hollywood heyday. These practices tended to come into being through trial and error, and composers, music editors, and directors were keen to alert us to the quixotic elements of production conditions.

My question throughout the first chapter was a musicological one: what are the functions of music in film? In other words, how does music work in film? The response to this question could be mostly accommodated within Claudia Gorbman's model – 'Classical Film Music: Principles of Composition, Mixing and Editing' in her book, *Unheard Melodies*. The main function of music in classic Hollywood cinema was to privilege the narrative, by illustrating and interpreting screen action, by signifying emotion, establishing setting and characters, providing continuity between scenes, and creating unity, via musical repetition, carefully-employed instrumentation and the leitmotif. The music always manipulated the viewer to a preferred ideological perspective. That is, until the 1950s and the advent of rock 'n' roll.

The pop compilation score, comprising pre-existing popular music, appealed to a new generation, and this democratisation of music was to take hold in and out of the cinema. Classical music became popular through the multiple communication channels of radio, television, cinema, and now the music video and internet. In Chapter 2, there was some criticism from composers and film studies academics, who privilege the specially-composed classical score over the pop score. These writers suggest that pre-existing popular music cannot express fine details, that songs are clumsy instruments which state the obvious, and encourage us to listen to the music at the expense of screen action and narrative. Several directors argued for the opposite case, implying that pre-existing music can communicate very precisely, particularly time periods, characterisation and theme, in a language accessible to all. In the literature examined in Chapter 2, we discovered that sometimes a pop score can function similarly to a classical score, and achieve similar objectives. However, the pop score certainly encourages a more interactive audience, particularly when it is 'heard' and 'affiliating identifications' are invited. Therefore, the core aim of the specially-composed score, of always privileging the narrative and

103

subsequently manipulating the audience to preferred ideological perspectives, is weakened. Indeed, this may no longer be the question to be asked of film music today. Films are greeting their audiences more kindly, saying 'howdy', and this is achieved through music.

However, many contemporary films are far from cosy viewing, and this unease is also communicated through music. When composers and directors subvert conventional film techniques by giving the score increased status, more complicated, open-ended and challenging stories can be told, which more directly express the complexity of the contemporary psyche. However, there is as McCauley says in *Heat*, "a flip side to that coin": scores resisting audience manipulation, refusing, for example, to acknowledge moral high grounds, leave us insecure, confused, and uncomfortable. Subversive and ambiguous scoring techniques expose and reinforce the deep-rooted ambivalence of survival, and allow us to experience character and personal interiority. It is also such scores which operate as narrative, redefining story-telling in film.

Heat

Music of masculinity and morality

This epic film, exploring masculinity and morality in contemporary times, offers no answers to the big questions about life, no judgements on right and wrong. Instead, director Michael Mann aims to show us the principles of cause and effect, how decisions, particularly those made under pressure, bring us to where and who we are. He examines the moral maze of survival in the city, including the varied ways in which men maintain ideals of personal space, power and professionalism, control and sanity. The music contributes significantly to the communication of such complexities and comprises a specially-composed score by Elliot Goldenthal in addition to pre-existing music by artists such as Moby, Einsturzende Neubauten, Brian Eno and Lisa Gerard. This hybrid score, of original and pre-existing music, is rarely foregrounded, and so is mostly 'unheard'. The music is eclectic: urban, industrial, techno, ambient, classical Hollywood, Gothic. It is always dark – often unsettling – and it serves to heighten the ambivalence of human acts and their consequences. This ambivalence is most starkly conveyed through Goldenthal's specially-composed score. In employing certain classical scoring techniques and resisting others, he creates a score which is impressionistic, intentionally inexact, never wholly at one with the screen action. Indeed, this music is characterised by its evasiveness, and it operates to explore a range of perspectives, refusing to rest upon any one. The result is a more open-ended score, which reflects the co-existence of opposing emotions in characters as they continue to choose actions which result in mixed feelings and unease.

In this chapter, I will examine five of Goldenthal's original cues in the order in which they are heard in the film. They are entitled *Heat, Untitled, Of Helplessness, Coffee Shop*, and *Of Separation*. The cues are linked together through string instrumentation, uncertain tonality, impressionistic scoring and the complicated psychological states they express. I choose these specially-composed cues to uncover some subtle changes in the

development of the classical score, and to address my central question: How does the music of contemporary Hollywood films express the complexities of urban existence? In this particular case, and throughout this chapter, I am asking: How does a specially-composed classical score communicate such complexity? To explore this question, I return to Claudia Gorbman's model of 'Classical Film Music: Principles of Composition, Mixing and Editing', and Aaron Copland's five-part model set out in *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*[1], to consider which classical scoring techniques Goldenthal embraces, which he rejects, which he partly employs, and for what reasons.

In *Heat*, Goldenthal mostly adheres to one of the most important classical scoring objectives of all: *inaudibility*. An 'unheard' score enables the composer and director to persuade an audience to a particular ideological perspective about the narrative, whether that be character action or psychological condition, without their knowing. In other words, in classical cinema, music would be subservient to story in a manipulative, unconscious manner. In some moments in *Heat*, the music is mixed so low that it is barely perceptible. On the other hand, at one brief but pivotal moment, the specially-composed score dominates other screen elements. In the film musical analysis of *Heat*, therefore, we shall discover how and why Goldenthal employs *and* subverts classical scoring techniques, and in doing so, establish the ingredients which express complicated contemporary existence. I will be demonstrating that it is the more ambiguous techniques of film music composing which convey this most accurately. I will also be arguing that by adhering to the rule of inaudibility, Goldenthal is able to subvert classical film music techniques more freely, and that it is in these 'quiet' subversive spaces that character ambivalence is conveyed.

Before analysing the cues, I will place *Heat* in the context of Michael Mann's film-making career, identifying themes, influences and stylistic features which culminate in this film. In tracing Mann's substantial oeuvre, an increasing interest in music is revealed through his employment of ground-breaking scores. I will then provide a brief background to the music for *Heat*. For the analysis of each cue, I will firstly describe how it is heard in its film context. This means that, initially, there will be equal interpretation of all film elements as they work together to convey meaning. Secondly, I will provide an extended

---

[1] The article 'Tip to the Moviegoers: Take Off Those Ear-Muffs', published in the *New York Sunday Times* on 6th November, 1949, discussed previously in chapter 1 of this thesis.

discussion of each cue in relation to established classical scoring techniques as argued by Gorbman and Copland. Finally, at the end of the chapter, I offer a summary of the main points.

Michael Mann, the film's director, producer and scriptwriter, has always shown interest in men under pressure in the city and the fine lines between those on either side of the law, and *Heat* represents a postmodern amalgam of former creative projects. After graduating in English from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and considering an academic career, Mann studied at the London International Film School in the mid 1960s. He spent seven years in London, studying film-making and working on a series of commercials and TV projects. His British contemporaries were Alan Parker, Ridley Scott and Adrian Lyne. In 1968, Mann made a documentary entitled *Insurrection*, about the Paris student riots, which aired on NBC. These events were later made into the short film, *Juanpuri*, which won the Jury Prize at Cannes in 1970. Returning to the USA in 1971, he embarked on a television career, writing episodes for *Starsky and Hutch*, *Vega$* and *Police Story*. These experiences, and particularly working with cop-turned-novelist Joseph Wambaugh on *Police Story*, taught Mann the value of using detailed research to achieve verisimilitude in film. Lengthy, meticulous research is now a trademark of Mann's film-making technique. We might also argue that, during this period, Mann was developing the craft of writing about masculine experience in the city. Meanwhile, during the late 1970s, Mann also took on small acting roles, in *Smokey and the Bandit* (1977), *House Calls* (1978), *Every Which Way But Loose* (1978) and *The China Syndrome* (1979).

The *Jericho Mile* (1979), Mann's first film for TV, was shot on film to enable additional cinema release in Europe. It tells the story of Rain Murphy, an obsessive, talented runner, serving a life sentence for killing his father. The film was shot inside Folsom Prison, and several of the actors were actually inmates. Again, close attention to the details and realities of prison life, and the theme of men under stress, are manifest as particular concerns of Mann, and this film was nominated for an Emmy Award as best drama of the year. As it happened, Michael Mann and Patrick Nolan received the Emmy for best dramatic screenplay (in Anna Dzenis, 2002, Michael Sragow, 2000).

Mann's first cinema feature was *Thief* (1981), starring James Caan as 'Frank', a professional safe-cracker. This character's life goals are to give up crime, marry girlfriend Jessie, and start a family, but big-time 'scores' (robberies) are needed for Frank's dreams to materialise. Unfortunately, the best-paid work available comes from the wily but ruthless gangster Leo (Robert Prosky), who expects Frank's loyalty and compliance for life. JD Lafrance (2004) argues that this movie "lays out a thematic blueprint" for Mann's later work (p2). Lafrance's robust theory has five dominant strands. Firstly, there is a respect for professionalism on both sides of the law. Secondly, the central character has clear goals but does not attain them, even when they are noble. Thirdly, the protagonists operate best when working, and worst when in relationships. Fourthly, the male leads tend to be loners who are driven; and lastly, relationships often hinder the key male players, or cause their downfall. This theory can be successfully applied to *Thief* (1981), *Manhunter* (1986), *Heat* (1995), *The Insider* (1999), *Collateral* (2004), and to a certain extent, Mann's more recent films *Ali* (2001), *Miami Vice* (2006) and *Public Enemies* (2009).

Thief is also significant in Mann's oeuvre as it is strongly stylised, both visually and sonically. Wet, mean streets in night-time Chicago, and reflective extended takes of men staring out into the city, are shot against the mostly foregrounded techno sounds of Tangerine Dream. Mann has become known for his eclectic, often electronic scores, and he boldly employs Tangerine Dream's music to reinforce the mental and physical difficulties men experience in order to survive in the dark recesses of the city. This is significant. Here is an early, self-conscious, modern 'heard' score which communicates unease on equal terms with visuals and dialogue. Michael Mann challenges accepted scoring practices in this film, and employs music as a conspicuous creative ingredient. The score also reinforces Mann's interest in complicated character construction, which is notably influenced by film noir, such as Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), dealing with people of the night, their questionable ethics and their professionalism. The music is often minimalist, with long-held single notes to convey unease, or reiterated short phrases to create tension. In contrast, psychedelic guitar playing, feeling improvisatory but tormented, emphasises character anguish and joy in equal measures. This duality of emotion, conveyed through the music, is another example of the subtle changes that the contemporary score has undergone. Here, its strength is to convey both the turmoil and excitement of living on

108

the edge. Viewers are invited to accept new social mores as they empathise with professional thief, Frank, who has more integrity than the police who chase him and the mafia who seek to control him. Michael Mann's admiration for professionalism on both sides of the law, his interest in the difficult decisions men have to make in order to survive, the moral questioning of what it means to be 'good', and masculinity in the contemporary world are scrutinised in *Thief* and in later films, but examined in most detail in *Heat*[2].

In 1984, Mann was appointed executive producer on *Miami Vice*. This pacy, urban TV series with film noir themes, featuring two cops named Sonny Crockett and Rico Tubbs, provided Michael Mann with a springboard to international success. Although Anthony Yerkovich was credited as the creator of the series, Michael Mann exerted significant influence over style and content. His aesthetic, cinematic approach to television, experimental images and strong contemporary pop compilation score resulted in a zesty series. Colour and fashion were important aspects, and Gianni Versace was employed as a consultant to the show[3]. Fashion, flash cars, a contemporary pop music soundtrack, the cosmopolitan ambiance of sub-tropical Miami, and two cool undercover police detectives provided the glamour, while neo-noir themes of corruption, cynicism, the abuse of power, and an emphasis on "whack-a-mole" drug prohibition provided the grit. This heady mix refreshed the cop show, and directly appealed to audiences with its sharp awareness of new-wave 1980s culture.

The music and an embryonic MTV aesthetic were central to the success of the show. Jan Hammer's distinctive, synthesised, specially-composed music contrasted with the compilation score of 1980s artists such as Phil Collins, Tina Turner, Dire Straits, Peter Gabriel, U2, ZZ Top and Foreigner. Some artists even guest-starred in the series, for example Willie Nelson (who also had a small part in *Thief*), Phil Collins and Frank Zappa. It was Jan Hammer's music, however, which gave the show its audio identity. Michael Mann allowed the composer considerable artistic freedom and the result was an iconic score[4]. While the show was on air, record companies jostled to secure spots for their up-

---

[2] Films by Neil Labute, such as *In the Company of Men* and *Possession*, also deal with such themes.
[3] Crockett, played by Don Johnson, and Tubbs, played by Philip Michael Thomas, were dressed in pastel colours. In contrast, their boss, Lieutenant Lou Rodriguez, always wore black suits with a white shirt to reinforce the melancholy nature of his character and his black-and-white perspective on life.
[4] In 1985, the show's title theme reached the top of the US Billboard charts, and by 1987, *Crockett's Theme* had become a number-one hit in several European countries. Hammer released albums of original music

and-coming artists. *Miami Vice* was an early TV example of the kind of 1980s commercial synergy which was to become common in the cinema. In addition to *Miami Vice*, Mann produced *Crime Story*, another television series, set in 1960s Chicago and Las Vegas. This series again focused on both sides of the law through the characters of Detective Mike Torello and mob boss Ray Luc. Del Shannon's hit song *Runaway*; 1960s fashions, cars and architecture; and the inclusion of Miles Davis playing in a club, presented an intensely accurate, stylish and culturally significant moment in time. The series was a critical success, although it never achieved the popularity of *Miami Vice* (in Anna Dzenis, 2002, Michael Sragow, 2000). However, the innovative employment of music in these shows demonstrates that music has a crucial role in conveying urban experience for Mann. Indeed, Yvonne Tasker (2002) argues that the "eclectic" scores in Mann's films "provide an aural correlate to the unrelenting claustrophobia that is Mann's view of postmodernity" (p256). In *Miami Vice* and *Crime Story*, I would suggest that the score is 'heard' for both commercial and dramatic reasons.

Manhunter was released in 1986, and marked the first appearance of Hannibal Lecter in the cinema. Again, both sides of the law are examined, but this time their proximity, parallels and similarities are foregrounded. The film examines the psyches of three characters in the film: police profiler Will Graham, played by William Petersen, whose methods involve adopting the mindset of his prey; psychopath and psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter, played by Brian Cox, who is held in a high-security mental institution; and Francis Dolarhyde, played by Tom Noonan, the "tooth fairy" serial killer who is on the prowl and murdering entire families. After meeting Hannibal Lecter in the hope of understanding how the "tooth fairy" operates, Will Graham is forced to acknowledge that his own preoccupations are similar to those of Hannibal Lecter. This realisation is as shocking for the audience as it is for Will Graham. The atmospheric specially-composed score was written by Michel Rubini, and the composing technique of contrasting long, low notes with short repeated, insistent motifs reinforces the instability of the psychopathic characters and the troubled, introspective Graham. This is another ambivalent score. Elsewhere in the film a pop compilation track featuring music by Red 7, Prime Movers, Iron Butterfly, Kitaro,

---

(continued) from the series, for example *Escape from Television* (1987), *Snapshots* (1989) and *Miami Vice: The Complete Collection* (2002).

Shriekback and Klaus Shultz offers a range of dark perspectives on the actions of the key characters. The music for *Manhunter* illustrates Mann's deepening interest in tormented mental states and contemporary morality, and its effectiveness to create unsettling pictures.

LA Takedown (1989), Mann's next television venture, was to be the template for *Heat*. This 92-minute TV pilot, written and directed by Mann, was based on real-life experiences. *LA Takedown* focuses on the two central characters, Vincent Hanna (played by Scott Plank) and Patrick McLaren (played by Alex MacArthur). Anna Dzenis (2002) argues that at this stage Mann was searching for ever-longer story arcs, and it is interesting to note that Mann's more recent films, *The Insider, Ali, Collateral, Miami Vice* and *Public Enemies* are all over two hours long. While there are obvious similarities in plot between *Heat* and *LA Takedown*, there are some interesting character additions and omissions. For example, the female partners of Hanna and McLaren in *LA Takedown*, are more feisty and feminist, but also more supportive of their men, than in *Heat*. On the other hand, the character of Waingro is more heavily specified in *LA Takedown*, but is not as forceful, or as psychotic as he is in *Heat*. The Chris and Charlene Shiherlis story is absent. In general, the smaller budget, brief pre-production period of only ten days, short running time, younger actors in the key roles, and missing sub-plots, weakened the impact of the programme, and NBC chose instead to run with other series such as *Baywatch, Quantum Leap, Hardball* and *Mancuso, FBI*. It is also interesting to note that *LA Takedown* emphasises traditional values, which is unusual for Mann. In *LA Takedown*, Hanna works hard at his marriage, is protective towards his wife, Lilian, and they stay together at the end of the movie. There is more emphasis on the joyous moments within relationships, and sharper distinctions are drawn between actions on the right side of the law, and those on the wrong side. However, more typical Michael Mann traits are evident in the foregrounded pop compilation score (featuring Billy Idol), in night-time cityscapes, extreme close-ups, a neo-noir feel, and an MTV aesthetic.

In the 1990s, Michael Mann focused on the big screen, and briefly veered away from crime stories to adapt James Fenimore Cooper's literary classic, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992). However, Mann's meticulous research is still evident here, in the representation of the American Indian tribes, and in the battle scenes, with arrows rather than guns; and we can still revel in the stylised camera work. Next came *Heat*.

111

Backstory to *Heat*

Made in 1995, *Heat* draws on the western, film noir, action movie, opera, documentary, and crime genres to illustrate its big themes. Michael Mann shows us how our own web of past decisions, particularly those which cannot be undone, bring us to where, who and what we are now. In Mann's view there are no such considerations as good fortune and misfortune – we alone are responsible for the nature and quality of our present existence. In this respect, Mann displays a concern with a central theme of existentialist philosophy. In his acclaimed lecture of 1946, entitled 'Existentialism is a Humanism'[5], Jean-Paul Sartre identifies two elements which are central to the ideology expressed in *Heat*. Firstly, Sartre argues that existentialism "is a doctrine which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity". In *Heat*, characters make decisions under pressure in extremely stressful circumstances, and so judgements over what constitutes 'right', 'wrong', 'moral' and 'immoral' are not straightforward, only relative. Indeed, Sartre claims that "no rule of general morality can show you what you ought to do: no signs are vouchsafed in this world". Secondly, and equally importantly, Sartre argues that the "first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders". This is the message Mann is conveying in *Heat*, and the uneasy lives that characters negotiate in the film are further evidence of Sartre's argument, that every action taken by an individual is burdened with "anguish, abandonment and despair". I will expand upon this later, and show how Sartre's thinking links directly to *Heat*, and my interpretation of ambivalence, when we examine the five specially-composed cues.

Michael Mann's interest in the crime themes of *Heat* began in the 1960s, when he became intrigued by the plight of East European immigrants making their way in Chicago society. He was particularly curious about *Chicago Tribune* reportage of the times, telling of shoot-outs, notorious gangsters and even entire criminal families. He was introduced to Chuck Adamson, a detective with the Chicago Investigation Unit, who became a close

---

[5] In *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, edited by Walter Kaufman, Meridian Publishing Company, 1989. Translated by Philip Mairet.

friend. Chuck Adamson related tales of the real-life Neil McCauley, who was 49 years old when they first met. At this time, McCauley had spent 25 years in jail, eight in Alcatraz and four of those eight years in isolation, known as "the hole". Michael Mann used some of Adamson's tales directly in *Heat*, such as elements of the coffee shop conversation, the admiration Adamson had for McCauley's professionalism, and criminal interpretations of moral fortitude. Mann was also interested in the personal lives of the police and their prey, and was fascinated by the idea that they might have similar problems holding relationships together. Mann first used 40% of the future *Heat* script in *LA Takedown*, which he shot in 18 days[6].

The film has a multi-strand linear narrative, but is predominately focused on the two key protagonists, Lieutenant Vincent Hanna of the Robbery-Homicide Division of the LAPD (played by Al Pacino), and Neil McCauley (Robert De Niro), an ex-convict and master criminal. We drop into the lives of Neil McCauley, Chris Shiherlis (McCauley's aide) and Vincent Hanna in the first few moments of the film, while Elliot Goldenthal's title music is heard, mixed in with sounds of the city.

The Music

The score for *Heat* paints a range of shadowy sonic cityscapes. Elliot Goldenthal aimed to "create a series of experiments . . . that were impressions of the film but weren't exact cues". To do this, he explored "strange combinations of sounds and sonorities" including percussion, guitars, a steel cello and home-made instruments[7]. The five specially-composed cues I am discussing are all produced by Matthias Gohl. When we consider that the role of a contemporary music producer includes some arranging, we must recognise that Gohl makes a significant creative contribution to the final score. On this film, there are several musical teams: music editors (Christopher Brooks, Michael Connell, Bill Abbott), two conductors (Jonathan Sheffer and Stephen Mercurio), orchestrators (Elliot Goldenthal and Robert Elhai) and recording engineers (Steve McLaughlin and Joel Iwataki). Credit is now given to these professionals (this was not always the case in the classic Hollywood

---

[6] Information from *Crime Stories, Heat Special Features*, DVD, 2004; and it was thanks to Art Linson, 20 years later, that Mann was encouraged to make *Heat* as a feature film.
[7] From the interview conducted with Goldenthal in *Into The Fire, Heat Special Features*, DVD, 2004.

era) so we can begin to understand that film music production is as intricate, important and as creatively collaborative a process as any other film component. Therefore, when we come to analyse the music we must be conscious of the layers of distancing between Elliot Goldenthal's original ideas for the music, and the finally mixed and edited cues we hear in the film. In Michael Mann's films, we must also remember the importance given to the music by the director.

The Kronos Quartet plays in the five selected cues of Goldenthal's original music for the film. A string quartet may at first seem a traditional, if not conservative choice of instruments for such a contemporary film, but this quartet is different. Founder and leader of the group, David Harrington, explains: "I have always wanted the string quartet to be vital, and energetic, and alive, and cool, and not afraid to kick ass and be absolutely beautiful and ugly if it has to be. But it has to be expressive of life. To tell the whole story with grace and humour and depth. And to tell the whole story if possible"[8]. The Kronos Quartet has worked with several minimalist composers such as Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Terry Riley and Henryk Górecki, but also with more mainstream artists such as David Bowie, Tom Waits, Nelly Furtado and Björk. The Kronos Quartet performed for Darren Aronofsky's film *Requiem for a Dream* (2000). Elliot Goldenthal's choice of a string quartet, as opposed to the classical Hollywood large romantic orchestra, is also significant, as we shall discover later.

I begin, then, with analyses of Goldenthal's specially-composed title theme, *Heat*, followed by *Untitled*, which briefly interrupts the *Heat* theme. Both cues are performed by the Kronos Quartet, and I choose them for several reasons. The *Heat* theme, together with the visuals, establishes the unrelenting uneasy atmosphere that permeates the film, and I want to explore how and why this is achieved. Both themes introduce us to the two protagonists (*Heat* for McCauley, and *Untitled* for Hanna) and exclusively reveal their otherwise hidden, troubled psyches. The score conveys the carefully-concealed opposing emotions, the *ambivalence* these outwardly tough men experience with every challenging choice of action. The analyses of these particular cues illustrate why Goldenthal subtly relaxes his hold on certain classical scoring objectives, prising open new musical spaces

---

[8] From www.kronosquartet.org.

114

where confusing urban existence and "bricolage"[9] masculinities can be more accurately expressed. Indeed, these impressionistic cues show how fine the lines are between these two men on either side of the law.

Analysis of opening cues: *Heat* and *Untitled*

The screen is in darkness. All we hear are the widely-spaced, restrained, sustained notes of the string quartet as the titles appear. The music is slow, elegiac, minimalist, and based initially around the key of B minor. The note B is emphasised both very low on the cello, and on the upper register of the violins; and the mediant[10] is barely noticeable, which leaves the tonality slightly insecure. In addition to this, there is a hesitancy in the playing, as if it is a struggle to suppress the volume. The music does not suggest any single emotion, but conveys instead a general sense of restrained melancholy. As the music continues, we view a train coming into night-time Los Angeles, in two long takes, from the front, then from the rear. As the train enters the station, its size and roar increase to engulf the viewer and drown the music. Flickering streetlights provide a blurry urban background. The strings continue to play softly and the ear is drawn to the violins in their top register, building tension and anticipation in the audience. The music does not gather pace: it holds back, containing itself as the violins climb higher, and linger, before all players move to a new chord (A minor) and simultaneously increase their volume.

---

[9] A term coined by John Beynon (2002) to express fluid, changeable masculinities. I explain this in more detail later in the chapter.

[10] The mediant is the third note of the tonic chord (in this case B minor) which fully establishes whether the chord is in the minor or major key. In this case, Goldenthal chooses a more 'open' sound, a floating around the note B, a drifting into the minor key.
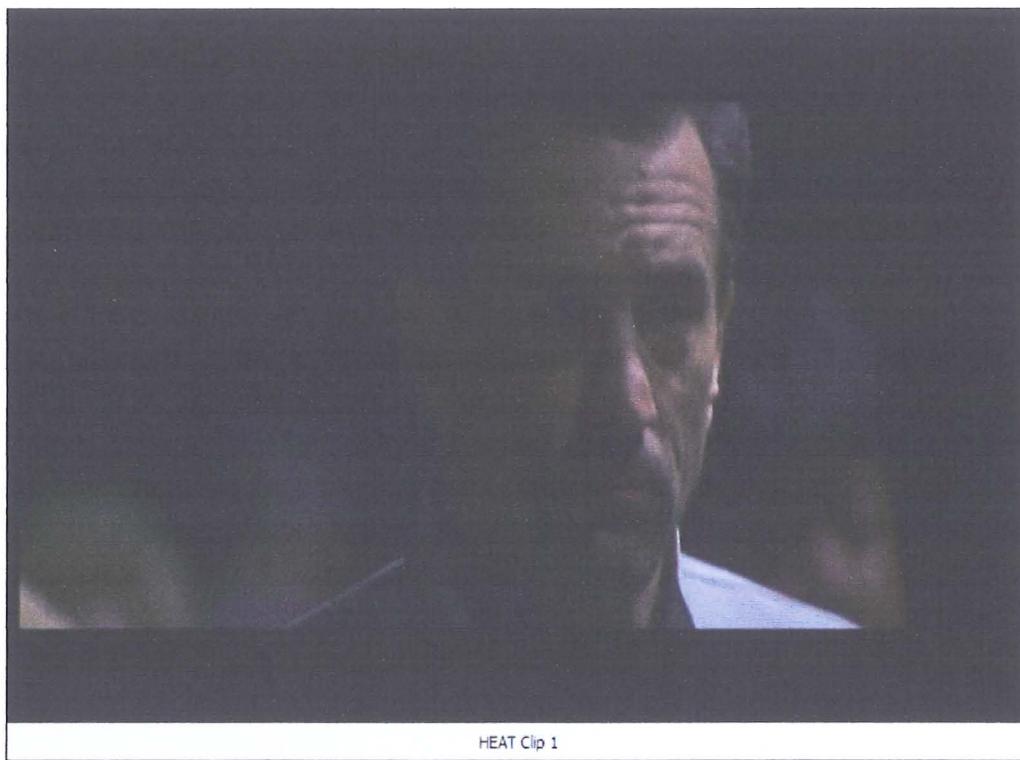
HEAT Clip 1

3.1 Neil McCauley steps on to the platform

Neil McCauley steps onto the platform. Centred, and in big facial close-up, he turns his head and checks for danger. This understated but dramatic change of chord, signalling his entrance to the film, immediately imbues the character of McCauley with gravitas, which is further reinforced by the increasing volume of the lower strings and the stately manner and pace of the music. The mix of minimalist scoring with traditional instrumentation communicates a distortion of time and place. The uncertain tonality of the strings adds intrigue and a sense of unrest, but I argue that it is the change of chord when McCauley arrives that hooks us into the film, which affects the mind and body, and subconsciously directs our emotions towards his character. McCauley alighting from the train marks the first choice of action in a chain of actions. Most of McCauley's actions in the film are pre-planned, and the ones he does not plan are those which precipitate his ruin. In these initial scenes, the film's key ideology – our existence is determined by the choices we make – is communicated through the music, by its dramatic emphasis on a single action. This musical sequence is to return later in the film, where it is used to signal McCauley's tragic demise. We might say that this music is a leitmotif for McCauley.

116

We drop into McCauley's life almost invasively in close-up, but are soon distanced as we view him in long shots descending the station escalator, then walking over to a hospital in an extreme overhead shot. At this point, the music briefly becomes more melodic, with slightly shorter note values, and a drone effect played on cello and viola to give a sense of anticipation mixed with foreboding. Then we hear the start of a dark, underlying rhythm, played on percussion as McCauley enters the hospital. As he passes through treatment rooms, without a word or hint of facial expression, sounds of hi-tech hospital equipment are foregrounded. A blue-tinted screen reinforces the clinical environment, but extreme close-ups on equipment and a naked torso underline the technological ability to manipulate the body, and its ultimate vulnerabilty. Already, we are aware of the big postmodern themes – alienation, the city, technology, the changeable body – and not a word has been spoken. While the moving pictures present details of things, Goldenthal's cue hints at the psychological condition of McCauley as we enter his world. At this point, the sparse, quiet, controlled score tells us that McCauley is a man of few words, undemonstrative, single-minded, reflective, alone. Yet Goldenthal's choice of strings, traditionally associated with emotion, tell us more. While there is vague tonality, the music expresses an overall sadness, a longing, perhaps a supressed passion. The music alone enables us to penetrate the interiority of this character. We are aware from the slow, solemn opening notes of the score that this will be a serious film, an epic. The shift of chord, which mirrors screen action precisely in an otherwise inexact cue, and the accompanying subtle crescendo for all instruments, underline McCauley as the tragic anti-hero.

McCauley drives away in a 'borrowed' ambulance, and a cut drops us into Chris Shiherlis' life, again in close-up. Shiherlis, played by Val Kilmer, is a trusted member of McCauley's team and a deadly marksman. The music continues with its underlying beat, and we are introduced to the character as he buys explosives for a future 'job'. He is posing as a demolition guy, flashing his false identity card to pacify the salesman. We do not stay long with Shiherlis, but the same music tells us that the characters of McCauley and Shiherlis are connected, that they are embarking on a dangerous mission, and that work has to be done swiftly, but discreetly. We hear the first words of the movie when the salesman asks Shiherlis whether he wants to pay by "check, charge or cash?".

117

A further cut takes us into an intensely intimate moment of Lieutenant Vincent Hanna's life. As the music stops sharply on the cut, we view an extreme close-up of fresh white bedlinen. These moments of silence are arresting as we voyeuristically wonder what will happen next. We are treated to extreme close-ups of Hanna's smooth, tanned face, hair and neck, and his wife Justine's glossy dark hair and expectant face. This is an affluent, attractive couple. For a few seconds we hear only a radio in the background and the sounds of love-making. Such sounds, reinforcing the breakdown of private and public – the radio, transmitting to a faceless society in the personal space of a bedroom; the secret squelches and gurgles of lovemaking relayed to millions – also suggest a snatched, precious moment away from the rest of the world. String music enters gently, but it is not a continuation of the *Heat* theme – this is reserved for Hanna's prey. Instead, we hear a few bars from an untitled cue, which is intriguing. Here, we have a couple intertwined physically, but perhaps not emotionally. The music has a mournful quality about it, subtly different to the tender but intrinsically light-hearted string score audiences might expect at such a point. The melody line with its sighing intervals and demarcation of each separate long note, emphasises longing and isolation.
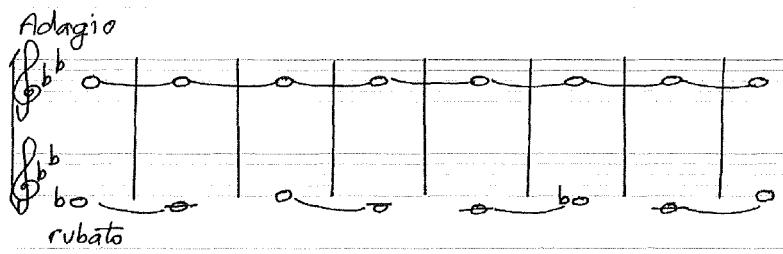
3.2 Sighing intervals in Untitled theme

This music is both "empathetic" and "anempathetic" to the moving visuals (Michel Chion, 1994). Chion argues that music which is *empathetic* "can directly express its participation in the feeling of the scene, by taking on the scene's rhythm, tone and phrasing", whereas music which is *anempathetic* exhibits "conspicuous indifference to the situation, by progressing in a steady, undaunted, and ineluctable manner" (p8). Chion also discusses the "added value" that music offers in the cinema. By this he means "the expressive and informative value with which a sound enriches a given image so as to create

the definite impression" (p5). However, at this moment in *Heat*, there is ambiguity. Our experience of soft strings heard in the cinema culturally conditions us to interpret the scene as one of tender emotion. Yet the notes the strings play tell a different story. In employing familiar instrumentation to create a contradictory meaning, a striking sense of ambivalence is communicated. The music forewarns us that this is a complicated relationship, but not in an overt way – this cue is 'unheard' and impressionistic. The soft strings, connoting emotion, signify that deep feelings are present in this scene, which the sighing musical figures underpin. However, the unclear tonality suggests unrest, unease, mixed feelings. Moreover, I would argue that the 'unheard' score reinforces that these feelings are unexpressed, secret, present only in the mind.

We can also begin to understand why Goldenthal chose the classic chamber grouping of the string quartet. It can communicate intense intimacy with its few instruments, each one clearly audible. Each instrumental line, therefore, can communicate separate meanings equally forcefully and more personally than a large orchestra. In this case, each musical strand is conveying layers of shrouded ambivalence. This is music for the (bed) chamber rather than the concert hall, and in this scene, the strings reveal the psyches of the characters, just as they have for McCauley and Shiherlis. The traditional grouping of the string quartet is also quietly disturbing. The quartet was most fashionable during the classical music period, when the 'great composers' such as Mozart, Beethoven and Haydn bolstered its status and established its reputation as perfect art music for the rich and educated. Here, the string quartet is employed to narrate the stories of two criminals and a robbery-homicide detective. All of this, whether knowingly or not, unsettles us, calls our own experiences into question when we hear such a historic combination of instruments applied to the silver screen, playing notes of the unexpected.

The music continues as Hanna and Justine bring their love-making to a satisfactory conclusion. A cut takes us to Vincent showering. The slowly-tracking camera lingers on extreme close-ups of Vincent's face and the glass tiles of the shower-cubicle. Michael Mann wants us to enjoy the bespoke design and high-spec fittings of the house, and we are reminded of his particular interest in contemporary city architecture. The music is drowned by the sounds of running water, and stops completely on an extreme close-up of Justine, lighting up a post-coital cigarette with visible satisfaction. The camera-work mirrors the

119

studied style of the house. When the music stops, reality intrudes. We witness the first of Justine's many attempts to connect more closely with Hanna. She offers to make coffee, and hopes that Hanna might take her for breakfast. Her suggestions are all turned down – "I can't, I'm meeting Bosko" – "I don't have time, Baby". The job comes first for Hanna, and there is no apology or attempt to make up for things later. However, we view his genuine concern for step-daughter Lauren, with her "son-of-a-bitch" father who habitually lets her down. In the absence of music, we focus on the dialogue and body language in this scene and realise that while they are a caring family unit, all three live quite separate lives with different, unconnected agendas.

The next character we meet is Waingro, played by Kevin Gage. The *Heat* theme resumes, but this time it is gathering pace and instrumention – percussion, strangled voice, electronic samples – in order to convey the darkness of his character. Waingro is a psychopath, and this is the first time he has been asked to work for McCauley. He emerges from the door of a diner where we guess he has just eaten. He demands more coffee from the sidewalk counter – "Hey, gimme another refill" – but runs to catch a lift from another of McCauley's trusted aides, Michael Cheritto, played by Tom Sizemore. The music contributes significantly to the character construction of Waingro, who is unkempt, unstable, fiery, physically powerful, potentially deadly. We discover little about Michael Cheritto at this point, except that he does not humour Waingro, telling him to "stop talking" while he drives the stolen truck. At this comment, Waingro removes his shades, and stares balefully at Cheritto. As Cheritto pauses in traffic, he turns to read Waingro's facial reaction, realising that he may have been abrupt. After all, Waingro was only trying to make agreeable conversation. We can see that Cheritto, while tough, is not hard. They park under the freeway arches, not far from McCauley, who is driving the ambulance, with Shiherlis riding shotgun. All the while, the music quickens its pace, and develops a more complex, dense and dark contrapuntal texture, with added electronic effects by Matthias Gohl[11]. The strings play a short rhythmic motif, while percussion instruments sound intermittently, suggesting a frenetic underworld. On the soundtrack CD, this music increases in volume until it is almost ear-splitting. Here, it is mixed quite low to give an overall impression of bold but increasingly evil intent. The crew put on white, full-face

---

[11] Goldenthal's original music is produced by Matthias Gohl for the film and soundtrack CD.

masks to attack an armoured car, manned by three guards. Waingro, enjoying the thrill of violent action, chooses to believe that one of the guards is defying his authority. "Wanna fuck with me?" he taunts, then kills the guard outright. This action was not in McCauley's plans, and to safeguard the gang's anonymity, the other two guards must now be killed. The mission is accomplished – $1.6million of bearer bonds have been stolen – but not in the way McCauley had intended. Waingro will pay later. The *Heat* theme ends.

We can already determine how these cues follow and deviate from classic film scoring techniques. Employing Claudia Gorbman's model entitled 'Classical Film Music: Principles of Composition, Mixing and Editing', and Aaron Copland's five-part paradigm mentioned in Chapter 1, we can see that both cues clearly adhere to the important rule of *inaudibility*. In Gorbman's model, it is stated: "Music is not meant to be heard consciously. As such it should subordinate itself to dialogue, to visuals – to the primary vehicles of the narrative" (1987, p73). This is mostly true of Goldenthal's two cues so far. They certainly privilege dialogue when it is present. However, there is hardly any dialogue in these opening scenes, and so in the absence of dialogue, music is able to become a more significant vehicle of communication, even if it is not always conspicuous. Indeed, it is only through the music that we are able to glean a sense of character; and what we hear and what we see are partly contradictory. Actions in these scenes are viewed as being taken with conviction and confidence. However, the music expresses elements of doubt. Also, as Goldenthal's cues are impressionistic, they are not entirely subordinate to the visuals either. In this case, they are less fettered, and able to communicate different interpretations of the narrative. In addition, I would argue that the unusual musical cue for the love-making scene, comprising unexpected notes on conventional instrumentation, attracts our attention, as it provides part-counterpoint to the screen, even though it is played softly. This cue, then, also becomes a vehicle for narrative: the music tells us considerably more than the visuals, and, in the spaces where dialogue is absent, speech is arguably replaced by internal, abstract, musical language of the mind. The same could be said for the introductory music, which plays as we encounter McCauley. Therefore, the choice of an 'unheard' score is wise: by more or less strictly adhering to the rule of inaudibility, Goldenthal is able to "get away with" subverting and loosening his grip on other classical

scoring conventions. By doing this, as we shall see, he can convey more complexity, more layers of meaning, than meet the eye.

Goldenthal's more ambiguous, impressionistic scoring technique enables us to explore the inherent possibilities within character psyches. This brings us to another important objective from Gorbman's model: *Narrative cueing*. In the model, narrative cueing is divided into two types: a) *Referential Narrative*, "eg indicating point of view, supplying formal demarcations, establishing setting and characters", and b) *Connotative Narrative*, "music 'interprets' and 'illustrates' narrative events"(p73). Claudia Gorbman states: "Music serves to ward off the displeasure of uncertain signification . . . It interprets the image, pinpoints and channels the 'correct' meaning of the narrative events depicted" (1987, p58). Now, Goldenthal's cues, impressionistic and with unclear tonality, don't quite adhere to any of the narrative cueing rules; and because of this, a deeper examination of character psyche is enabled. The soft, slow, elegiac string music surrounding McCauley in the opening scenes, sets up important enigma codes around his character, which are never resolved. Is McCauley truly committed to the actions he is taking? Is he an admirable leader of men, with their interests at heart? Is he just trying to make a living in a difficult, modern world? Does he have a conscience? McCauley offers us no clues with his facial expressions, but his choices of action, so far, involve instilling loyalty and discipline in his team, meticulous planning, armed robbery, frightening and killing people, and ordering members of his team to do the same. No remorse is ever shown *on screen*. While the music gathers pace and darkness to reflect and interpret the increasingly illegal and brutal actions of McCauley's team, we know already that the quiet and slow-playing strings signify the restless reality of McCauley's uneasy interior world. The music, formulating enigma codes, is again operating like narrative. Instead of visual or dialogue action codes setting up enigmas, the music is performing this function[12].

The soft, slow, sighing music accompanying Hanna has the same effect. We wonder: What is going on in Hanna's mind? Does he actually love his wife when he resists every effort by Justine to nourish their marriage? What does it mean to do the right thing in these circumstances? Hanna's actions and facial expressions also offer no clues. It is only

---

[12] Roland Barthes originally applied these codes to Balzac's novel, *Sarrasine*, in order to analyse the work as an intertextual construct. The action and enigma codes are concerned with the sequencing of the narrative. Enigma codes keep us interested by setting up mysteries and puzzles to solve.

through the music that we glean anything at all about the mental states of these characters. Aaron Copland's five-part model is relevant here. Music, he argues, can underpin the psychological ideas of characters, playing "upon the emotions of the spectator, sometimes counterpointing the thing seen with an aural image that infers the contrary of the thing seen" (1949, p5). In the love-making scene, this is partly the case, and this is what makes the music interesting and different from past scores. The string music connotes emotion, which is to be expected, and the harmonies, while not all consonant, are not entirely dissonant either. Therefore, the musical ingredients described so far could well reflect the scene. However, the sighing figures, the lack of resolution, and the demarcation of each long, single note provide a counterpoint to the screen action. Michel Chion claims that "some music is neither empathetic or anempathetic – it either has an abstract meaning, or a simple function of presence, or value as a signpost: at any rate, no precise emotional resonance"[13]. These last three words are significant. In *Heat* there *is* emotional resonance, but it is not precise. It is mixed, uncertain, confused, unclear, and perhaps not even definable by the characters, and this is because it is music of interiority. Chion's phrase, almost an afterthought, is inadvertently at the heart of Goldenthal's score. The quiet inscrutability of emotional resonance, which only the score communicates, subtly underpins emotion as always important, and ever dense, perplexing and ambivalent. Classical scores of the past, which directed us to preferred, clear ideological positions, have subtly changed, and now communicate a more bewildering contemporary world.

The central ideology of the film – our web of past decisions brings us to who and where we are – is conveyed more accurately by this subversive unheard score than through other film elements. As I noted earlier, Sartre argued that every choice of action taken brings "anguish, abandonment and despair". In his lecture of 1946, he explains: "For in effect, of all the actions a man may take in order to create himself as he wills to be, there is not one which is not creative, at the same time, of an image of man such as he believes he ought to be" (p4). This is the first step to experiencing existentialist *anguish*, the realisation that "man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility" which accompanies every choice of action (p5). Sartre states that any action of pretence, or lying, "implies the universal value which it denies. By its very disguise . . . anguish reveals itself"

---

[13] From Michel Chion, Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, p9

(p5). The covert restlessness and disguised anguish created by actions taken in *Heat* are only communicated through the music. In *Heat*, it could be argued that the music also represents anguish. According to Sartre, we endure *abandonment* as we make our choices. In this film, as in existentialism, there are no excuses for our actions. We cannot look for, expect or rely upon forgiveness, support, or understanding from any living or supernatural being. Therefore, we experience *abandonment* as we are left with our decision-making in solitude. In *Heat*, the central characters are portrayed as being ultimately alone, and again it is the music which represents this abandonment. Finally, Sartre theorises that we feel *despair* as we take action. This means that "we limit ourselves to a reliance upon that which is within our wills, or within the sum of the probabilities which render our action feasible" (p10). Our characters, negotiating complex urban spaces, are always limited in the choices that they can make. As Sartre says: "Beyond the point at which the possibilities under consideration cease to affect my action, I ought to disinterest myself. For there is no God and no prevenient design, which can adapt the world and all its possibilities to my will". This is the *despair* we experience, as only certain choices are available to us – "we should act without hope" (p10). This hopelessness is also communicated through Goldenthal's score in its lack of any musical resolutions, or any obvious tonal home, and its emphasis on musical techniques such as sighing figures, open chords, and electronic effects, all of which are the result of never-ending "technological, metaphysical and existential inquiry"[14].

Nevertheless, in line with classical scoring techniques, both cues discussed above create atmosphere and embellish the action to a certain extent. In 'Tip to the Moviegoers: Take Off Those Ear-Muffs' (1949), Copland places this objective at the top of his model. While Goldenthal's score does achieve this objective (particularly for the actions leading up to the stealing of the bearer bonds), I would still argue that the music is more concerned with painting impressionistic pictures of interiorities, not evident on the screen. While the musical features of tempo and rhythm operate in established ways in both cues, the unclear harmony and the welding together of diverse instrumentation – traditional acoustic (the string quartet), steel cello, studio sampling and amplification, electric guitars and

---

[14] Philip Brophy argues that all modern elements in the cinema are a result of these three things, which he discusses in *100 Modern Soundtracks*, BFI, 2004, p4

keyboards, and homemade creations – express the immediacy and ambivalence of contemporary urban existence, and the difficulty of negotiating such a complicated, perplexing environment. To return to Philip Brophy, the score acknowledges "the mutated state of being which arises from decentred and deconstructed audiovisual distribution"[15]. The addition of electronic and more experimental instrumentation is therefore another significant development in the classical score.

Adhering to Gorbman's model, the *Heat* theme certainly provides formal and rhythmic continuity (for example, the cut from the McCauley to the Shiherlis story, and through the many scenes leading up to the taking of the bearer bonds); and it does, at these points, illustrate narrative content, in the accelerating pace and dissonant music, to reflect the increasingly evil behaviour of Waingro. Indeed, all film elements work together throughout the film to persuade us that Waingro is 'evil'. In these moments, we can see the classical film score operating as it always has – quietly manipulating us to interpret action and character from a particular, preferred perspective. This makes sense at this stage in the film. We are able to absorb an array of social standards and human behaviours, all of them relative, and always changing. The only character we know to be wholly evil is Waingro, and he provides a benchmark for our common understanding of depravity, against which we can measure others. As Sartre says: "Man makes himself; he is not found ready-made; he makes himself by the choice of his morality, and he cannot but choose a morality, such is the pressure of circumstances upon him. We define man only in relation to his commitments".

In *Heat*, the string grouping, which we are culturally conditioned in the cinema to associate with emotion, is assigned to McCauley as much as it is to Hanna. This means that from the outset, we are invited to empathise with McCauley, the leader of men on the wrong side of the law, as much as we do with Hanna, on the right side of the law. In fact, the opening bars of *Heat*, which set the scene and introduce McCauley, are similar in mood, tempo, instrumentation and volume to those that introduce Hanna. Also, the music which surrounds McCauley in his first scenes, stays with him all the time, conveying a consistent suppression of emotion, a tactic he must sustain if he is to survive. Early on, and particularly at the change of chord previously discussed, we are already poised to become

---

[15] Quotation also from Philip Brophy, *100 Modern Soundtracks*, BFI, 2004, p4

empathisers, immersing ourselves in his character and willing him to succeed. The music, in conveying a suppression of emotion, signifies emotion as all-important. McCauley's ruthless actions, therefore, could be executed with ambivalence, with mixed feelings which only the music reveals. The much shorter cue for Hanna, as discussed, also communicates ambivalence, and this is reinforced in the ensuing dialogue. Hanna has the marriage, the family, the supportive network, but ultimately chooses to reject these certainties. Again, the music tells us more – with its barely-audible volume, sparse scoring, and sighing figures – we can sense that Hanna has opposing emotions about his personal life. Yet the strings connect the two protagonists through emotion – which they need to keep at bay for their respective professions. Much later in the film, when Justine challenges Hanna again about his absences, lack of communication and inability to articulate his feelings, he explains: "I gotta hold on to my angst. I preserve it because I need it. It keeps me sharp, on the edge, where I gotta be". In his view, not only is there no point in sharing gruesome homicide details with Justine (it does not make things better), it is also bad for business. For his part, McCauley has his '30 seconds' life rule. Both cues, therefore, contribute to character construction, as described above, but the music does not sway us to a preferred perspective. This is an important development in the classical score, which reflects more contemporary understandings of ethics.

This score even confounds gender expectations, in that the strings and piano, so often associated with the feminine, are here used to suggest the masculine. Hanna and McCauley may have hard facades, but the wayward strings connote sensitivity. The instrumentation also highlights Michael Mann's interests in the fine lines between ethical stances, and the stress induced by decision making under extreme conditions. The music persuades the audience to enter this new world of social standards, relying on conditioned responses provoked by conventional instrumentation, in addition to the partly-contrapuntal use of music against screen action.

The pervading sense of unease communicated through the music never finds relief in the film. It does not provide a sense of closure. This is in contrast to Aaron Copland's five-part model, outlining the aims and objectives of original film music. He argues that there should be a rounding-off, a satisfactory conclusion. The sense of unease communicated by lack of resolution in the music, is in fact reinforced by the quietness of

126

the score. By softly destabilising our expectations of how music works in film, more wide-ranging, complicated and challenging ideas can be expressed without suggestion of judgement.

The *Heat* theme is perhaps the most important and substantial cue in the film – it introduces us to the main characters, and returns later, like a leitmotif, to herald McCauley's demise. Now, I am going to examine two much shorter cues composed by Elliot Goldenthal, before returning to the *Heat* theme. I want to show other ways in which Goldenthal maintains, subverts and resists classical scoring traditions. I choose the first cue, *Of Helplessness*, to illustrate what happens when most classical scoring objectives are adhered to, but are *heard*. I choose the second cue, *Coffee Shop*, to show how the music quietly serves to strengthen the bond between the two men, to reveal their similarities, their hidden, softer masculinities, and their never-ending psychological unease. In achieving this, Goldenthal is able to communicate more about men under stress in the city, persuading us to empathise with both, but none in particular.

Analysis of cue, *Of Helplessness*

Vincent and Justine dance, laugh and join in the fun at the team's night out. Bosko sits with his wife on his knee, enjoying her body, kissing her breasts openly, joking and telling tales of former police pals. Vincent and Justine kiss on the dance floor, clearly enjoying the pleasures of a rare night out together in relaxing, trusted company. This is a much more riotous affair than the refined, quiet, family dinner out we witnessed earlier in the film with McCauley's crew. Dancing to *The Thrill is Gone*, sung by B.B. King, Vincent's mobile rings and he is called away. Justine leaves the dance floor, and Vincent faces the bleak reality of the crime alone.

The pre-existing music plays over a cut to an overhead shot of a pool with a dead bird floating in the corner. We view Vincent's car pulling up as the music changes to the cue entitled *Of Helplessness*. As the camera pans across a neon sign advertising "weekly rates" for rooms, we realise that the aftermath of Waingro's night spent with a young black prostitute is about to be revealed. The music forewarns us forcefully, with its acoustic string score. Initially, the lower strings are emphasised, and they play long, descending

step-wise phrases which never find a tonal home. Hanna takes a look at the face of the murdered girl. The music then rises in step-wise phrases, with each note emphasised, to an extended *sforzando* as the mother of the young girl breaks out of the crowd and rushes towards Hanna.

HEAT Clip 2

3.3 Mother breaks out of the crowd
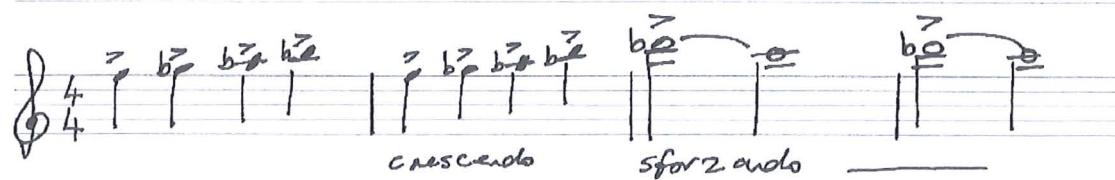
3.4 Ascending, step-wise phrases in *Of Helplessness*

Hanna physically prevents her from seeing the dead, mutilated body of her beautiful daughter. Hanna holds the mother in his arms with utter compassion. The music swathes the scene in sadness, telling us that nothing can be done. The daughter cannot be

helped. The mother cannot be helped. As the crowds gather against the night-time cityscape, outside a down-town cheap hotel, it is the music that tells us how the characters feel. Helpless.

This cue could have been written in the golden age of Hollywood. While we know the Kronos Quartet are playing, they are magnified to sound like the entire string section of a romantic symphony orchestra. In addition, towards the end of the cue, timpani and brass are added, which reinforce the romantic scoring tradition that was common in the Hollywood era. Suspensions rather than resolutions are emphasised, and these are reminiscent of a Wagnerian score, with its distinctive yearning qualities. With its historic references, this music communicates an intense sense of time-space compression. It enables us to experience the mother's grief in the present while simultaneously mourning with her for the past. The score, drawing on such established scoring practices, ensures that, at this moment, audience members are united in their hatred for Waingro and their compassion for the girl's mother. The music anchors meaning on screen and communicates a clear ideological stance. So far, classical scoring techniques are maintained, because a preferred reading is crucial at this moment.

However, the rule of inaudibility is rejected. Firstly, the score is privileged for some time, and secondly, there is a distinct and memorable melody which even contains repeated elements. If we recall Maurice Jaubert's comments regarding the functions of the classical score: " Film music should never, so to speak, reveal its own musical nature . . . we shall be tempted to listen to it. And it will detach itself from the image – a danger which increases in proportion to the inherent value of the music" (in Fred Steiner, 1989, p96), we can see how Elliot Goldenthal's aims and objectives are different. His musical score mirrors Adorno and Eisler's views, which questioned the need for unobtrusive music in film. To remind the reader, in *Composing for the Films* (1947), they argue: "One of the most widespread prejudices in the motion-picture industry is the premise that the spectator should not be conscious of the music" (p9). Here, music takes centre stage. Goldenthal and Mann made a creative decision to enable the music to communicate the maximum meaning at those pivotal moments. In this section of the film, music *is* the narrative, and it is *not* one which is riddled with ambivalence. On screen at this point, we assume that the mother,

Hanna, and the bystanders experience the mental and physical effects of grief. The music, therefore, expresses this sadness as it is embodied, and felt by all. By subverting the golden rule of inaudibility, Goldenthal brings attention to the power of musical expression, boldly and explicitly. However, Goldenthal subverts this rule sparingly, and it is evident elsewhere in the film that the unheard score is still the most powerful for communicating the complications of character psyche.

Bearing in mind that Goldenthal has not created "exact cues", the music also behaves rather like a foregrounded, pre-existing score, in several ways. Firstly, the music gives movement to the screen, as a pre-existing score often does, by adding a sense of rhythm and impending action across a series of otherwise quite long takes with little action. Secondly, the music arguably invites the audience to bring Anahid Kassabian's idea of "affiliating identifications" to the screen, but this time drawing from relevant film music and classical music worlds, and associated personal experiences. Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, the music is foregrounded in order for us to be conscious of it, with its strong, repeated melodic content, as it battles against other filmic elements and ultimately dominates them.

The music, then, is persuasive, but it does not subtly manipulate us towards a preferred ideological position, as an unheard classical score might do. Instead, this cue bludgeons the audience, with its loud dynamic and cultural conditioning, via conventional scoring, to satisfy our expectations, and to express a necessary hegemonic view of the action which has taken place in the film world. As I stated before, all film elements have been working together throughout the film to portray Waingro as evil, and at this point the score communicates that meaning more than any other film element, explicitly and forcefully. Waingro must be understood as evil, as he is the extreme benchmark for immorality. The 'heard' cue, foregrounded in a mostly unheard film score, stands out to send us clear signifiers in an overall impressionistic, partly polysemic film score. This is an interesting employment and development of classical scoring. By *loudly* employing established compositional techniques, and adding *musical interest*, Goldenthal ensures, for just this moment, that music dominates all other screen elements, and takes on the role of narrative.

Analysis of cue, *Coffee shop*

Hanna, in a police helicopter, scans night-time Los Angeles, looking for McCauley. When a freeway patrol crew tracks McCauley down, Hanna switches to a waiting fast car and tails McCauley along the freeway. Music entitled *New Dawn Fades* powers the ride. Performed by Moby, and originally written by the 1970's band Joy Division, the music is foregrounded and reinforces the toughness of both central characters and their "warrior man" qualities (Barry McCarthy, 1994). With its strident guitar riff, played unusually on bass, and solid 4/4 rock beat, this dark, macho music establishes that this is a man's world. The music constructs this atmosphere by its sounds and rhythms but also by its associations. The post-punk band Joy Division with its troubled lead singer Ian Curtis, were known for their bleak, introverted, yet aggressive songs. Tragically, Ian Curtis, an epileptic, killed himself in May 1980 just before the band were due to tour America for the first time. When audience members mix these intertextual sounds heard in the cinema with their own personal memories, then add suicide to the potion, the screen is arguably swathed in a cloak of death, destruction and dread. The foregrounded music here takes control of the screen and the audience, and sets us up with feelings of fear and impending chaos.

McCauley pulls over and stops the car, but ensures a gun is at the ready. Hanna steps out of his car, with his own gun hidden. He wanders over with a smile on his face: "How ya doing?" McCauley does not respond, and looks straight ahead. "What do you say I buy you a cup of coffee?" McCauley looks from left to right and says: "Yeah, sure. Let's go". And with that simple question and answer, these two men at the top of their professions – in the real world and in the *Heat* world – set up a meeting, and in a coffee shop. Instead of the brutality we expected, we are rewarded with a quiet, rather philosophical chat in Kate Mellini's coffee shop. While the focus of this chapter is the original contemporary score in *Heat*, the remarkable functions of Moby's pre-existing music in this scene are important to consider. Firstly, the music controls the scene as it is explicitly foregrounded, and dictates the editing. In the absence of dialogue, the loud music and visuals alone inform us of the maleness of the scene, and what is happening. Tension is also created by the music inviting the audience to draw upon "affiliating identifications" with the song, which have been forged outside the cinema. With all the melancholy

associations described above, Michael Mann cleverly dupes the audience by thwarting expectations. Arguably, the feelings the music arouses, after it is over, are mixed: relief, disappointment, frustration and most importantly, painful ambivalence. We are invited to enter into this new arena of modern morality and mixing the music high in this scene encourages us to confront our own ethical positions.

Cut to a table in the busy coffee shop[16]. There is no music at the start of this scene: just the everyday hubbub of a popular café. This enables the audience to focus on the dialogue, and note how quickly Hanna and McCauley establish a rapport. We begin to learn intimate details about each character, details that would not normally be exchanged on a first meeting, and certainly not between two such high-ranking men on opposite sides of the law. Hanna drives the conversation, and starts by establishing McCauley's history and exploring why he continues to "take down scores". They talk with humour about what it means to have a "regular life" and McCauley asks if Hanna's life is all "barbeques and ball games". Remarkably, Hanna begins to disclose family secrets. He explains: "My life? My life's a disaster zone". Then, leaning forward for more intimacy, "I got a step-daughter so fucked up because her real father's this large-type asshole. I gotta wife. We're passing each other on the downslope of a marriage – my third – because I spend all my time chasing guys like you around the block. That's my life".

McCauley listens intently, and understands. He responds by explaining his life rule to Hanna: "A guy told me one time: 'Don't let yourself get attached to anything you cannot leave in 30 seconds flat if you feel the heat around the corner'" and empathises with Hanna's difficulties in trying to keep a marriage together, especially if hunting prey like himself. "That's an interesting point" responds Hanna. Now, as soon as these words are spoken, Goldenthal's music enters quietly, almost inaudibly, to herald a shift into deeper hinterlands. "What are you, a monk?", asks Hanna. "I have a woman", McCauley reveals, " . . . I tell her I'm a salesman". We view Hanna's consideration of this statement by facial expression alone. He relates to this. In fact, both men are economical with the truth to their

---

[16] (As explained in *Pacino and DeNiro: The Conversation*, in the *Heat Special Features DVD*, 2004, the characters are each filmed in mid shot, shot reverse shot, take for take. Two cameras were in operation at all times to ensure an organic performance, enabling every nuance and reaction to be captured. McCauley's take one was also Hanna's take one, and so on. Most of the scene is taken from take 11. Michael Mann decided that the actors were better not to rehearse beforehand, preferring to opt for a natural spontaneous effect).

partners: Hanna denies Justine access to his job, his thoughts; McCauley simply lies. Who is right, who is wrong, and is there a right or wrong? Privately, both men protect their partners from the murky details of their professions. Nothing is to be gained by exposing the realities. In other situations, they purposefully keep close relationships under control, to keep sharp in order to do their jobs, but also to ensure space, whenever they need it, for themselves.

A few lines follow which "cement" this remarkable relationship. McCauley considers that this is the way things have to be "or we'd both better go do something else, pal". Hanna says: "I don't know how to do anything else". McCauley replies: "Neither do I". Hanna responds: "I don't much want to either". McCauley, smiling, reiterates: "Neither do I". With those words expressed, they smile and catch each other's eyes with complete understanding. In other circumstances these two men might have been friends. They know their lives mirror each other's: they are two consummate professionals who place their jobs first; leaders of men with precarious relationships; self-made and utterly self-aware.

Meanwhile, Goldenthal's music continues to play softly in the background. The music is mixed low throughout the scene and it functions to express the unsaid, the intangible, the common bonds and difficulties both men share. It is significant that the music enters just as McCauley begins to tell of his own personal life, revealing more to Hanna than he does to girlfriend Eady, or a trusted member of his crew. Here again, as in the opening scenes of the film, strings accompany them. Strings, always associated with emotion in the cinema, serve to connect the two men as before, and to deepen the bond between them as ever-more intimate details are revealed. The strings play long pedal points (long, sustained notes over which harmonies change) which create a subtle tension, never quite resolved. The piece begins with pedal points played both high and low in the strings, creating an enveloping intimacy. The music revolves around open chords, resisting any firm tonality. The piano melody comprises mostly three and four-note figures, which undulate. The chords fall, then rise to a slight dissonance, so never feel complete.

133

HEAT Clip 3
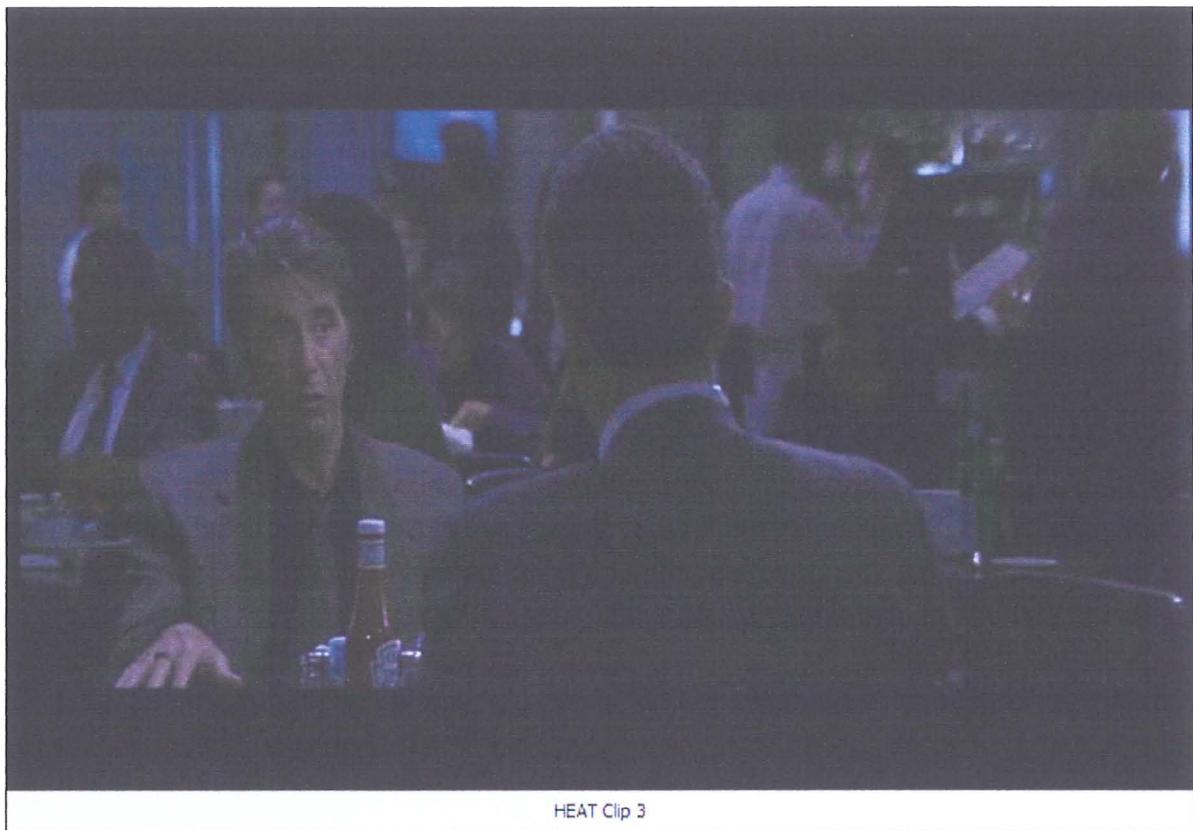
3.5 Hanna and McCauley exchange amiable conversation in the coffee shop
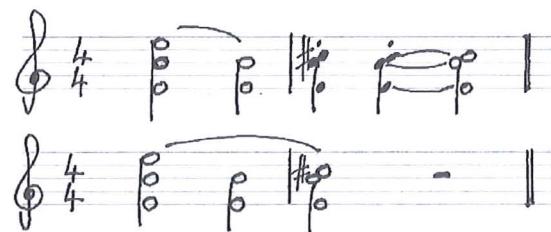
3.6 Three and four-note figures which fall then rise in Coffee Shop theme

The reiteration of these figures serves to provide a sense of progression to the scene. At the same time, the reiterations engender a suspension of time, a lingering, a savouring of the moment. The result is a feeling of teetering on the brink. Here are two men who should not be together in such an intimate way. Yet, they need to be together, partly to find out more about each other, but also because they discover much in common and enjoy each

134

other's company. The sharing of intimacies accompanied by string music would traditionally suggest romance in the cinema, and the inexactness of the scoring enables such thoughts to occur. However, the two men are mostly expressing how it feels to live life on the edge, and the consequences of actions taken in that dangerous place. The music reinforces this by its refusal to resolve and its contradictory sensation of movement and suspension, as if to convey an on-going feeling of uncertainty which may never end.

Once again, the music expresses the antithesis of both dialogue and action, and reveals underlying unease. Hanna speaks of his personal life with a weary resignation. McCauley tells of his life rule in flat tones of acceptance. The music suggests the opposite. The ambiguous tonality in the music at this point conveys the discomfort with the necessary lies McCauley spins for Eady, and the "downslope of a marriage" which Hanna could right if he wished. The music expresses a "bricolage masculinity" which is not conveyed through other screen language. John Beynon (2002) coined this term to illustrate that "men are now upholders of a hybridised masculinity that is experienced and displayed differently at different times in different situations" (p6). Here, the music enables a variety of masculinities to be expressed simultaneously. Through verbal and body language, both men display Barry McCarthy's (1994) "warrior man" traits. These are: physical courage, endurance, strength, technical skill, and honour. Both men have exhibited these skills in their professions, and there is mutual respect for such traits. In the coffee shop conversation, these are partly maintained as both men claim they stick to their goals via "warrior man" methods. However, the music informs us of more complicated masculinities, which are unexpressed. For example, when both men confide their recurring nightmares – Hanna's of balloon-headed dead people, and McCauley's of drowning – the music continues to play softly, as before. McCauley and Hanna do not discuss how terrifying these dreams are, but talk as if they are to be expected and dealt with like any other problem. The music, however, does communicate emotional unease, and allows us, the audience, to better understand their psyches, which are far from "warrior man".

As the conversation comes to a close, strings and piano play more in unison, possibly to reinforce the characters' similarities but also their ultimate differences. Hanna makes this clear on screen: "If I'm there and I've got to put you away, I won't like it . . . but if it's between you and some poor bastard whose wife you're going to turn into a

135

widow – Brother, you are going down". McCauley replies: "There's a flip side to that coin. What if you do got me boxed in and I gotta put you down. Cause no matter what, you will not get in my way". By arranging more unison writing in the strings and piano parts, the characters' individual goals gather strength, but as McCauley's last words ring out: "Maybe we'll never see each other again", the music shifts back to its original inscrutibility of pedal points, open sounds and instability, as they set out to resume their fractured lives outside the coffee shop.

For this cue, Goldenthal strictly adheres to the rule of inaudibility, and in doing so subtly subverts certain classical scoring expectations. Firstly, the soft string and piano music, providing counterpoint to the scene, conveys the troubled psyches of the characters, information which is altogether absent in the other film narrative elements of image, editing, sound and dialogue. The music avoids any explicit or even implicit narrative cueing, and so takes on a narrative role of its own, in being the only element to depict character interiority. The unheard music operates to persuade us to empathise with each of these men, but not one in particular. As the film continues, the music intensifies around these characters, inviting us to enter their inner worlds, and to understand them. Again, the choice of an unheard score is appropriate – it quietly reiterates the unsaid, thus signifying interiority as all-important to our interpretation of the film. This music of interiority is always uneasy, ambivalent, and is ever communicating Sartre's philosophy of existentialism, that every action taken is always accompanied by "anguish, abandonment and despair". "Life is nothing until it is lived; but it is yours to make sense of, and the value of it is nothing else but the sense that you choose"[17]. McCauley attempts to "make sense" of his life by adhering to strict, planned regimes, always knowing each action he chooses is outside the law, laden with responsibilities for his team and the potential damage he might cause to innocent bystanders. Hanna tries to make sense of his life by chasing criminals like McCauley for the greater good, but always knowing this gives him a high, unequal to any other. Al Pacino says that his character also "chipped cocaine" and that "every once in a while he would explode"[18]. Hanna half-heartedly holds on to his marriage to Justine,

---

[17] From Sartre's lecture 'Existentialism is a Humanism', 1946.
[18] From *Into The Fire, Heat Special Features*, DVD, 2004

recognising his preference for work. Both men are sharply aware of themselves, their choices of action, and the "anguish, abandonment and despair" which surrounds them. In adhering to the rule of inaudibility, Goldenthal can subtly break with classical scoring traditions, and communicate a more authentic impression of intricate, challenging modern living.

Secondly, the "romantic" choice of instrumentation is able to communicate a more contemporary understanding of what it is to be a man. Indeed, the combination of historically feminine instrumentation and uncertain harmony reveals the "bricolage" masculinities which Hanna and McCauley carefully conceal beneath their "warrior man" exteriors. Again, in softly subverting musical and dramatic expectations, unstated, hidden character attributes are revealed.

Thirdly, this cue has "no precise emotional resonance"[19]. Employing Michel Chion's terms, the music does not offer "added value", by "its participation in the feeling of the scene" in a wholly *empathetic* manner. Nor does the music work in such an explicitly *anempathetic* way by exhibiting "conspicuous indifference to the situation", as it is so inconspicuous (1994, p8). Instead of warding off "the displeasure of uncertain signification", as Gorbman says, this impartial cue resists clarity. Again, it is in this hushed, ambiguous sound space where ambivalence is communicated.

Lastly, unheard high strings have come to signify connections between the two protagonists, and in the coffee shop scene, these links are reinforced *on screen*. Conventionally, music would underpin the screen dynamic, but in this film, Goldenthal's score is the primary, and often the only vehicle, for communicating these important details. The unconventional, rather romantic combination of strings and piano to accompany overtly masculine conversation, quietly states the common bonds these men share, and how intrinsically linked they are psychologically. By employing a persuasive unheard score and subverting the classical techniques cited above, Goldenthal is able to communicate complex adult experience without any clear, possibly patronising, ethical stance.

---

[19] In Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994

Return of *Heat* theme – not quite "home free"

Towards the end of the film, after Eady discovers the reality of McCauley's activities, and his role in the bank robbery, which causes the deaths of Bosko, Cheritto and Breedan, she and McCauley head down the night-time freeway for a new life together. Eady has come to terms with McCauley's criminal activities, and McCauley has finally found a relationship he hopes not to abandon, despite his 30-second rule. However, as they speed along, McCauley thinks of Treyo and his killer, Waingro, who had already eluded McCauley's wrath in an earlier scene. McCauley, even though freedom is waiting to embrace him, cannot forgive Waingro for getting the better of him, and for precipitating his demise. He rings Nate, who gives him details of Waingro's whereabouts. As he picks up the cell-phone to speak, the *Heat* theme returns, quietly at first, but increasing gradually in volume. The cinematography gives the appearance of a surreal, slightly dream-like sequence, and when Eady asks McCauley what he and Nate were talking about, he replies: "Nothing – home free". She smiles, but divergent thoughts flicker over their faces. As the music moves slowly at this point, we experience a sense of suspended time. McCauley considers all his options, and as the strings rise higher, his facial expressions become contorted, part smiling, part anger. As the strings play that same understated, but dramatic chord we heard in the opening scene, his face turns to an expression of hatred and determination, and he wrenches the wheel to redirect the car, intent on putting an end to Waingro. Goldenthal's emphasis on a single action highlights once again Michael Mann's theme of causality and how our choices determine our existence. This single action marks the downfall of McCauley, and it is brought to our attention because it is the only musically synchronised moment in an otherwise inexact cue. Here, just for an instant, Goldenthal employs the classical scoring technique of mirroring the action, to express the film's ideology in the most succinct way possible.

Analysis of cue *Of Separation*

McCauley leaves Eady in the car, outside the hotel where the unsuspecting Waingro is staying. McCauley poses as a hotel employee, pretends he is delivering room service, and gains access to the building unnoticed. He finds Waingro, shoots him without conscience, and leaves him sprawling with arms outstretched, and head lolling. McCauley activates the fire alarm and the hotel staff and guests begin to evacuate the building. Hanna scrutinises the scene from the air as he arrives by police helicopter. After Hanna alights, he walks a few paces then stops as he catches sight of Eady waiting anxiously in the car. McCauley's presence is confirmed. At the moment when Hanna turns to see Eady, Goldenthal's cue *Of Separation* enters. At first, it is barely audible against the frenetic night-time activities of the emergency services and people in panic. A long sustained note (Eb) emanates from a single violin, then gradually gathers strength, volume and tension as the other members of the Kronos Quartet enter to play in unison. As McCauley emerges from a side entrance, the long suspended note searingly falls to a Db, falls further to a G, then rises.
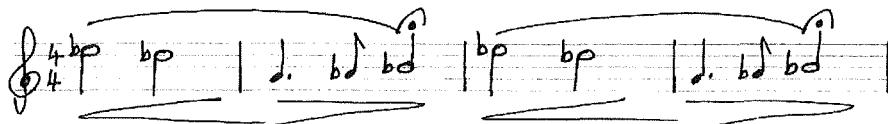
3.7 Accompanying five-note figure in Of Separation

This five-note figure is repeated (with a significant pause in between) as McCauley smiles at Eady and walks towards her.
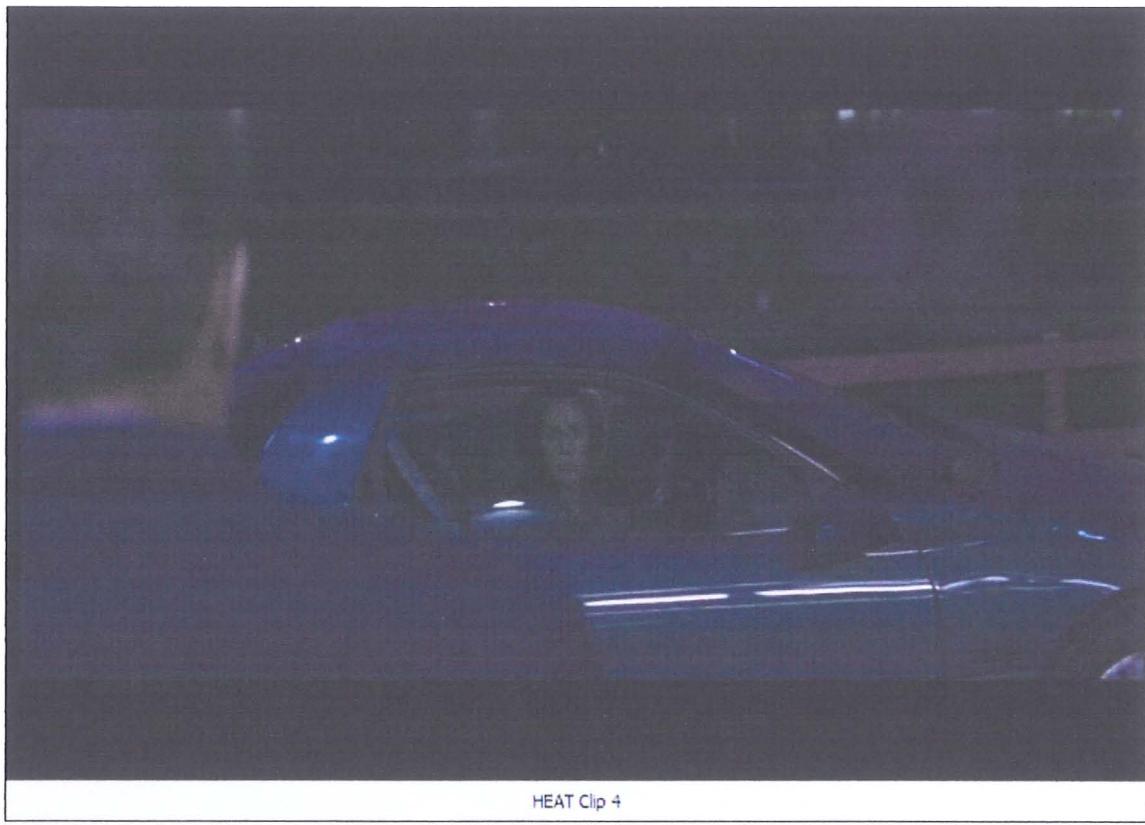
HEAT Clip 4

3.8 McCauley smiles at Eady

In its falling then rising, its resolved suspension then unresolved cadence, and in its emphasis on each note, this figure suggests both hope and hopelessness. At this moment, anything could happen: Hanna could take McCauley down for good, or he could escape "home free". As McCauley checks that all is clear, he sees Hanna making his way towards him. The music delves into darker territory, becoming increasingly chromatic and modulatory as the actions and emotions on screen develop. Suddenly, the 30-second rule must be applied for real, and the music expresses McCauley's extreme feelings with its increasing suspensions, its dramatic octave leaps and tonal uncertainty. McCauley does not want to abandon Eady, but must stick to the 30-second rule if he is to avoid life in prison. From the moment McCauley catches sight of Hanna, the 30-second timer starts, and for this section Michael Mann simulates real time as McCauley and Eady part company for ever, in long takes, in shot reverse shot, in diminishing size.

Hanna runs into the frame in an over-the-shoulder shot, and the music changes key again, this time to mark a shift from the separation of Eady and McCauley to the final

140

chase. This time the music is in a less complex key. It steps into A minor, with a new theme which is partly reiterated.
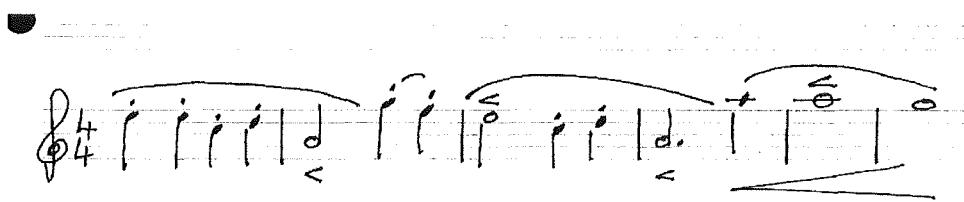
3.9 Music steps into A minor with new theme in Of Separation

This last section is arranged for brass and timpani in addition to strings. The result is an expansive western film feel, as the big issues in the film are brought to a climax, with an underlying military beat and strident brass. The theme is developed to incorporate the earlier opening, sighing figure, and tellingly this section ends with chromatically raised notes. The opening held note of Eb, falling to a Db, finally rises to an E. Although only a semi-tone apart, the music in between has expressed upheaval and chaos. Even while the final chase theme dominates, the earlier sighing figures are referred to in inversion, in imitation, in sequence. The tension of the chase is mixed with the sadness of the separation, and as the music never resolves, (and here the uncertainty is enhanced by an increase in volume), ambivalence is forcefully communicated. McCauley leaves Eady with tearing reluctance. He hopes to elude Hanna, but yearns to stay with Eady. Hanna worthily attempts to capture McCauley, but with mixed feelings about the inevitable outcome. The slightly raised final notes foreshadow a final tightening of the screws, a closing in, a dénoument.

Mann's key idea – our web of past decisions brings us to who and where we are – is reinforced in these scenes. The actions of McCauley, the professional criminal, are burdened with existentialist "anguish, abandonment and despair"[20]. McCauley experiences *anguish* as he chooses to leave, knowing that he hurts Eady and himself; *abandonment* as he realises he is condemned to be utterly alone; and *despair* as he has just three, bleak options. He must either turn himself in, escape never to see Eady again, or be shot in a bid for freedom. At the same time, Hanna's actions are brought into focus. As a professional

---

[20] In Jean-Paul Sartre's lecture, 'Existentialism is a Humanism', 1946

policeman he must bring McCauley down, but he "won't like it" as he has come to respect this kindred spirit. If McCauley is caught, or possibly killed, Hanna is left with no-one in his life to understand him. In this situation, Hanna has only one choice – to capture McCauley. "Anguish, abandonment and despair" are present in all actions of the protagonists in this scene, and Goldenthal's score intensifies this ambivalence. The ambivalent music invites the audience to experience ambivalence themselves, and this is the main reason I choose this cue for analysis. *Of Separation* expresses the intense difficulties of choosing actions for survival in the city, in which "no theory to absolute knowledge or of any social practice of universal validity"[21] is confirmed. In refusing to favour one character over another, the music conveys a complicated range of modern experiences, with more accuracy and pertinence.

The complexity of these closing scenes is communicated by drawing directly on particular classical scoring techniques. Firstly, there is, unusually in this score, some detailed interpretation of the screen action, both explicitly and implicitly. Goldenthal's use of rhythm, tempo, orchestral textures, and increasingly intricate harmony reflect the excitement, tension and increased movement as the chase accelerates. While there is no 'mickey-mousing', the music nevertheless underlines the quickening pace of the action and editing, and the psychological and physical pressures experienced by the characters. In the chase, similar pressures are conveyed for both protagonists, as 'professionalism' dictates their choices of action. Where narrative is more straightforward, (during the chase), classical score components are employed. The orchestration builds from the quartet to the full romantic symphony orchestra, including brass and timpani. This is significant, and conventional in classic cinema. Brass instruments, so often connoting a 'warrior man' masculinity comprising values of physical and mental toughness, honour, loyalty and skill, are employed, as these men at the peak of their professions battle for control. Timpani adds a sense of the military, of power. No soft strings at these moments. Narrative content is clarified, anchored and underlined by the score in the traditional manner, providing continuity between shots and in transitions between scenes.

---

[21] From Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000

However, the soft, high string note at the beginning of this cue marks Goldenthal's subtle shift from established rules. High string notes were also sounded at the opening credits of the film. The minimalist scoring style, comprising a slow, stately pace, sustained pedal points and restrained performance, informed us of McCauley's interiority, the inaccessible, impenetrable private space barred to others. The music was heard in counterpoint to the screen, and it revealed ambivalence in McCauley's actions. The cue which introduced us to Hanna was similar in mood, tempo, instrumentation and volume. In the coffee shop, where confidences were shared and mutual respect gained, sighing figures, sparse scoring, slow tempo and sustained notes signified common psychological bonds. In the cue *Of Separation*, the high note sounded on a solo violin is barely audible but nevertheless discernible against intense, decisive and purposeful actions viewed on screen. As this single, thinly-textured note is sounded at the moment when Hanna catches sight of Eady, I argue that the fine line between the lives of the two protagonists is reinforced, delineated and expressed. We might also argue that this fine line is drawn to mark the start of the ultimate separation between Eady and McCauley, and Hanna and McCauley. At this point, Goldenthal's choice of extreme minimal scoring, which does *not* convey or mimic screen action, is able to communicate interiority. Again, the 'unheard' score is employed, but it is not manipulative.

Indeed, this cue, even in the chase, does not entirely control any preferred reading, the technique Michel Chion (1994) describes as giving "added value". The music does not favour either character in the chase, for example. The string instrumentation associated with the key characters, and the arrangements which feature sighing figures, single-note emphasis, and unresolved tonality, have persuaded us from the outset to empathise with McCauley as much as with Hanna. This particular musical cue sways us this way and that, and we are invited to decide ourselves whether we want McCauley to be caught or not. This is difficult, as we have come to know both men through the music, not necessarily through their actions.

While certain classic scoring techniques apply, we must remember that Elliot Goldenthal was aiming to write inexact cues which would give an impression of the scene rather than a synchronised and detailed blow-by-blow account. When we consider this point, we can see how Goldenthal has maintained the classical scoring traditions, but has

143

loosened their grip on both the film and the audience. If we take those classical scoring elements cited above and consider them only as approximations, eg the score partly highlights the narrative, or partly controls the preferred reading, we can see how much more space is left for audience participation and reflection. This marks a significant difference between old and new creative practices. If the music only partly communicates the scene content, then much of what is uncommunicated is left open-ended. This is entirely apt for a film which resists overt ethical stances.

The main themes in *Heat* – causality, morality, masculinity, survival in the city – are all questionable, flexible, never wholly clear. In writing a score which never quite commits to the screen, Goldenthal aids Michael Mann in his communication of what it is to be a man in a challenging, contemporary urban environment. While *Of Separation* adheres to classical traditions more strongly than *Heat, Untitled* and *Of Helplessness*, it still communicates the ambivalence which dominates the film. In fact, it is possible to argue that by employing scoring techniques which we all know and recognise, and pitching them against the screen inexactly, often in part-counterpoint, we are more conscious of the messages of the music and their distance from the screen. This reinforces the painful ambivalence experienced in McCauley's and Hanna's choices of actions, and in ourselves, as we wish and do not wish for the final outcome.

Summary

In this chapter, we have considered five specially-composed cues, which are linked through string instrumentation, uncertain tonality, impressionistic scoring, and the complicated psychological conditions they express. The score subtly underlines the central ideology of the film: our existence is determined by the choices we make, and I am arguing that Mann displays a concern with the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. Every action taken by McCauley and Hanna is laden with responsibility, as it is in our own lives. Jean-Paul Sartre regards this responsibility as being divided into three distinct experiences: "anguish, abandonment and despair". In *Heat*, it is the music which conveys this philosophy more than any other film element. Indeed, it is only through the original music that we are able to examine the interior worlds of the two protagonists and realise the

similarities between them. Goldenthal's cues are largely unheard, and in adhering to this important scoring convention, he is able to subvert other traditional composing techniques more freely and sometimes inconspicuously. The cue entitled *Heat* is able to become a more significant vehicle of communication in the absence of dialogue, even though it is unheard. Through the music alone, we are able to detect elements of doubt in the otherwise overtly decisive actions of McCauley on screen. A sense of modernity is also communicated with the inclusion of diverse instrumentation – to accompany the armed robbery – such as string quartet, steel cello, studio sampling, amplification, electronic guitars and keyboards. Further contemporary scoring is evident in the instrumentation of the cue *Untitled*, which accompanies the love-making scene. Here the conventionally romantic sounds of strings and piano play notes of the unexpected, and this expresses Hanna's (and possibly Justine's) private dissatisfaction and ambivalence in a novel manner. From the opening scenes, the music surrounding both Hanna and McCauley is weighted with existentialist "anguish, abandonment and despair" – it is always melancholic. The sad, soft string music that we come to associate with Hanna and McCauley, is heard in part or complete counterpoint to the screen, and it sets up enigmas around the characters which are never resolved. This is important – music is subtly functioning as narrative, with enigmas arising within the score rather than within visuals, sound or dialogue. I am arguing that this is a significant development in the role of a specially-composed classical score. However, conventional compositional techniques are in abundance when music surrounds Waingro. He is the benchmark for evil, and so the persuasive unheard score works to signify depravity more explicitly. In contrast, the unheard music surrounding McCauley and Hanna persuades us to empathise with both characters equally, and this is appropriate to depict Mann's interest in the fine lines between the lives of those on either side of the law.

While Goldenthal strictly adheres to the rule of inaudibility for *Heat* and *Untitled*, he rejects it for the cue entitled *Of Helplessness*, and instead employs certain other conventional techniques, loudly. The Kronos Quartet are magnified to sound like the entire string section of a big romantic symphony orchestra, and timpani and brass are added later to underpin the romantic tradition. Goldenthal's music emphasises suspensions rather than resolutions, so a Wagnerian 'yearning' quality pervades the score. A clear ideological stance is conveyed through the music: Waingro is evil and he has caused hurt which cannot

be undone. However, Goldenthal also subverts certain compositional techniques. He writes an extended memorable melody which brings the score to our attention. This mix of old and new techniques does not subtly persuade us to empathise with the murdered girl's mother and despise Waingro's depravity as in a conventional score. Instead, this music loudly and explicitly proclaims itself, so that there is no confusion over the preferred reading. By conspicuously employing established techniques and adding musical interest, Goldenthal enables the score to be the chief narrative vehicle in a scene with barely any movement or dialogue. There is not a grain of ambivalence here – and it is the music alone which provides the clear, ethical stance.

The *Coffee Shop* cue embraces the rule of inaudibility to signify the impenetrable interiorities of McCauley and Hanna. While the conversation between the two men is redolent of masculine bravado, the piano and string music of long pedal points, uncertain harmony and open chords, works in counterpoint to the screen dynamic. This music serves to reveal the ambivalence of their existence, and in this they are united. The music is quiet, to underline that such thoughts are private, ambiguous and hidden. The "romantic" instrumentation also conveys more "bricolage" masculinities, which these men carefully conceal behind constructed "warrior man" exteriors. The unheard score, with surprising instrumentation, is able to convey both interiority and a modern sense of what it is to be a man.

Lastly, the cue entitled *Of Separation* is the one which adheres to most classical scoring techniques. During the chase in particular, when narrative is at its starkest, the music confirms expectations. The music is unheard, it sets a mood, underlines the quickening pace of dramatic action with appropriate rhythmic and textural detail, underpins the similar psychological pressures both Hanna and McCauley experience, and provides continuity between shots and transitions between scenes. The orchestration develops to include timpani and brass, traditional masculine instruments which are appropriate in this scene depicting "warrior man" skills and values. The music also works to persuade us to empathise with the protagonists – but not one in particular. In addition, the soft, single high string note at the beginning of the cue reminds us of interiorities weighed down with ambivalence.

146

In all the unheard specially-composed cues discussed above, it is only in the subversive sound spaces where modern masculinities, ambivalence and interiority are uncovered. Such music seems either to expose opposing elements to the screen action, or to present grey areas and enigmas for consideration. Drawing on a mixture of old and new techniques, Goldenthal's original music is able to convey experience in a bewildering modern world more accurately than in a traditional score. The music expresses complication, and central to this is ambivalence. As music is the only signifier of shifting interiority and fragmented feelings, and as these themes are so significant, music takes on a more prominent role in story telling. Indeed, in this score, we are seeing glimpses of music as narrative. All cues discussed above are overwhelmingly sad, and the unresolved scores suggest that this sadness is perpetual. Elliot Goldenthal's music enables us to enter into Michael Mann's version of dystopia, and we discover that he does not offer solutions or moral guidance. Instead, he offers the philosophy of existentialism. The music, quietly melancholic and teasingly inexact, invites us to consider the actions on screen. And no matter what we see, Goldenthal reminds us that each one of those actions is taken with "anguish, abandonment and despair".

Magnolia

Music for messed-up minds

In the San Fernando Valley, a dozen disparate individuals struggle to preserve their sanity. Director Paul Thomas Anderson examines their fragile psychological states with a compassionate zoom lens. The scrutiny uncompromisingly reveals uncomfortable themes of regret, betrayal, incest and death. Anderson weaves the unhappy individual tales into one momentous story, which unfolds over a single day on Magnolia Street. The grand narrative is about two selfish, dying men who knowingly wrecked the lives of their children. These men are now riddled with regrets, and they try to make amends, to soothe their guilt. The film uncovers the widespread debris of their pasts, which includes their damaged wives and children, and other characters whose lives have been tainted, even indirectly, by these men. Three times in the film we hear the words: "We may be through with the past, but the past ain't through with us". The film explores the impact of the past upon the present, and the characters' desperate means of coping. The film is also resolutely anti-patriarchal, focusing particularly on psychologically damaging relationships between fathers and sons.

The musical score is appropriately intricate and dramatically foregrounded. Jon Brion's sparse, specially-composed score serves to link the characters psychologically, as they each approach their personal crisis points under increasing pressure. Aimee Mann's songs act as mentor, counsellor, narrator and divulger of character interiority to underline ambivalence explicitly. In order to convey these mixed feelings conspicuously, Anderson openly subverts film scoring conventions by allowing the songs to dominate other screen elements. Elsewhere in the film, Anderson includes two well-known pre-existing pieces of classical music – *Also Sprach Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss and the *Overture* from *Carmen* by Bizet, to tragi-comic effect. Also included is the pre-existing pop music of Supertramp and Gabrielle which, at certain moments, is played over Jon Brion's specially-composed score. The innovative, musical cues in *Magnolia* are strikingly realised, and are brought to our attention by their high volume.

148

In this chapter, I will focus on Aimee Mann's music, which provides the inspiration for the film. Through analysis of the songs *One*, *Wise Up* and *Save Me*, heard at pivotal moments in the film, I continue to uncover more changes in the development of the film score, in order to address my central question: How does music in contemporary Hollywood film convey the complexities of urban existence? Significantly, I shift this project from analysis of the specially-composed, abstract, impressionistic, wordless music of Elliot Goldenthal, to the study of foregrounded songs, played in full, which invite attention to their sung lyrics, vocal grains and musical arrangements. Through film musicology, I investigate how labyrinthine songs can be; how Aimee Mann's dense lyrics of the psyche darken, intensify and destabilise when sung; when the "grain of the voice", the vocal melody and arrangement are found to contain opposing, contradictory elements. Transported into the film world, these bewildering sounds become heightened when they are associated with character alienation and angst. In this chapter, therefore, I hope to open up debate about the role of song in film by arguing that 'heard' songs can function as potent communicators of contemporary experience, particularly when they are employed subversively. Songs can structure narrative form and content, causing established film narrative components to be suppressed. When this happens, more complicated, open-ended and challenging stories can be told, and I continue to argue that, at the core of these stories, lies ambivalence. In *Heat*, this ambivalence over choices of action is quietly conveyed but never ultimately defined through music. In *Magnolia*, these tangled feelings are *exposed and examined* through music which includes sung words.

Aimee Mann's songs are particularly germane to the exploration of my central question. Firstly, they are not exactly specially-composed, nor quite pre-existing, but somewhere in between, rather like Simon & Garfunkel's songs for *The Graduate* (1967). Paul Thomas Anderson says: "I sat down to write an adaption of Aimee Mann songs. Like one would adapt a book for the screen"[1]. At the time of writing the screenplay, Anderson and Mann were close friends, working in tandem. One of Mann's lyric lines particularly caught Anderson's imagination: "Now that I've met you, would you object to never seeing me again?"[2]. In the film, the friendless Claudia utters this line to Officer Jim Kurring

---

[1] In Preface in *Magnolia* CD accompanying booklet written by Paul Thomas Anderson, 1999
[2] From the song *Deathly* composed by Aimee Mann in 1999.

during their first date. Anderson claims that he "wrote backwards from that line. It equals the story of Claudia. It equals the heart and soul of Magnolia"[3]. This cross-influencing of film and music not only defies linearity, but further undermines the conventional, subservient status of music in film. It also enables us to probe Anahid Kassabian's theory of affiliating and assimilating identifications more deeply. The application of this theory, concerned either with specially-composed or with pre-existing music, exposes unusual elements in Anderson's treatment of the score, which in turn offer spaces where mixed feelings can be communicated. Secondly, these songs, like Elliot Goldenthal's original cues for *Heat*, enable us to examine character interiority. However, Aimee Mann's songs are always 'heard', and so apart from subverting the golden rule of inaudibility, these songs convey interiority explicitly, overtly and loudly. They expose the hidden abuses in an unflinching display of festering malignance. Thirdly, in this new space where music is conspicuous, sounds themselves become more significant. The sung words in conjunction with instrumental arrangements are empowered with meaning, and on close examination of the lyrics, vocal grains and instrumental accompaniment, ambivalence is communicated through opposing musical forces. Indeed, so potent are these musical dichotomies, that the characters themselves cannot escape them. Fourthly, the songs function to upturn traditional narrative form in film, by suppressing dialogue and causing visuals to take on more subservient roles. In the three songs I analyse, music is dominant in every sense. The songs suppress dialogue so much so that we strain to hear it, or fail to hear it. In these situations, lyrics, vocal grains and music accompaniment become the narrative, as they demand attention through domination of all other film elements. In addition, music dictates editing, both in pace and style. Finally, and to reiterate, I am arguing that songs in film, disparaged by some writers, such as Claudia Gorbman and Royal S Brown, are shown to be intricate, accurate and appropriate channels for communicating complicated contemporary existence.

Before analysing the cues, I offer a brief résumé of Paul Thomas Anderson's career, in order to demonstrate his developing interest and employment of contemporary music. I will then examine the chosen songs in the order in which they are heard in the film: *One*, *Wise Up* and *Save Me*. As for each cue in *Heat*, I describe how each song is heard in its

---

[3] In Preface in *Magnolia* CD accompanying booklet written by Paul Thomas Anderson, 1999

film context, so again, initially, there will be equal interpretation of all film elements as they work together to convey meaning. Thirdly, I will provide a discussion of each song in relation to Anahid Kassabian's theories but also to the ideas already debated by Claudia Gorbman, Aaron Copland and Philip Brophy. This will enable us to acquire a broader view of continuing film score developments, and to address my central question directly. Finally, I provide a summary of the main points.

Paul Thomas Anderson began his career as a production assistant for television movies such as *Sworn to Vengeance* (1993), and videos and game shows such as *The Quiz Kids Challenge* (1990) in Los Angeles. This detailed knowledge of entertainment programmes is evident in his depiction of the fictional game show in *Magnolia* entitled *What Do Kids Know?* Anderson further developed the craft of film making by working in a similar capacity on small independent films. *Cigarettes and Coffee* (1993) was the first short film Anderson shot and scripted, and it premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 1993. As a result of this success, Anderson developed his ideas further at the Sundance Institute's Filmmaker's Workshop, and the result was *Sydney*, later retitled *Hard Eight* (1996)[4]. This first feature film, starring Samuel L Jackson, Gwyneth Paltrow, Philip Seymour Hoffman, John C Reilly and Philip Baker Hall, is about the gambling underworld in Las Vegas. The film comprises a specially-composed score by Jon Brion, mixed with a foregrounded pop compilation track.

    Boogie Nights (1997), which draws upon Anderson's 30-minute, high-school mockumentary, *Dirk Diggler* (1988), achieved critical acclaim, with three Oscar nominations: screenplay (Paul Thomas Anderson), best supporting actor (Burt Reynolds), and best supporting actress (Julianne Moore). *Boogie Nights* examines the American porn industry at a time when celluloid pornography was poised to become another art film genre. Instead, it gave way to cheap video formats, focusing on the servile body as object. Burt Reynolds stars as the kindly patriarch of a porn-movie 'family', and while the film is unflinching in its view of the industry, Anderson challenges us with his satirical yet compassionate perspective. Again, a foregrounded pop compilation score hooks us into the movie from the start, immediately recreating the zeitgeist of the disco era. However, the

---

[4] Information from Paul Thomas Anderson's own website http://cigarettesandredvines.com/biography.php

music achieves much more than this. Philip Brophy argues: "*Boogie Nights* deftly employs songs like aural production design, matching antique synths to gaudy wallpaper, Ibanez fuzz-wahs to the lighting in convenience stores, and compressed snare thuds to ritzy cowboots" (2004, p49). Songs begin in one scene then travel to another, making for a self-conscious, chameleon score changing in meaning, and reflecting evolving psychological conditions. Characters are seen to choose songs, and, as in Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994) or *Jackie Brown* (1997), these actions exist to aid identity construction. In addition, *Boogie Nights* "reaches a height of vertical narration, where everything is told – as songs do 'all at once'. Bypassing literary models, this film is a timbral text which must be listened to in order for it to be read" (Brophy, 2004, p50). In *Boogie Nights,* therefore, we can already observe Anderson's employment of songs to convey the psychological, and to form a prominent part in narrative creation. Michael Penn wrote the few cues of specially-composed music in *Boogie Nights.* In between times, Paul Thomas Anderson has directed a wide range of music videos, for songs such as *Try* (1997) composed by Michael Penn, *Across the Universe* (1998), *Fast As You Can* (1999), *Paper Bag* (2000) and *Limp* (2000) written by Fiona Apple, and *Here We Go* (2002) with music by Jon Brion. This wide range of musical experience demonstrates how important the score is to Paul Thomas Anderson, and this experience is put to distinctive creative use in his next film, *Magnolia.*[5]

Magnolia (1999) deals with contemporary existence, via intimate examinations of character psyches which are interpreted, probed, communicated and commented upon by the foregrounded musical score. In particular, the musical score underlines the ambivalence, the mixed feelings and angst, surrounding character actions and life experiences. When I write of ambivalence, I am always referring to the painful, opposing emotions experienced by each of the characters as they choose certain actions over others in challenging situations. In *Magnolia*, the characters continue to select the easier actions, knowingly sacrificing and excluding the harder courses of action which would lead to a better life. These easier actions, such as taking pills or indulging in extreme behaviour, always avoid confrontation of their individual predicaments, and so propel the characters

---

[5] It is interesting to note, that Anderson's latest film *There Will Be Blood* (2008), employs a specially-composed score by Jonny Greenwood in addition to pre-existing classical music.

into increasingly darker psychological spaces. The children's choices are unhappily limited by the selfish choices of their parents. All characters are acting, therefore, *with ambivalence*, with unbearable feelings about their choices, until they sing *Wise Up*. Even after this point, ambivalence is still experienced, as every action taken still involves hard choices, the ones which cede to the seductive, easier choices.

As in *Heat*, existentialism is therefore evident: actions taken in the past or present are seen to be ever laden with "anguish, abandonment and despair". Therefore, I continue to argue that, as in *Heat*, the music conveys this ambivalence more than any other film element, working at times in counterpoint to the screen. Most characters are connected through the past, by chance or by design. Three characters, including the two dying fathers, regret their pasts and are tormented by guilt. Two adult sons and an adult daughter cannot cope with their pasts because they were betrayed by selfish parents. The two children in the film are the unhappy sons of selfish, uncaring fathers. They try hard to break away from the negative patterns of their short pasts, by courageously facing up to their predicaments. The visual symbol of the magnolia flower, I suggest, refers to the innocent children in the film whose lives have been indelibly stained by the sins of their fathers. Just like real magnolia flowers, they are delicate, solitary, and in need of protection. No-one listens to these children, as it is in no-one's interests to do so, but of all the characters in the film, they show the most mental toughness. To this astringent potion, Anderson adds a strong dose of Fortean thinking, in the emphasis on anomalous phenomena, such as chance connections or happenings. This theme actually brings relief to the film, and provides us with several welcome smiles. There is even a split-second glimpse of Charles Fort's book, *Mysterious American*, on a hall-table. Mostly, however, Anderson focuses on the weaving together of the lives of the main characters "through coincidence, chance, human action, past history and divine intervention"[6].

The film begins with a 10-minute prologue, with stylistic references to silent film, which sets up the Fortean theme of happenstance through three narrated urban myths. This section opens the viewer's mind to the possibilities of links, coincidences and chance events which the characters might experience for good or for ill. The seething world of Magnolia Street opens with the song, *One*.

---

[6] From summary of film notes on *Magnolia* DVD cover, 1999

Analysis of the song *One*

A black screen affords a brief respite, before *One* cuts the silence with a slice of sound. A single, simple E minor chord is played 16 times on the upper register of a keyboard. As we listen, while giving the credits half an eye, we are alerted to the emphatic repetition of the same chord, played staccato.

4.1 Opening four bars of One

This repeated, detached sound sets up two interconnected themes in the film – unconscious ongoing behaviour patterns, and isolation. When Aimee Mann's voice eventually enters with the words *One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do* sung to a meandering step-wise melody, this theme of isolation, indeed alienation, is underlined.

4.2 Lead sheet with lyrics for first vocal line of One

The word 'One', sounding on the first, most important beat of the bar, and on the first, most important note of the E minor scale – E – is singled out for our attention. The second line of the verse: *Two can be as bad as one; it's the loneliest number since the number one*, begins in the same way.
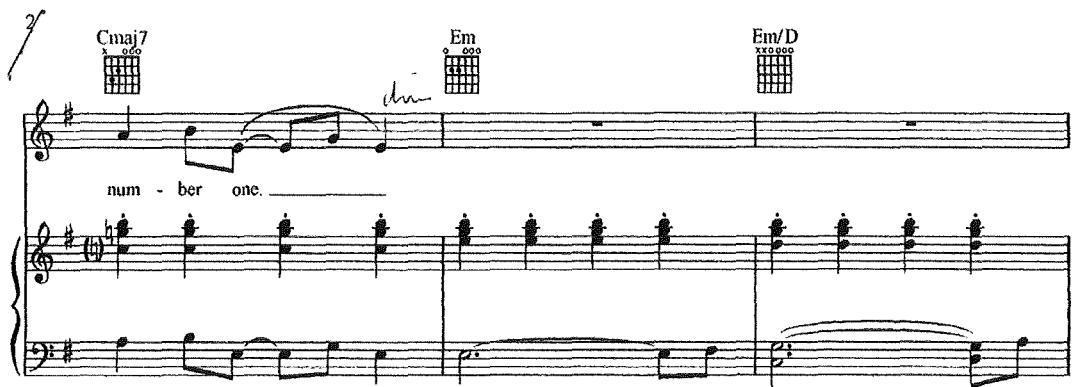
4.3 Lead sheet with lyrics for second vocal line of One

However, the melody for line 2 reinforces that *two*, is just as *bad as one*, by ending on an E, an octave lower. Ending on an even lower version of the 'home' note of the scale suggests a feeling of inevitability, if not certainty, that 'one', the self, is always ultimately alone. As the drum kicks in, a magnolia flower opens up on the screen. Through the transparent petals we view a map, presumably of the San Fernando Valley, including Magnolia Street. These interconnected street-lines quickly change to human veins, then to an aerial view. This visceral dualistic symbolism, of external and internal worlds, of community and individual, of mind and body, proclaims the tortuous ambivalence and desolate anomie of contemporary existence.

As the music continues into the second verse, we view Frank TJ Mackay (played by Tom Cruise) speaking on a television set in an anonymous room.
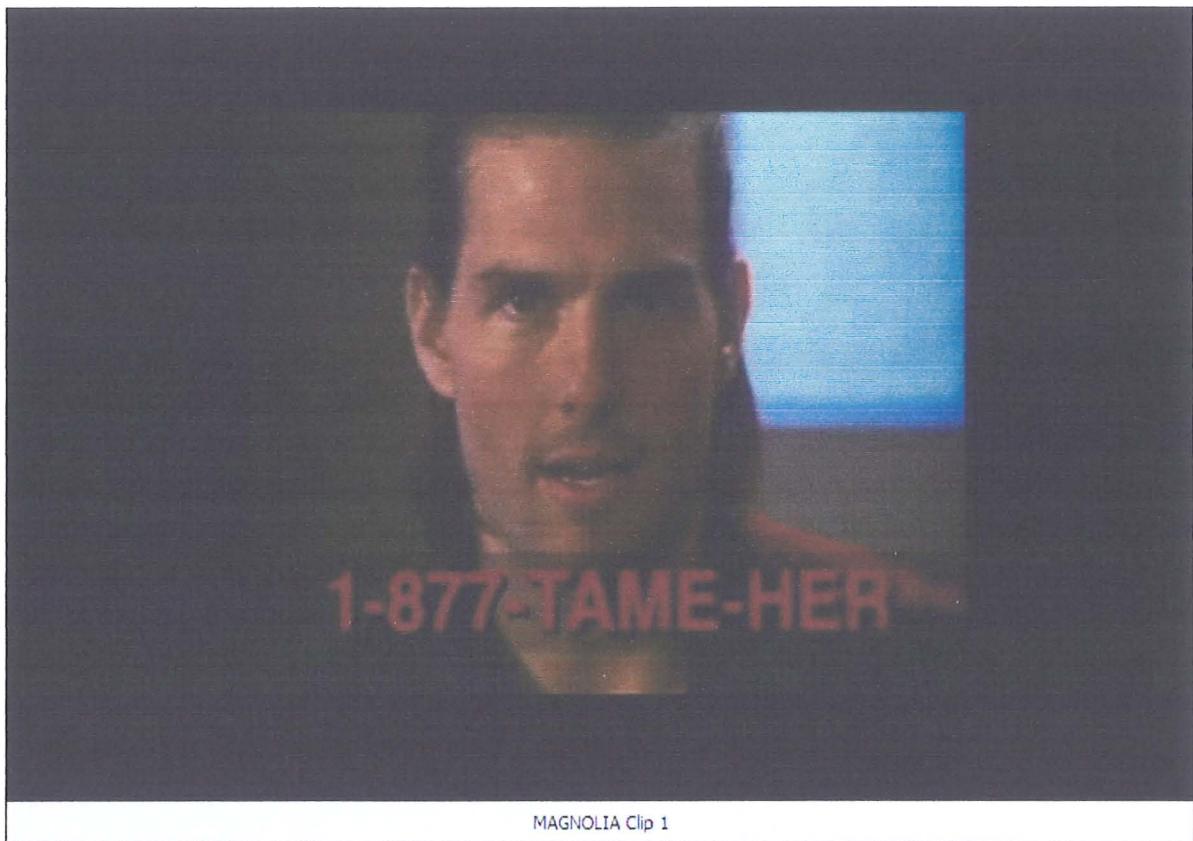
MAGNOLIA Clip 1

4.4 TJ Mackay in action

He is promoting his latest Seduce and Destroy video, entitled *Tame Her*. The music dips slightly so that we can hear Mackay's hard-sell language. It is blunt, sexist and offensive. He urges his exclusively male audience to take all they can from women. This video, he reassures, will teach you how "to get any hard-bodied blonde just dripping to wet your dock". We are still aware of the word 'one' bleating out from the song, and the insistent detached single chord pattern running through the music. The repetition of this chord sequence affirms that this is common behaviour for TJ Mackay. Its insistent nature suggests that this is behaviour he cannot control. The word 'one' in this context begins to mean many things. At this moment, the word could refer to selfishness, greed, and an unshakeable belief in the supremacy of the phallus. Yet the persistent staccato chord pattern, combined with the lyrics and the character's extreme behaviour, suggest a lack of self-control, a sense of being apart from society, and even though Mackay communicates to millions, a searing loneliness. The target audience for this advert is also the lonely – the

157

men who are James Bond in their dreams, but more Mr Bean in reality. It is also significant that the second verse of the song begins: *No is the saddest experience you'll ever know*. At the sound of the word 'No', we move to TJ Mackay's story. The rejection theme in the lyric contrasts starkly with Mackay's posturing on screen. The fact is, he is ambivalent about everything he does, but he suppresses the negative, ensuring that the only word he hears in life, is 'Yes'.

As TJ Mackay's voice continues spreading the gospel of sexual greed, the song increases slightly in volume and takes us across the cut to Claudia (played by Melora Walters), sitting in a bar. A middle-aged man approaches and says: "Hey". She turns round unsmilingly and faces the man. Without another word, they head for Claudia's apartment. After she snorts a line, while the man looks on with strained patience, he utters a single word: "So?", resulting in a cut to the bedroom. Claudia lies face-up, looking bored, far away, and unhappy. The nameless man satisfies himself with her rag-doll body, regardless. The music progresses in its meandering, yet insistent manner, with the word 'one' still reinforced in the vocal. The combination and continuation of TJ Mackay's voice and the song forge a psychological and physical link between the characters of Claudia and Mackay. They are the 'adult' children whose fathers have betrayed them. They both indulge in extreme behaviour. Both their fathers are powerful media men, connected to the game show, *What Do Kids Know?* While TJ Mackay promotes physical and psychological power over women, Claudia is, in this instance, a knowing victim. The song underlines the selfishness of TJ Mackay's thinking, and of Claudia's casual lover who wants nothing but sex. The fact that Claudia is a coke addict with deep emotional problems is of no concern to him. All of this, of course, suits Claudia. It is easier for her if no-one cares about her drug-taking, or repeated patterns of casual sex. At this moment, on this day, Claudia acts as she usually does – snorting a line, having sex, saying goodbye. TJ Mackay's remorseless behaviour also excludes emotions. Both characters promote the body as a controlling factor in relationships. Once the physical contact is over, nothing is left, and that's how they like it. The song in this context has a hollow ring as it reinforces their fixations. It also unites them in their utter ambivalence towards everything they do.

A cut, accompanied by the music and a new voice-over, takes us into the world of Jimmy Gator (played by Philip Baker Hall). Firstly, we view old TV footage of Jimmy, the

great media personality on *What Do Kids Know?* These clips mark his 12,000[th] hour of broadcasting. The tone of these clips soon changes. As the narrator joyfully announces: "He's a family man who's been married for over 40 years", we see Jimmy having casual sex with a woman in his office, then another clip showing Jimmy as a devoted husband, walking hand in hand with his wife. Jimmy takes what he wants from life, in the way TJ Mackay advises. In contrast to daughter Claudia, Jimmy's face is always smiling. He has it all – an adoring wife, a daughter, a "bouncing baby grandchild on the way", fame, fortune, and sex with any woman he chooses. We discover later that behind the smile, all is not well. Jimmy is dying of cancer, and feeling guilty over past actions. Here though, we view his normal behaviour patterns which the music underlines. Again, the music serves to connect the characters psychologically. Jimmy, like TJ Mackay, is all-controlling in front of the camera, and uses women. The two men communicate with millions of viewers, have an intensely busy life and an image to maintain. However, like Claudia, they are ultimately alone with their problems.

Next we meet Stanley (played by Jeremy Blackman), the child genius on the game show Jimmy presents. We see Stanley first on a TV screen, eventually in close up. His face is angelic and his presence is clearly important on the show. However, when we see him being bullied by his father in his real, off-screen life, overhead and long shots make him look insignificant, a pawn in others' lives. Stanley's behaviour patterns are dictated by his father. This includes doing chores, endlessly swotting to win the competitive rounds on *What Do Kids Know?* and trying to please his father, who can never be pleased. We see him struggling out of the car with his books, as his father leaves him to face another intensive day at school. There is no time for Stanley to make choices, express an opinion, or just be a kid. His life is geared towards earning money and winning in an acutely public arena. Paul Thomas Anderson cleverly links Jimmy's story to Stanley's through the song and the show. Again the song, with its emphasis on the word 'one', highlights the loneliness the boy experiences, and at the same time, the selfishness of those responsible for creating his melancholy. The insistent music suggests that, for Stanley, the pressure is never-ending.

The next character we meet is Donnie (played by William H Macy), the ex-child genius. We view him first on an old clip of *What Do Kids Know?* from 1968, and then on

this particular day at the dentist's. He is getting fitted for braces – even though he is now middle-aged. The dental assistants giggle in awe at his ex-game show, ex-child genius status. After leaving the dentist's, fretting that he might be late for work, Donnie gets into his car. As soon as the car begins to move, Gabrielle's music (*Dreams*) strikes up over Aimee Mann's song, which is still heard faintly in the background. We assume that *Dreams* is playing on a tape in Donnie's car. This is to become a diegetic musical feature we associate with Donnie as the film progresses. The fleeting domination of diegetic pre-existing music over the non-diegetic soundtrack is a clever aid to character construction. The title of this song could suggest that Donnie is not really addressing his real world situation, which is expressed in *One*. It drowns the word 'one' and the insistent chord patterns, just for a moment. Gabrielle's music also plays from the dentist's to Donnie's work place, like a companion. Every time Donnie is in his car, the same music emanates from the tape-player. The music, like the longed-for braces, gives him psychological support. Unfortunately, while *Dreams* plays loudly, Donnie accidentally drives the car through the plate-glass window of his work place. This is a typical day in Donnie's rather sad life.

The volume of *One* increases again as we meet male-nurse Phil (played by Philip Seymour Hoffman) arriving at the house of Earl Partridge, the producer of the game show *What Do Kids Know?* He immediately goes to attend to Earl, who is literally on his death bed. Phil and Earl communicate honestly with each other, and we very quickly understand Earl's personality. He is grumpily pleased to see Phil, and when asked how he is feeling, he says: "Fucking bullshit is what it is". He asks Phil to do something for him, and Phil is only too happy to oblige. Phil stands out because he is at one with himself, in good health, young, and a sensitive, trustworthy person. His character attributes provide stark contrasts with Earl, who is gravely ill, taciturn, untrustworthy and full of regret. The song continues to play, connecting Earl (played by Jason Robards) to the other characters through the theme of isolation. His past actions cause him to be estranged from his son, Jack (Frank TJ Mackay), and the wife he loved. His past actions cause his son to act in an extreme way, impelling him to be even more cavalier towards women than his father. Earl's game show causes Stanley to be unhappy, and Donnie to contend with a blighted life. The Show's presenter, Jimmy Gator, is responsible for his own daughter's misery. Earl, facing death,

has directly and indirectly caused all characters so far (apart from Phil and Linda) to be alone, and the song continues to haunt the screen as we begin to realise the extent of these dark connections. Briefly, the camera cuts to Earl's wife, Linda (played by Julianne Moore), as she paces through rooms in her nightdress, on the telephone, urging a doctor to relieve Earl's pain. She kisses Earl, then rushes out, issuing instructions to Phil about her husband's wellbeing. She stops the car outside the garage, and wails: "Fuck, fuck, fuck". She is riddled with guilt over her own past affairs, as she now loves Earl and is in turmoil with regret. While Linda is on the screen, the chorus lyric continues, acting in counterpoint to the screen and informing us of her psychological condition.

When the song progresses to a repeat of the second verse, we meet devout Catholic police officer Jim Kurring (played by John C Reilly). The lyric states: *No is the saddest experience you'll ever know. Yes, it's the saddest experience you'll ever know.* These lines suggest rejection, which of course triggers an intense sense of loneliness. Jim eats breakfast with a newspaper for company. He laughs along with the TV, and prays at his bedside. He talks to himself in the car, and narrates his own story. Paul Thomas Anderson blurs the distinctions between reality and fiction in Jim's life, with sound and dialogue moving freely from non-diegetic to diegetic spaces. When Jimmy speaks across the moving pictures of himself, we assume these words are his inner thoughts. When we see him talking to himself in the diegetic space, we realise he is on an imaginary talk show. The words he is uttering sound like a 'voice of God' documentary narration, and this would be in keeping with his personal belief system. "As we move through this life", he says, "we must try to do good". Clearly there is no-one in his life, and so Jimmy creates his own companions, rather like Donnie, to keep him from the cliff edge. The music is apt here. Jimmy is divorced – he has known the saddest experience of 'no'. After we have been shown a random moment in Jimmy's life on this random day, the music lurches to a halt.

The employment and positioning of this song is striking. While Anderson ignores the golden rule of inaudibility, he still uses the song to communicate a preferred reading of the psychological. The combination of an unconventional technique and a conventional 'persuasive' scoring practice makes for a bold opening. Gary Johnson (2008) argues that the incorporation of the song is "not the most subtle of approaches, and the music is played

at such a high volume that it effectively drowns out the actors" (p2). These statements are easy to defend: the song is blunt, dominant and loud, and we strain to hear the characters speaking. The hook line, with the central message of the song, is repeated over and over. The rule of inaudibility is squarely rejected, and on the surface, Claudia Gorbman's view on songs in film rings true: "Songs require narrative to cede to spectacle, for it seems that lyrics and action compete for attention" (1987, p20). However, Anderson has good reasons for employing the song in this way, and on close examination, it does, in fact, work quite subtly. Certainly, Anderson injects the audience with a fixed reading of the film, but this comes as a welcome relief at this point. We have just been exposed to Fortean possibilities of happenstance via the re-telling of three intricate urban myths. It is difficult to see where these are leading, and the point is that they lead nowhere. They are presented as inexplicable occurrences, so that the audience is thrown into a world of endless possibilities of chance happenings. This is to open wide the viewers' minds to what might ensue. *One* anchors the film's concern with alienation within the first few seconds, and hooks us into the story. The arresting opening four bars followed by the two-line first verse, give us something to cling on to in a wilderness of meaning. The song instantly secures a direct line to the psyches of the characters, and it is from there that we can begin to realise Paul Thomas Anderson's mission – to interweave and link these individual stories to create one huge narrative. The song *One* sets up the big story.

Composer Frank Waxman's comments on the functions of scoring, mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, are apt: "Film music is heard only once, not many times as in concert music, and it must therefore have the qualities of simplicity and directness" (in Thomas, 1991, p43). In *Magnolia*, this is especially the case – there is no further development of the song as leitmotif through specially-composed music. Here we have a self-contained song, heard in its entirety – once. However, although the song is direct and memorable, it is capable of various interpretations as we have seen above. It is about loneliness, and also about rejection. The bridge lines make this clear: *It's just no good any more since you went away. Now I spend my time just making rhymes of yesterday.* The bridge also flags up the theme of the past, which inextricably links our characters together. I have also suggested that the word 'one' could be associated with selfishness. So, lyrically, this song heralds the four important themes of the film: alienation, rejection, selfishness and the past, and none

162

of them are straightforward. The sung words relate these themes "all at once"[7], and as they are all connected to the psychological, and arguably the crisis of existentialism, the song is much more complicated than Gary Johnson asserts. Philip Brophy's comments on *Boogie Nights* are also applicable here, as Anderson is employing music to be part of a "vertical narration" in a "timbral text which must be listened to in order for it to be read" (2004, p50). Multiple actions take place on screen as the music progresses, so overall, several layers of meaning are being communicated simultaneously. Therefore, narrative does not "cede to spectacle" at all in this case, particularly if we consider music to be intrinsic to the creation of narrative.

The musical arrangement of the song enables further layers of interpretation, and as the song is foregrounded, the strands of musical meaning gain significance. Jon Brion has produced the whole song and plays every instrument we hear. The choice of electric instrumentation instantly grounds the song in contemporary times. The electronically manipulated sounds bring to mind Philip Brophy's theory that modern elements in cinema are the result of "technological, metaphysical and existential enquiry" and that "cinema's modern audiovisuality" is "more to do with endoscopic exploration, plastic surgery, chemical alteration, electroshock therapy and nerve stimulation", (2004, p4). Brion's arrangement underlines the psychological turmoil of the characters and their ways of coping: cocaine, pills, sex and morphine. The subtle acoustic drum-playing adds further complication, as it blurs the boundaries between free-form jazz, pop and hard rock, with intricate rhythmic textures. Meanwhile, classical-sounding rising and falling figurations weave through and across the keyboard's single-beat insistence, the meandering vocal, and the drum parts. The result is a contrapuntal tapestry of sound, intensely compressing time and space, and aptly reflecting the ensemble cast of lost and lonely individuals whose pasts are forever present. Further to this, while the song begins in E minor, the music quickly travels to unrelated tonal territories, which give the song an unending sense of unease. This is set against the insistent keyboard chords, always discreetly moving downwards. Two backing vocals harmonise, comment and reflect on Aimee Mann's singing of the lyric. This

---

[7] Referring to Philip Brophy's comments made earlier in this chapter about *Boogie Nights* from his book *100 Modern Soundtracks*, 2004, p50

is no corny song about lost love and loneliness. On the contrary, its density and obstinate persistence serve to communicate the ambivalence of the characters' lives.

In *Heat*, ambivalence is communicated in a hushed way. Interiority remains on the inside – it is secretly conveyed to us through the unheard specially-composed score featuring a mix of instrumentation from string quartet to studio-created electronic sounds. Hanna and McCauley perform traditional "warrior man" masculinities for the outside world, keeping their angst private and ultimately indefinable. The mixed feelings McCauley and Hanna carry do not consume them, as they are exemplary, sharp professionals. As Hanna says: "I gotta hold on to my angst. I preserve it because I need it. It keeps me sharp, on the edge, where I gotta be". However, the characters in *Magnolia* are engulfed by their angst, so much so that actions chosen are dominated and fuelled by their uncontrollable psychological conditions. The inside is blatantly on the outside, and music, as the divulger of the psychological, is appropriately brought to the fore.

When we hear the introductory chords of the song, they cut into the silence and darkness as described above. The loud opening engulfs us with its strong, detached, repeated chords and the "grain"[8] of Aimee Mann's voice, heard and felt in performance. The music draws our attention to the mind and the materiality of the body. When the magnolia flower opens, and our attention turns to its symbolism, there is still a focus on the music. The song's underlying insistence that 'one is the loneliest number' anchors all images on the screen. Paul Thomas Anderson constantly reminds us of the links between the characters, no matter how they may be appearing on screen. As in *Heat*, *One* is heard mostly in counterpoint to the screen dynamic, which brings it further to our attention. As Gary Johnson argues, the music competes with, and at times, dominates the dialogue, but this is clever manipulation of sound, music and dialogue by Anderson, to emphasise the physical and mental struggles each character endures every moment of their lives. They all try to deny the truth conveyed through the music, which will not go away. Arguably, as audience members, we experience these difficulties, too, as we physically and intellectually struggle to hear and make sense of all we perceive. The employment of this music is rather subtle after all.

---

[8] Term used by Barthes in *Image Music Text*, London, Fontana Press, 1977

There is much to consider in on-screen action *and* the off-screen, non-diegetic music as noted above. Claudia Gorbman argues: "Song lyrics threaten to offset the aesthetic balance between music and narrative cinematic representation. The common solution taken by the standard feature film is not to declare songs off limits – for they can give pleasure of their own – but to defer significant action and dialogue during their performance" (1987, p20). At this point in *Magnolia*, this is not the case at all. All the characters are introduced to us in considerable detail – we gain intimate access to their daily, unhappy lives. Bearing in mind that this is a truly multi-strand film with ten characters of equal status, all with intricate connections to one another and weighty psychological profiles, I would argue that "significant action and dialogue" are offered, but in presentations which challenge audience expectations.

However, this cue does operate like a traditional specially-composed score in certain respects. Referring to Gorbman's model[9], the music sets the mood and emphasises "particular emotions suggested in the narrative". At this point several of the characters, such as Linda and Stanley, do show stress, but others, such as Frank and Jimmy, act confidently. In these cases, the loud music works in counterpoint to the screen, to bring interiority to the outside as discussed above. Yet the technique of counterpoint itself is hardly new. Indeed, as noted in Chapter 1, composer Marc Blitzstein identified two types of film music counterpoint in *A Symposium of Composers* in 1940[10]. These are *counterpoint foreground* and *counterpoint background*, and they are cited by Blitzstein as two out of four types of musical relationships to film. Aaron Copland counts musical counterpoint as important in underpinning the psychological, by "playing upon the emotions of the spectator, sometimes counterpointing the scene with an aural image that infers the contrary of the thing seen" (1949, p5). In his article, Copland continues with the comments: "This is not as subtle as it sounds. A well-placed dissonant chord can stop an audience cold in the middle of a sentimental scene . . ." However, in *Magnolia*, the music pervades these scenes in a determined fashion, *from the start*. In fact, all the music in *Magnolia*, whether specially composed, pre-existing or somewhere between, is unrelenting in its expression of ambivalence *regardless* of what is shown on screen. So here we have a

---

[9] From Claudia Gorbman's book entitled *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*, BFI Publishing, London, 1987, p73
[10] In the journal *Music in Films*, 1940, Vol I, No 4

new slant on an old technique, which creates a fresh space for emotional turmoil to be communicated.

In terms of narrative cueing (number IV in Gorbman's model), the music operates in quite conventional ways. It indicates a point of view and helps to establish setting and characters. However, the music does not work in a "connotative" way so clearly. In Gorbman's model it is stated that "music 'interprets' and 'illustrates' narrative events". As the song *One* is intrinsic to narrative creation, as much, if not more, information is revealed through the song itself. While on-screen actions and events are multiple and varied, the music, in its audibility, equally demands audience attention.

However, there are two ways in which the song mirrors conventional techniques more than any other. Firstly, as Claudia Gorbman says: "Music provides formal and rhythmic continuity – between shots, in transitions between scenes, by filling 'gaps'". The song *One* does this and more – not only does it link all shots and scenes in a seamless way, it links the characters in their desperate psychological plights. Secondly, the music provides *unity*, "via repetition and variation of musical material and instrumentation, music aids in the construction of formal and narrative unity" (Gorbman, 1987, p73). Again, the song achieves this and more. While the song itself is not developed in the film, we hear within it a range of repetitions and variations of words, notes and sounds. The song also structures the narrative, as characters appear at appropriate points in the metre and lyric. In this instance, therefore, we can observe a significant development of the film score: it is dictating sound, dialogue and visuals and becoming increasingly significant in the creation of meaning, and, therefore, narrative.

In the above discussion, we can see that this music is, in fact, operating very much like a classical, specially-composed score except for four crucial reasons. Firstly, it is overtly loud. Secondly, music dominates other elements, especially dialogue and editing. Thirdly, the song is heard only once – yet in its entirety. Lastly, it is intrinsic to the structuring of the narrative. We might argue that the song is able to function like this because it is not quite specially-composed and not quite pre-existing. *One* was originally composed in 1968 by Harry Nielson, and performed by *The Moondogs* in the following year with limited success. It is most likely to be unfamiliar to a contemporary audience. In addition, Jon Brion's fresh arrangement, which was specially created for the film, offers a new

perspective on the original song, and so arguably for most, this song is heard in *Magnolia* for the first time. This situation, which provides a new arena for meaning, marks a further development in the contemporary film score and of Anahid Kassabian's theory concerned with pre-existing and specially-composed music. As a reminder, Kassabian (2001) argues that original classical scores condition "assimilating identifications" which "draw perceivers into socially and historically unfamiliar positions, as do larger scale processes of assimilation". In contrast, she suggests that compiled or pre-existing scores offer "affiliating identifications" which "depend on histories forged outside the film scene". Kassabian argues that if "assimilating identifications try to narrow the psychic field, then offers of affiliating identifications open it wide" (p4). All of this makes sense, except when we come to a song such as *One*, written 30 years prior to the film, with a freshly and specially-arranged score. If ties have been forged outside the cinema, then they are distant, weak or forgotten. So, for the minority of the audience, affiliating identifications will exist, but for the majority of the audience the music is heard largely uncontaminated[11] by past associations, as if specially composed for those moments. Therefore, Anderson is able to draw on the strengths of a piece of music which is self-contained and heard in full, but experienced by most for the first time.

In its heard, complete and fully-developed form, the music achieves higher status and so is able to communicate meaning assertively. Indeed, even if it were not foregrounded, the song would still have more potency. Royal S Brown (1994) states that within a postmodern perspective "music can take on a very privileged status as the ideal image, precisely because of its apparent nonreferentiality" (p236). Brown is particularly interested in the power of the specially-composed classical score in which words are excluded, but his comments are interesting here because, arguably, *One* with its sung lyrics does achieve a privileged status with *words and music and referentiality*. As noted in Chapter 2, there was a resurgence of pre-existing classical music in films from the 1960s, such as *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961) featuring the music of JS Bach, and *The L-Shaped*

---

[11] From Robynn Stillwell, 'Clean Reading: The problematics of In the Air Tonight in Risky Business' in Steve Lannin and Matthey Caley (eds), *Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema*, Intellect Books, 2005. In this article, she discusses the title song as having been 'contaminated' with various meanings in pop culture history, and how it is difficult to obtain a 'clean reading' in such cases. However, she also states that 'contaminated' songs can provide enrichment in a film text.

Room (1962) employing the music of Brahms. In such films Brown argues: "the excerpts of classical music compositions that replace the original film score no longer function purely as backing for key emotional situations, but rather exist as a kind of parallel emotional/aesthetic universe" (p239). Again, these comments are interesting in relation to *One*. In the 1960s, classical music was not as accessible as it is today, and to many audience members, the music of Brahms or Bach would be heard for the first time, just as *One* might be heard for the audience of *Magnolia*. In addition, in its "parallel emotional/aesthetic universe" *One* is able to operate *separately from and together with* the screen dynamic. Therefore, the employment of an ambiguous scoring technique, featuring a song played in its entirety, which is not quite pre-existing and not quite specially-composed, enables multiple layers of meaning to be communicated simultaneously.

This song has several multi-layered functions. It is there to link the characters together, through the central themes of loneliness, rejection, selfishness and the past. This is achieved equally through sung lyric (particularly with its emphasis on the words 'one' and 'loneliest'), vocal delivery of the melody, musical arrangement, and the grains of the performers. It is brought to our attention so that we do not forget the suffering of the characters, no matter how they might be behaving on screen. Instead of manipulating an audience to a preferred meaning, the music *tells* us bluntly of their challenging situations which, for the moment, are inescapable. The audience experiences these struggles as it works hard to grasp the meaning of the film by trying to focus equally on the dialogue, the music and the moving images. This undermines traditional story-telling in film, where music is subservient to the dominant narrative vehicles of dialogue and visuals. Jon Brion's electronic arrangement immediately anchors the film in the present, and helps to confirm the contemporary themes of alienation, isolation, the body and morality, by its use of manipulated sounds. The complicated harmonies, melody, lyric, vocal and instrumental writing reinforces the ensemble cast's interweaving stories, which link together to tell one big story, one grand narrative of individuals experiencing lives of ambivalence. Added to this, the grains of Aimee Mann's voice and Jon Brion's playing tell us that this story is about intense embodied experiences, where minds are on the outskirts of sanity, and bodies are on the verge of breakdown.

Analysis of the song *Wise Up*

(I begin this section with a description of the build-up to the entry of *Wise Up*, to enable understanding of the full implication of the song for all characters).

As the day continues, tension mounts. All the characters have reached a point of no return, and are poised to take action, for good or ill. Some truths are revealed – others are denied. Frank TJ Mackay lies about his background to a woman TV reporter. She confronts him with the real story – his mother is dead, and after she died, he was placed in the custody of a Miss Simms. Frank cannot handle these blunt facts and he must not allow them to be aired. He calls the interview to an abrupt close: "I gave you my fucking time, bitch". His anger at the truth, being exposed by a woman, is unleashed in the afternoon session, 'How to Fake Like You are Nice and Caring'. He shouts: "I will not apologise for who I am. I will not apologise for what I need. I will not apologise for what I want". At this moment it seems as though he will repeat the sins of his father. Meanwhile, Phil Parma tries to reach Frank by phone, in the hope of securing a meeting with Earl (Frank's father) before it is too late. The call is switched from one cursing, stressed Mackay aide to another: "It's fucking Janet with a situation on the phone". Eventually, the call reaches Frank. He vents his anger, hurt and frustration on the woman aide. "I just want you to do your fucking job!", he screams. She retaliates: "I am doing my fucking job, Frank". Two women have seen through the lies. The truth closes in on Frank and he is confronted with the new reality of his father's demise, and old realities he has carefully resisted. As he walks alone in a corridor, a glockenspiel plays, to suggest the stolen innocence of his childhood.

Claudia continues to consume cocaine and play loud music. Officer Jim Kurring asks her for a date and she accepts. The well-meaning cop's elation soon turns to despair when he follows the suspected Worm, and he loses his gun when the Worm fires a shot at him. He sobs to God, pleading for help to find his gun, as this is an unforgivable crime for any policeman. On TV, Jimmy Gator is suffering mentally and physically. He has visited daughter Claudia with disastrous results. The game show *What Do Kids Know?* is also in a mess today. Jimmy feels unwell, forgets his cues, stumbles and confuses the questions. Claudia watches him on TV as she snorts a line. Her father Jimmy's guilt is all-consuming, but he holds the show together, until Stanley wets his pants and refuses to continue. He has asked permission to go to the bathroom, but this request is denied as The Show must go on.

169

Jon Brion's specially-composed score includes a triumphant brass line as Stanley finally makes a stand against the game show executives, the other contestants, and his father. He quietly insists: "I'm sick of being the one . . . I always answer the questions. I don't want to do it any more . . . I'm not a toy. I'm not a doll". His father freaks backstage and chases Stanley as he runs to the bathroom. Brion's specially-composed glitzy, razzmatazz theme-show music plays loudly, providing a stark contrast to Stanley's mental state as he dashes away, and the show comes off air. Meanwhile, the other child contestants join in the resistance.

In a bar, Donnie declares his love for Brad, the bartender. As he leaves, Donnie shouts out to anyone who will listen: "The book says we may be through with the past, but the past is not through with us. And no, it is not dangerous to confuse children with angels". He still hurts at his parents' betrayal, and no-one cares. Donnie's vulnerability is cruelly exposed in the bar, and he throws up in a toilet, experiencing mixed emotions of relief and terror. Relief, that he has expressed the truth, and terror at its consequences. Later, he lays out workplace keys, ready to replace money he has stolen. Donnie is poised to turn his life around, and is confronting his demons. Meanwhile, Earl's wife Linda barely functions. She confesses her guilt to the lawyer, whose sound advice is not even heard: "I've sucked other men's cocks" she wails inconsolably. The lawyer's counselling attempts are also not welcome: "Shut the fuck up, shut the fuck up. You must really shut the fuck up". Later, Linda screams at Phil for contacting Frank, and slaps his face. Marginally calming down, she apologises and asks him to oversee Earl's final hours. She is too neurotic, too consumed with guilt, too selfish to cope. She cries: "I don't know how to do this. I do things and I fuck up . . . Can you tell him I'm sorry for the things I've done, fucked up". She leaves the two men to their fate, and drives away. In her car, she takes an overdose.

Earl asks Phil to sit near him. He tells Phil about his first wife Lily, and their son Jack, and how he loved Lily. "These two that I had and I lost . . . this is the regret that you make . . . the goddam regret . . . The biggest regret of my life is I let my love go . . . what did I do?" He advises Phil to ignore those who say "you shouldn't regret anything". Earl tells him: "You regret what you fucking want . . . You can use it, OK". Earl explains that he played around because "I wanted to be a man. I didn't want her to be a woman. You

170

know, a smart and free person who was something". Phil weeps as he gives Earl a shot of morphine to eliminate his mental and physical pain. He hugs Earl and kisses his forehead. As the camera homes in on a tight close-up of Phil's face, the gentle piano introduction to *Wise Up* is heard.

MAGNOLIA Clip 2
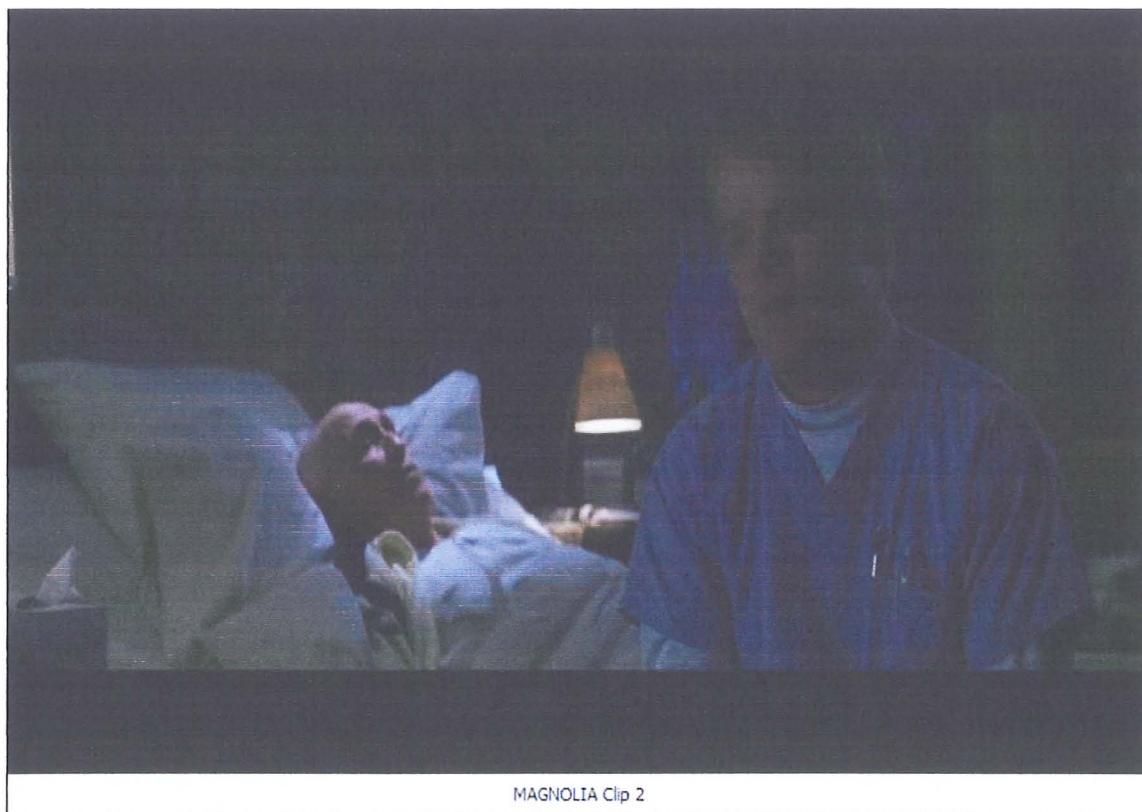
4.5 Phil nurses the remorseful Earl

4.6 Piano introduction for Wise Up

171

The music teeters into the film world. It feels as if it could stop at any moment, immediately capturing the mental frailty of the characters. This is music for messed-up minds. We hear the same phrase repeated four times before the voice enters, just as we heard a repeated pattern of chords for *One*. While the musical introduction of *One* assertively set up the stark themes of isolation and irrevocable behaviour patterns, here the introduction reinforces mental and physical frailty, shades of grey, difficulties, 'nowhere lands' which all link back to a core of ambivalence. The repeated pattern underlines the certainty and uncertainty that all characters experience at this moment. The short motifs played within each bar also reinforce this point. The motifs are linked and unlinked musically. They are single, self-contained musical motifs, but intrinsically part of the song, just as the characters are separate and alone with their particular problems, but together in their common realisation that it's time to wise up.

If we take the left-hand line first, we can see that the same beat is played, and is, in fact, continued into the first two lines of the song. This anchors the song in 4/4 time, also known as common time, arguably the most employed time signature in popular music. The left hand rhythm does not challenge any expectations. The first beat is the most important in the bar, and the same note is held for two beats. The last beat is the least important in the bar, and it ends with a quaver note (1/2 beat). The notes the left hand plays, however, slightly upset the certainty cart. The key signature is D major, but the first note the left hand plays is G – a related note, but clearly not the 'home note' of D. The right hand, in contrast, plays a full D major triad over the G, on the first and most important beat of the bar. The right hand reinforces the key of D, while the left hand tugs us towards the key of G. Tonality, therefore, is unclear from the outset. Yet, because these chords are related, their difference is subtle, hardly even noticed, rather like some of the characters in the film. While a steady beat persists in the left hand, the right-hand playing almost stumbles. The right-hand chords hedge around the main pulse. They start on the beat, then play off the beat for the remainder of each bar. Straightaway, this communicates a sense of uncertainty, a reluctance to keep up, a failure to make the grade. As indicated earlier, these opening bars offer us a direct line into the characters' psyches, as did the introduction for *One*. Here, the underlying theme of ambivalence is clearly stated by the music.

After one bar of the piano introduction, a cut takes us to Claudia preparing a line of coke. We hear Claudia's voice whispering: "You're so stupid", and naturally, quietly, Mann sings the first two words, *It's not*, then Claudia joins in, to perform the first lines of the song as a duet, one voice off-screen, one on-screen. The simultaneity of diegetic and non-diegetic music sounding together has an almost heart-breaking effect. The grain of Aimee Mann's voice is plaintive, breathy, unique. The grain of Claudia's voice is fragile, hesitant, not quite in time, not always on the note. It is also distinctive. Claudia is late with her entry as she is getting a fix of cocaine, and this adds to the intense embodied feel of the song at this moment. The vocal line is subtly syncopated, as is the piano accompaniment. The awkward seventh leaps from low to high expose the voice's vulnerability, and any weaknesses in pitching. This combination of syncopation, physical tuning difficulties, two distinct "grains" and a vague tonality which is neither fully in D or G, communicates a poignant sense of ambivalence about human existence.

4.7 The opening vocal line for Wise Up

Aimee Mann's voice enters on a low A, on the very last quaver of the bar, then continues to a G and slides to an A, an octave above. The low note on the word 'it's' immediately followed by the G and A gives a sense of oscillation, extremes, and, in this context, intense emotional instability. As already indicated, this interval is difficult to sing, but as Mann is a professional performer, this would not be the rationale behind the notes, particularly as we know this song to be pre-existing. I would argue that Mann chose to write the G before the A to challenge musical expectations (this interval is always strongly discouraged in classical vocal arrangements), to allow that leap to jar, and to show that there is a slight hesitation before climbing to a resolution on the A, but at the opposite end

173

of the octave. While the lyric states an emphatic *It's not*, the music says the opposite – it expresses a lack of conviction. When Claudia's voice enters (after her fix of cocaine), she does not bother with the G. The octave leap alone is hard enough to achieve. So, only Aimee Mann's voice sings that awkward interval A to G, which means that the singers are not quite in time with one another. This is the case all the way through the song when this particular phrase is reiterated. All the singers leave out the G, while Aimee Mann consistently includes it. Yet this is not the only musical subtlety employed to convey mixed feelings. The rhythm for the vocal line resists the main pulse, just like the piano part. The characters do follow the rhythm of the song, (more or less, some more accurately than others) and so the instability of the pulse, added to the physical difficulties of pitching much of the song, inject an intensely visceral experience. All the while, Aimee Mann's voice sings confidently, precisely, and with authority, which elevates her voice to the position of mentor, and, I argue, exposer of truths.

Claudia, the first character to sing (with Aimee Mann), cries as she sits on the sofa in front of the lines of cocaine. She is in mental turmoil. Her father has abused her, he is dying and she has just found love. She chips cocaine to soothe the stress, unconvincingly clinging to life.

She sings:

4.8 Claudia's vocal lines in Wise Up

175

These sung words capture Claudia's personal situation perfectly – even though the lyric is, in fact, pre-existing. The words express her angst, and bind her past and present inextricably together. On the one hand, the lines could refer to past decisions to embark on a series of casual relationships and to consume cocaine. Both of these activities have since become uncontrollable habits, strategies for the suppression of anxieties, and this was not what she intended. On the other hand, these first two lines could be interpreted more positively. When Claudia meets Jim Kurring and likes him, she is overwhelmed by the fact that he also likes her. Suddenly, Claudia has found the kind of relationship she needs and wants, but she *can hardly stand it* because she will not deal with the past. The final line brings both past and present into the foreground explicitly and uncomfortably. *It's not going to stop* means that her self-destructiveness, through inability to address her past, will not stop – *till*, as Jim Kurring sings, *you wise up.*

In a fluid camera movement we move from Claudia's apartment to Jim's. We hear Claudia's voice segueing into Jim's:

4.9 *Jim's vocal lines in Wise Up*

Jim's vocal lines bring his situation sharply into the present reality. He realises he can take action himself and change his life for the better. All the while, Aimee Mann's voice pervades the non-diegetic space like a mentor, telling the characters what to do. At the same time, the characters are reaching points of realisation, and telling themselves what to do. The song, like a baton in a relay race for life, passes from character to character. The music and sung words act as narrative, and together, they inform us of the characters' pasts, presents and futures should they choose to live anew. Instead of moving from past to present to convey memory or history, Anderson chooses to move across stories to connect suffering in the here and now. There is an existentialist understanding of consciousness being "essentially temporalised". As Sartre says: "At present it is not what it is and it is not what it is not"[12]. In other words, each of these characters currently lacks the future at which they are aiming for a better life. "The present is simply the presence of consciousness to the world as a being that constantly transcends the past towards the future" (Gary Cox, 2009, p33).

Jimmy Gator barely hits the notes of his lines, as he sits slumped in a chair at home. The grain of his voice reveals that he reluctantly accepts his life will end without Claudia's forgiveness. Jimmy passes the song baton to Donnie Smith, whose car music elsewhere in the film has drowned out the non-diegetic score to soften the bleakness of his reality. Here, sitting at his kitchen table with a huge cheque for $100,000 mounted on the wall and made out to his younger self, Donnie becomes a part of the music, physically and mentally. He absorbs the song by singing it, by taking advice from it, by acknowledging its meaning and by finding himself in a more enlightened psychological space. Donnie pushes the song into the chorus, where Phil (very briefly) and Earl take over. Earl struggles to sing – his voices cracks on every sung note – as his life-cycle nears completion. He passes the song on to Linda, who is sitting in the driving seat of her car in a quiet street. Linda wills her life to end with an overdose and, as the rain beats down, she sings the bridge, in a barely conscious state. Like Jimmy Gator, she scarcely makes an attempt to sing the song. Meanwhile, Frank is also in his car outside his father's house, and decides to pay his father one last visit. Practically motionless, he brings the song nearly to its conclusion. His body

---

[12] Quoted from *Being and Nothingness* in Gary Cox, *How to Be and Existentialist*, London and New York, Continuum,2009.

177

language – limp, hunched up, tearful – is dramatically different to the Frank we know. His repetition of the hook line reminds us that he needs to wise up more than anyone. Stanley sings the last line of the song. His high child's voice and angelic face remind us of the magnolia symbolism. With certainty and sweetness, he sings: *so just give up*. Stanley, the youngest character, seals the song's meaning. After wising up to each situation, action must be taken, by giving up those self-destructive patterns of behaviour which cause such personal anguish.

In one sense, the songs I have analysed so far are strikingly blunt instruments of communication. The characters cannot escape the music, and it is the score which reminds us – and them – of their difficult situations. The songs reveal interiority, and bring the inside to the outside explicitly. Even when Donnie's car music drowns out the non-diegetic score for a moment, it only returns more insistently. The songs are also conspicuously foregrounded, which constantly brings them to our attention. In the case of *Wise Up*, where the characters absorb the song's meaning and sing along, the music and lyrics become the action, the dialogue, and, therefore, the narrative. So, instead of narrative ceding to spectacle, as Gorbman claims happens with songs in films, spectacle cedes to music. The long takes and close-ups of the actors as they sing (mostly in a sitting position) enable close consideration of the lyrics, the psychological conditions of the characters, their imminent futures, and the messages communicated through the musical arrangement and vocal grains. The singing of the song is a cathartic action for the characters and a pivotal moment in the film. In addition, contrary to Gorbman's theory that music is more effective when it is 'unheard', this cue is infinitely more powerful because it *is* heard, considered, and embodily experienced.

I have discussed elements of directness and subtlety in the score for the song *One*. I have also commented upon the intended embodied struggles both the characters and audience experience when confronted with competing visuals, dialogue, sound and music. Now, I want to examine the positioning of *Wise Up* in the film and its musical arrangement, to see why the song is so potent at this point. I also want to consider how and why the song continues to express the ambivalence felt so searingly through *One*, and throughout the entire scores of *Heat* and *Magnolia*.

When Claudia's voice enters during the introduction of the song, bringing the non-diegetic music into the diegetic space, it seems 'natural'. As the music divulges the psyches of the characters so quickly, it does not seem unusual that they should express their innermost thoughts through the singing voice, even though this film is not a musical. There is no sense of "a song coming on", especially as we have come to associate the playing of music with Claudia. Yet, the technique of blurring the boundaries between diegetic and non-diegetic sound is to be found in the musical. Rick Altman, in his book *The American Film Musical* (1987), argues that "this intermixing is at the very heart of the style characteristic of the American film musical. By breaking down the barrier separating the two tracks, the musical blurs the borders between the real and the ideal" (p7). In this song, the 'real' predicaments of the characters' lives are communicated, in addition to the 'ideal' worlds they could reach, if they took the 'ideal' necessary action of wising up. Also, music has been foregrounded to aid character construction elsewhere in the film, so it is no surprise that the characters should also adopt this method to comment on themselves, foregrounding the score even more to provide further intensities via a catharsis of emotions. The song provides a special, almost spiritual vehicle for this intention.

However, I am aware that others do not share this view. In the interview with Cynthia Fuchs (1999) cited earlier in the chapter, Anderson himself comments on a review by the *New York Times* which stated that the film is a masterpiece until the characters sing. Anderson's reaction was: "The singing is not that fucking crazy. For me, once they sing, the movie becomes so much more traditional, the camera doesn't move so much, people are having conversations, it's picking up the pieces of the first two hours" (p1). Anderson's comments are, of course, absolutely right in terms of bringing the film's elements together, but it is remarkable that he downplays such a potent moment in his own film. The word 'traditional' does not ring true when associated with this song. The selection of the song is appropriate. There is an apt lyrical space for each of the characters, even though this song is actually pre-existing[13]. Slowing down the editing speed enables the song to dominate in a particularly powerful way. This is not traditional. Often in a music video, for example,

---

[13] The song features in the very end credits of *Jerry Maguire* (1996), so assuming most cinema-goers do not watch the end credits, almost all the audience of *Magnolia* would hear the song for the first time in the film, unless they heard the soundtrack CD first, or were Aimee Mann fans with prior knowledge of this song.

sexualised bodies move within fast edits to the pulse of the music. The music is equal to the visuals, and sometimes less important. Here, the song dictates all elements, and the slow editing emphasises the full embodied impact of each line of the musical instrumentation and lyric. The long takes allow a focus on the grains of the characters' voices, which reveal their mental and physical pain. The song links the characters together and forces them to confront demons from the past. *Wise Up* brings about the wising up. It is an almighty, complex, multi-layered action code which provokes enigmas in our minds. This is an effective example of a music narrative. We wonder how they are all going to survive without their crutches of cocaine, sex, pills and shots of morphine. The song here is stronger than any visual element, any character, or any material or spiritual form. It is all-powerful and all-pervading, insisting that ambivalence, even when confronting regretful pasts, will never fade.

There is yet another reason why the use of the song is so striking and potent at this point in the film. I mentioned earlier that the lyric provides an apt space of reflection for each character. So, in fact does the music. Let's look firstly at the song as a whole. After the rhythmically faltering piano introduction, the vocal rhythm continues to resist the beat, even at the end of the hook, where a musical conclusion might be expected. All phrases begin and end off the beat. Every line the characters sing is left hanging on a note which is hardly ever on the tonic, or home note of D. On the one occasion a character's line does end on a D, it is accompanied by an unrelated chord. Throughout the song, the tonality is either vague (eg the D chord over G as already discussed) or unrelated to the home key. The musical language, I argue, expresses that the characters are, at last, moving into new territories but also acknowledging the difficult struggles of the past. The heightened feeling of time-space compression in the lyric is intensified by fleeting chord changes (on average two per bar) in the arrangement. When we add the instability of the rhythm to the unsettled tonality, and remember that the music constantly undermines the certainty expressed in the lyric, we, and the characters, are invited to experience extreme surges of mixed emotions. The music and lyrics unite the characters in their ambivalence towards their current existences.

Returning to my point about individual musical spaces for the characters. Two of the most neurotic people in the film are Linda and Frank. Their lines follow each other's in the

song. Linda's first two lines *Prepare a list for what you need, before you sign away the deed,* contain mostly step-wise intervals which fall then rise, then fall then rise in a purposeful, meticulous manner.

4.10 Linda's vocal lines in Wise Up

The lyrics remind us that she organised her lists of drugs carefully, and that she has made a definite decision to renounce Earl's will. The vocal melodic line reinforces this to a certain

181

degree. However, the musical accompaniment expresses her psychological state. Her lines start confidently, assertively in G major. The piano playing mirrors this certainty by playing full G major chords on each beat of her first bar. This mood soon changes (by her second bar) as we move into E major, then Esus4 over B to E major. In the next bar we move to a G chord with an added 9th. This last chord is heard in between the words *cause it's* and *not going to stop*. It forces a pause, a breath, which shows hesitation. The music continues in this chromatic fashion as Frank sings a reiteration of the hook. Linda's and Frank's sections are the most complicated harmonically and rhythmically, and Frank's lines particularly stress the extremities within his psyche. He is both arrogant and vulnerable, like and unlike his father, sure and unsure of his actions. The song ends with Stanley on the note A. This is the dominant of D, and part of the D major chord, but it is still not D. While Stanley's lyric simply states, *so just give up*, the music resists such certainties, and returns to the opening piano lines of individual motifs, which are not quite in D and not quite in G. While wising up and giving up are the right moves to make, outcomes will not be certain or easy for these characters. Even in the last notes of the song, the music does not offer us relief from the ache of ambivalence.

So far, I have discussed how *Wise Up* seizes hold of the screen dynamics, and overtly undermines the traditional narrative elements of visuals and dialogues by working its way into the film world, so much so that it engulfs the characters. Music is not subservient to narrative – it is functioning *as narrative*. However, to achieve such a status, we need to delve more deeply, to establish exactly why this is the case. Firstly, there are the sung words, which now function as mental dialogue to inform us that all the characters are in the process of wising up, for a better future. However, the fragility of the characters' vocal grains heard against Aimee Mann's confident, mentoring vocal, accompanied by a contrary musical arrangement, destabilises fixed meanings and any ideas of certainty. When sung, lyrics transform into a moving, ever-changing mix of melody, vowel sounds, breathing and dynamics, all of which flow from the body. As Barthes says: "the grain is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs", and it is the grain that can "lay open *signifiance* in all its volume" (1977, p188). Not only that, John Hull argues that "the voice is a fingerprint of sound, in which the history of the person is encoded" (2001, p13). The characters' singing words tell their individual life stories in the film, but also

inadvertently something of their own personal pasts beyond the acting world. Words, therefore, provide only one strand of possible meaning when sung, and so the entire song's status is increased in its inscrutability, its insistence on abstruseness, provoking an active audience searching for clarity in a film about ambivalence.

We also need to ask if any traditional scoring expectations and techniques are employed. By exploring this question, we can arguably pinpoint new practices in film scoring, and also conventional scoring intentions which have remained, developed, dissipated or disappeared. In considering these aspects, we might delineate precisely how musical elements operate as narrative and how they are able to express contemporary existence more potently than traditional film and film music components.

Firstly, let us remind ourselves of the kind of cue *Wise Up* presents. It is non-diegetic *and* diegetic. Operating in two spaces – one inside the film world, one outside it – this cue not only presents a hybridised technique which merges new with old, but also a fresh, intensified film component. This double cue is heard as if in stereo, with special effects – Aimee Mann's voice and the voices of the characters coming through both speakers, with the added dimension of the musical arrangement, which is present in the non-diegetic score, but also arguably in the minds of the characters on screen. While the song *One* pervades the screen, communicating a central theme of ambivalence which never finds relief, the characters are nevertheless seen in their everyday activities, *regardless* of the music. In the final analysis, therefore, *One* works mostly in a non-diegetic capacity, even though it dominates other screen elements associated with the construction of narrative.

Wise Up, on the other hand, operates equally, but more forcibly on all planes. When first heard, the piano music is entirely outside the scene observed, in that the source is not seen or assumed to be there. In these initial few seconds the music operates like an abstract, non-diegetic specially-composed score. When Aimee Mann's voice enters confidently, then Claudia's falteringly, two more strands of musical communication are introduced in addition to the layers of sounds and meaning within the sung lyric as discussed above. Therefore, this new scoring practice sets up a fresh space for multi-formed story-telling, and the way the song is positioned and employed in the film reinforces its ability to

function as narrative. This is an important reason why, at this point, the score has heightened status.

Another reason is that *Wise Up*, like *One* is not quite pre-existing and not quite specially-composed. Again, as discussed, this is an unusual scoring practice, which on the one hand allows the music to partly function like a specially-composed score as it is heard mostly for the first time by the audience, and on the other hand, to gain a distance from the screen as it operates in a "parallel universe"[14]. Again, this technique empowers the score as its contribution is redoubled. Finally, *Wise Up* is heard in full; but it is fragmented by the characters themselves as they each sing and absorb the song for themselves. This shows how the visuals are *conducted by* the music. They move with, to, around and at the mercy of the song. Together, these new scoring techniques increase the score's status so much so that they leach the power away from visual and dialogue.

So, does the song function in any way like a traditional score? Yes – but there are also subtle differences. The music is certainly a 'signifier of emotion' (number III in Claudia Gorbman's model). Gorbman states: "Soundtrack music may set specific moods and emphasise particular emotions suggested in the narrative, but first and foremost, it is a signifier of emotion itself" (p73). Certainly, *Wise Up* sets a mood, and emphasises emotions, which the characters reinforce by singing along. However, the mood is not 'specific' or the emotion 'particular' as the characters express mixed feelings. At the same time, Aimee Mann's voice operates as a clear force for good, while the musical arrangement is redolent of ambivalence. This lack of signification is an example of a subtle difference between new and conventional techniques. *Wise Up* communicates *signifiance*, and in resisting ultimate meaning, in refusing to offer relief, I argue that it gains potency.

The song also provides *continuity* (number V in Gorbman's model), such as "formal and rhythmic continuity – between shots, in transitions, between scenes, by filling 'gaps'". In this case, the song adheres to traditional scoring values in every sense – apart from the fact that *Wise Up* is a song, and not entirely abstract. Lastly, the song provides *unity* (number VI) "via repetition and variation of musical material and instrumentation". *Wise Up*, like *One*, is heard in full, but is not developed like a leitmotif. Nevertheless, within the

---

[14] Royal S Brown's comments, mentioned earlier, on the capacity of pre-existing music in postmodern films to occupy a "parallel universe" which can communicate separate strands of meanings.

song there is "repetition and variation" which link the characters together in their psychological turmoil. However, the second half of the unity rule is interesting. It states: "music aids in the construction of formal and narrative unity". In this, we can identify a precise change in scoring technique, as *Wise Up* dictates the formal and narrative unity. Indeed, we might say that it represents the formal and narrative unity as it is the music which tells the story and controls the editing and entrance of visuals – and there is no traditional spoken dialogue during the music. Here again we can detect an empowerment of the score, a rise in status.

These comments lead us to the question of *Narrative Cueing* (number IV in Gorbman's model). At first glance, *Wise Up* functions rather traditionally in terms of *referential / narrative* by "indicating point of view, supplying formal demarcations, and establishing setting and characters". However, in consideration of *connotative* narrative where "music 'interprets' and 'illustrates' narrative events", we can detect another precise change in scoring developments. The cue *Wise Up contains and presents* the narrative events, as all the actions take place *within* the song. Some of these actions are in the mind, as the characters decide to take action and wise up. Another is the action of singing the song. Other actions include Aimee Mann advising through the song, and the characters responding by reflecting, considering and making decisions about their lives. Here, we are presented with visuals interpreting and illustrating the music. Again, the score is empowered. After all this, it seems almost superfluous to note that the music is, of course, audible, and intended to be heard conspicuously.

Wise Up, then, performs the function of a mentor, advising the characters what to do. It operates as several action codes which force the characters into new psychological spaces, where they tell themselves what to do. The song is the most powerful component in the film at this moment. It dictates all that we and the characters experience in those scenes. The song forces the edits to slow down, and become subservient to it, so that there is a focus on the grains of the voices. In the long takes, the characters struggle with the notes to reflect the way they contend with their lives. Certainty is expressed in the lyric and uncertainty is conveyed in the music with its awkward leaps, indefinable tonality and syncopated rhythms. As the song builds with the introduction of bass guitar, percussion and chamberlin, the binaries of security and insecurity intensify. After the song is over, we

185

cannot be sure that all will be well. The mentor has advised, and her voice is one of reason. However, as these characters have lived so long in the shadows between sanity and insanity, we ask ourselves if, once they have wised up, can they give up?

Both *One* and *Wise Up* prise open spaces for character and audience reflection. While the songs offer direct lines to character psyches, they do not manipulate towards fixed conclusions through ultimate signification. Anderson employs these songs to demonstrate the bigger picture – the individual surviving in a confusing contemporary world – where few things are simple. The songs express those complexities, showing alienation but also possible links to others, no matter how strained, difficult or unpleasant those relationships might be.

Analysis of *Save Me*

Claudia and Jim reach out to grasp one of those links at the end of the film. This part of the story is told almost entirely through the song *Save Me*. Just before we hear the opening chords, we view Donnie replacing money he has stolen, under Jim's watchful eye. Jim talks across these scenes, and we are reminded of the fine lines between fiction and reality in Jim's life, expressed through seamless switches between diegetic and non-diegetic sound in the film. Sometimes Jim offers a 'voice of God' documentary style narration. At other times, he talks to himself in the car as if he is being interviewed on an imaginary talk-show. At this point in the film, we initially see Jim talking to Donnie, but we cannot hear specific words. Jim's 'talk-show' voice takes over, then we see him alone in the car, considering the act of forgiveness. He is in deep contemplation. His fantasy world is disappearing, and his real, potentially better life is beginning to sharpen in his mind. Jim's lips do not move, but his talk-show voice continues non-diegetically in a slower, more deliberate way as reality emerges. He says: "What can we forgive? Tough part of the job, tough part of walking down the street". As he starts the car, heading for Claudia's, we hear the introductory bars of *Save Me*, played by Aimee Mann on acoustic guitar, and John Sands on bass drum. The music pushes across a cut which takes us to Claudia's bedroom. She is sitting upright in bed, and her mother is leaving the room after making sure her daughter is comfortable.

186

Claudia's face is expressionless, but her eyes are watery. She looks slightly to the side, fully absorbed in her own thoughts. As the introductory guitar chords and bass drum play, there is time to absorb the mise-en-scene of Claudia's humble apartment, and to consider her psyche. From the opening chords alone, it is clear that she has turned a corner. The music begins assertively in G minor, with emphasis on second and fourth beats, as opposed to the more conventional first and third beats. While the sheet music is marked 'moderately slow', the song feels faster than *Wise Up*, mainly because of its obstinate rhythm, with stress on the "off-beats". On the fourth beat of the bar, traditionally known as the weakest beat in 4/4 time, there is further emphasis because of the chromatic note F sharp, the leading note of G minor. This causes a certain dissonance.

4.11 Introductory four bars of Save Me

The rhythm is as insistent as it was at the start of this day on Magnolia Street, with the song *One*. That particular song pervaded the screen to illustrate the unrelenting loneliness, angst, negative behaviour patterns and painful mixed feelings that characters experienced over their choices of actions. The introduction to *One* was simpler both rhythmically and harmonically, partly because direct communication was needed at that point, after the happenstance scenes. In *Save Me*, these introductory chords are no less insistent, but they are more intricate in harmony and rhythm. The combination of the assertive, almost jaunty rhythm, minor key with added chromaticism, and repeated phrases always seeking to resolve at the end of each bar, seem to suggest an acknowledgement of the difficulties ahead and those already experienced, mixed with renewed fortitude and determination. As

the grain of Aimee Mann's voice enters, with a dulled decisiveness[15], there is no change in Claudia's expression, and there is no movement in the scene at this point. Only the music informs us that Claudia has travelled to a better, safer psychological space.

---

[15] The flattened notes, not-quite clear tonality, and contained pace of the music in addition to Aimee Mann's subdued vocal delivery give a sense of dulled, possibly chemically-controlled emotions here.

4.12 Verse 1 and into the chorus of Save Me

189

The melody line – floating on off-beats, teetering around the main harmonies with accented passing and suspended notes hinting at mild dissonance, and revelling in melismatic treatment of vowel sounds – gives a sense of playfulness, even a hint of abandonment. The lyric brings a harder, almost more practical strand to the song as Claudia, we assume, considers that Jim Kurring might, after all, be the one to *stem the flow of her psychological bleeding*. The question is though, can he actually save her from herself and from being a freak. On the first sounding of the word 'save' in the opening chorus, Jim Kurring's voice is faintly heard as he arrives at her flat. Simultaneously, Claudia looks directly up at him.

Jim talks to Claudia, but their dialogue is rendered inaudible by the music. The song expresses Claudia's thoughts, which are so loud in her head that she, like the audience, barely hears Jim. The song builds to include bass guitar and accordion. As it moves towards the bridge, and increases in volume, the electric guitar enters, conveying a release of tension and a mounting passion. Right at this moment, and in the last seconds of the film, Claudia turns her head and smiles – not at Jim, but at the viewer.

MAGNOLIA Clip 3

4.13 Claudia turns to the audience and smiles

The smile acknowledges our presence in the film and invites, possibly assumes, a connection to the film which is intimate and personal. The message, conveyed through the song, is that to find happiness, you must save yourself or find another to save you. Jim, we assume, saves Claudia. Earl dies – perhaps death saves him. Jimmy Gator commits suicide, and so saves himself from further anguish. Linda is saved by Dixon (the Worm's young son) and recovers in hospital. Frank pays her a visit. We assume that Frank also saves himself, perhaps with the help of Phil, comes to terms with the past, and tries to do good. Stanley tells his Dad that he has got to be nicer. Although his words fall on deaf ears, Stanley has moved to a new psychological space, where he can be happier.

The song *Save Me* dominates visuals and dialogues, with the lyric taking on the role of interior dialogue, transformed into sung sounds to make Claudia's mind transparent. The lyrics emphasise the existentialist understanding of consciousness as Claudia transcends her past, moving towards her future which is not yet. The song, therefore, operates as the chief narrative form, as, unusually, most of the actions occur within the music. The only four actions on screen are: Claudia's mother leaving after ensuring her daughter is comfortable; Jim arriving at Claudia's apartment; Claudia looking directly at Jim; and then Claudia facing the audience with a smile. While three of these actions are significant in terms of character progression – Jim taking steps to move on, Claudia acknowledging Jim in her life as a potential force for good, and her joyous realisation that she has wised up – they are not as complicated or as significant as the actions conveyed through the sung words and musical arrangement. The musical arrangement, for example, informs us of subtle shifts in Claudia's psyche as it travels into freer spaces with increasing confidence. The instrumentation builds from acoustic guitar and bass drum, to electronic bass, melodica, keyboards and percussion. As each additional instrument enters, another degree of strength is attained. When the electric guitar enters at the bridge and Claudia smiles at the audience simultaneously, it *sounds* as if she is being released. There is a crescendo as she smiles, and a move to strident major chords played *mezzo forte* (fairly loudly). This musical language is certain, and as the bridge continues, and secular saviours such as Peter Pan and Superman are referenced in the lyric, a playfulness in the music is evident, with its brief dips into minor chords, the vocal luxuriating in melismatic treatment of vowel sounds,

and tricksy syncopation. The bridge is also treated with a harder rock style which reinforces these points, and, as the credits roll, there is a sense of hope.

This music operates non-diegetically. That is until those moments when Claudia shifts her head to look at Jim and then to the audience. However, as Claudia gives nothing away throughout the scene, remaining more or less static until she smiles, the music entirely depicts her psyche, her mental processes and actions. Aimee Mann and the band perform *as* Claudia. They represent her interiority, and so arguably this music seeps into the film world seamlessly and undetected. Throughout the film, we have come to associate loud music with Claudia, and so, as with *Wise Up*, it is no surprise to hear music used to represent her psyche at this moment.

Save Me, while played in full, is heard with visuals only until the bridge, at which point the credits appear. Therefore, the song acts rather like a musical coda, rounding things off to a hopeful conclusion, if not a satisfactory one. Arguably, the song represents the psyches of all surviving characters as they travel to the next phase in their lives. This song then, is potent, and when considered against Claudia Gorbman's scoring objectives, it seems that half the conventions are upturned, and in reverse. Working through Gorbman's 'Principles of Composition, Mixing and Editing', we can discern that the music is audible as opposed to inaudible. While the song is a 'signifier of emotion', it redoubles its potency by representing *all emotion*. Nothing, apart from the self-conscious smile at the end of the film, is evident from screen or dialogue, and so narrative *and* emotion are embedded within the music alone. Therefore, instead of the soundtrack setting "specific moods" or emphasising "particular emotions suggested in the narrative", the song's musical arrangement and sung words constitute narrative and emotion simultaneously. There is also an upturned expectation in terms of narrative cueing. Instead of music, for example, "indicating point of view and establishing setting and characters", the mise-en-scene takes on these functions. In turn, this frees the music to tell us Claudia's viewpoint, and make clear where her character (and the others) are, psychologically. The music does not interpret or illustrate narrative events, as these narrative events are in the mind, and *only* conveyed through the music. Even the expectations of a score to provide continuity and unity are upturned. As there is only one long take during *Save Me*, the music is relieved from providing "formal and rhythmic continuity – between shots, in transitions between

scenes, by filling 'gaps'", as there are no other scenes. In addition, like the other songs, *Save Me* is heard only once. While it provides unity for those moments by including "repetition and variation of musical material and instrumentation" *within* the song, it is not extended and developed elsewhere in the film to "aid in the construction of formal and narrative unity". However, as discussed, the song does link all stories to form a hopeful conclusion, in a lighter-hearted self-contained moment. In challenging our scoring expectations with *Save Me*, Anderson is able to place song at the top of narrative hierarchy. The song, achieving such status, is empowered to untangle the uneasy complexities of damaged individuals as they seek redemption.

Summary

Magnolia begins by introducing us to the theme of Fortean happenstance. In presenting us with a series of bizarre urban myths, our minds are opened wide to infinite possibilities of experiences, be they random, intended, good or bad. This confusing experience is conveyed through songs which are employed strikingly and innovatively. The first cue, *One*, is non-diegetic and works mostly in counterpoint to screen action. Therefore, like Elliot Goldenthal's specially-composed score for *Heat*, the music reveals aspects of character which are otherwise carefully concealed. However, unlike the specially-composed opening cue for *Heat*, *One* is heard, and so much so, that it dominates dialogue. This attracted some criticism, but I argue that Anderson creates a new scoring intention to show how the characters' psychological conditions engulf their thinking and influence their actions. The music conventionally establishes the setting and tone of the scenes discussed, and also provides unity in the film – by linking the characters psychologically and reinforcing the main themes of alienation, rejection, selfishness and the past. The music achieves these objectives quickly, in order to anchor meaning after the bewildering happenstance scenes. As the music is conspicuous, the sounds themselves gain significance. Jon Brion's arrangement, comprising acoustic and electronic instruments, complex rhythms, and a mix of styles, sets up the grand, contemporary multi-stranded narrative, and reflects the many alienated individuals whose pasts are forever present. With Brion's specially-composed arrangement of an arguably obscure old song, the music

inhabits a new aural film space somewhere between original and pre-existing. The song is played only once, but in its entirety, and so is self-contained, and arguably more potent. It structures narrative by suppressing dialogue, dictating editing pace and style, and positioning content, as characters appear at appropriate times to accompany the metre and lyric. For all these reasons, the song is propelled to a heightened status in the opening scenes, and is able to convey the psychological complexity of several characters, as Brophy says in a "timbral text" with a "vertical narration" – where everything is told – as songs do 'all at once'" (2004, p50).

While *One* suppresses dialogue, dictates editing and underlines the main themes of the film in an overtly insistent way, (particularly with the repetition of the words 'one' and 'loneliness'), the song remains non-diegetic. Characters continue to struggle with their negative behaviour patterns on screen, regardless of the sung words and musical arrangement. *Wise Up*, however, operates diegetically *and* non-diegetically, simultaneously, and conspicuously. This redoubles the potency of the song, which already has a heightened status, as it is heard in full with musical ideas developed within it, and is therefore self-contained with its own "parallel universe"[16]. In addition, the song is not quite specially-composed and not quite pre-existing, with a fresh arrangement by Jon Brion. As the song is heard in "stereo effect", it is afforded even more dramatic emphasis. Aimee Mann's voice takes on the role of mentor in the non-diegetic track, while the characters' vocal lines express mixed feelings in the diegetic track. This sense of ambivalence is achieved by characters singing an assertive lyric, while struggling with the pitching and timing of the syncopated melody line. Consideration of the sung lyric, transformed into melody, vowel sounds, breathing and dynamics, "the body in the voice as it sings" (Barthes, 1977, p188) further increases *signifiance*, and instability. The musical arrangement, operating non-diegetically, (and perhaps diegetically in the characters' minds), reinforces ambivalence as it resists the main pulse, and is never fully established in either G or D. The lyrics and musical arrangement provide apt spaces for character reflection, and while the song is heard in full, it is fragmented by the characters themselves. The baton-passing of the song represents a race for survival and redemption.

---

[16] Referring to comments made by Royal S Brown (1994) about pre-existing classical music in postmodern films which is able to communicated separate layers of meaning to those conveyed by screen action.

Yet, there is more. *Wise Up* functions as narrative. Actions take place *because* of the song, and *within* the song. Characters absorb and sing the song. They reflect, make decisions, and plan ahead. *Wise Up* is a multi-layered, omnipotent action code, as it brings about the wising up in characters, and overrides traditional film elements by dictating the visuals and silencing the dialogue. Extreme long takes and close-ups *accompany Wise Up*, and they free the music to convey meaning.

Save Me acts as a musical and dramatic coda, transporting the film to a hopeful, if not entirely satisfactory, conclusion. The song (and its performers) represent Claudia's psyche, and it is again within the song where actions occur. Shifts in Claudia's psyche are revealed by the lyric and the building musical arrangement, which include playful references to secular heroes Superman and Peter Pan, light-hearted melismatic treatment of vowels, dips into minor chords, and unusual combinations of instruments such as electric guitar and accordion. Claudia sits motionless on her bed, and it is only the music which provides movement and action in this scene. That is, until she looks at Jim and then smiles directly at the camera. *Save Me*, therefore, seeps into the film world, almost unnoticed, and upturns significant conventional scoring practices: it is audible, and constitutes all narrative, continuity and emotion simultaneously. *Save Me* brings the inside to the outside in all its complexity, and as *Magnolia* is chiefly concerned with the psychological, this song provides a fitting ending.

Film music theorist Royal S Brown states: "It stands to reason that the dialectical tension between the musical and the cinematic symbol will be increasingly tightened the more the music remains on an abstract level. And so the classical, nondiegetic film score has, throughout cinema history, remained fairly free of the human voice and almost totally free of lyrics" (1994, p40). In *Magnolia*, the singing voice of Aimee Mann, telling of fragile people, increases the tension, aided by the swelling arrangements and contemporary instrumentation. The grains of the various singing voices heard in the film offer *signifiance*, as do the notes and sounds the singing voices and arrangements perform (Barthes, 1977). Mann's songs are, in fact, rich with open signifiers. Although the songs resist manipulating us to preferred perspectives, they deeply involve us in the characters' lives, by insisting on being heard by the audience and everyone in Magnolia Street.

195

Moulin Rouge

Music of delusion and decadence

Moulin Rouge (2001), directed by Baz Luhrmann, pulsates with dance classics from the ballroom, rave, disco and nightclub which stir and shake times, places, fashions, genres, morals, classes and outrageous characters into a vivid whirlwind tale "about love". Christian, a young Englishman from London, played by Ewan McGregor, arrives in the Paris of 1899 with dreams of becoming a writer. Within moments he is introduced to a team of Bohemian artistes, led by Toulouse Lautrec, who immediately enlist his help in writing their show, *Spectacular, Spectacular*. As the show is to be mounted at the Moulin Rouge, Christian is also given the task of asking owner, Harold Zidler (played by Jim Broadbent), to produce it. While visiting the club, Christian sets eyes upon Satine, the star attraction – "the sparkling diamond" – and instantly falls in love. An elusive affair begins: Satine (played by Nicole Kidman) is a courtesan, obtainable by any man with money; she is obliged to charm the oily Duke (played by Richard Roxburgh) but, unbeknown to Christian, she is dying of consumption. While this type of tortured-love story is somewhat formulaic, it is a perfect vehicle for Baz Luhrmann, whose aim is to create a showbiz extravaganza in the venue that housed "the greatest rave" ever. The breathtaking pace and surprising effects of the music, editing, camera work and mise-en-scene combine to create a rich and decadent panoply of "intensities", providing the ultimate experience in audience-participation cinema.

The music drives the film, becoming the dominant form of narrative, and its anomalous use heightens the postmodern content and style with irony, wit and colour. The score comprises original music by Craig Armstrong, and freshly arranged pre-existing music, featuring well-known artists such as Kylie Minogue, Norman Cook and Placido Domingo. Luhrmann draws on techniques from the American film musical and music video, to enable more flexible and subservient roles for visuals and dialogue. Against this

wild, vivid and subversive musical canvas, contemporary themes of ethics, fragmentation, alienation, and, most of all ambivalence, are laid bare.

In this chapter, I will illustrate how the film score has developed from lowly servant of dialogue and visuals in traditional film narrative, to master of film elements in a new type of music narrative. In the chapter on *Heat*, we can discern traces of this repositioning of music. Elliot Goldenthal's impressionistic, specially-composed 'unheard' score heightens the ambivalence of human acts and their consequences by quietly conveying interiorities of mixed feelings, through music which partly conflicts with screen dynamics, never finds a tonal home and resists ultimate signification. The result of these musical effects is that enigmas are created around the central characters which are never resolved. The music invites the audience to explore a range of viewpoints about the characters, but refuses to rest upon any one. This ambiguity empowers the music, particularly in scenes where music replaces dialogue, and allows it to function as part-narrative. Enigmatic codes are usually created by the established film narrative elements of visuals and dialogue, but in *Heat* they are also created by music. In addition to this, the score is the only film element to express the complexity of the main protagonists, who are otherwise viewed and heard to be decisive, tough and skillful professionals. The music reveals that Hanna and McCauley's actions are, in fact, laden with existentialist "anguish, abandonment and despair". Goldenthal's music does not contain words, and this abstract quality is appropriate to convey suppressed, impenetrable, private masculine interiority. We might consider the score in *Heat*, therefore, to be an embryonic music narrative, conveying complicated contemporary existence in an understated manner.

The opposite is the case in *Magnolia*. Most characters in this film are engulfed by their psychological problems, so much so that actions taken are often habitually self-destructive. Jon Brion's specially-composed score serves to link the characters psychologically, but Aimee Mann's songs express the embodied stresses of drowning in the psyche. Her not-quite pre-existing and not-quite specially-composed songs are heard so loudly that they dominate all other film components, including the characters themselves, who cannot escape from musical meaning. The song *One* dictates editing and suppresses dialogue; *Wise Up* is sung and absorbed by the characters, functioning as a colossal action code and catalyst for character action in the future. *Save Me* unravels the dénouement of

the story in the final scene, as Claudia sits motionless in bed. In particular, the song traces Claudia's thought processes as she moves to a more enlightened psychological space. Like *Wise Up*, actions take place *within* the song, while dialogue is made redundant, and visuals subservient. At these moments, songs take on the role of narrative, in order to reveal very contemporary experience conspicuously.

While songs are strikingly employed in *Magnolia*, they do not dominate the entire film as they do in *Moulin Rouge*. In this chapter, therefore, I am asking why Luhrmann should choose mostly freshly-arranged pre-existing songs to tell a story in a film which refers to the full range of entertainment forms, but mostly the American film musical and pop video. In other words, and returning to my central question, why should songs be selected to express the complexities of contemporary urban experience? Why should they, more than other film elements, and more than a specially-composed classical score, be capable of conveying an over-riding theme of ambivalence? In order to explore this in *Moulin Rouge*, I will firstly place Baz Luhrmann's work in context by outlining his 'Red Curtain Trilogy'. This will explain the principles of Luhrmann's aims for a theatricalised cinema, which privilege the power of the myth and 'artificial reality'. As I discuss the Red Curtain Trilogy, I will show how the American film musical directly informs *Moulin Rouge*, with specific reference to the work of Rick Altman (1981, 1987, 2002) and Jane Feuer (1982, 1993). After this, I will briefly illustrate how pop video characteristics also influence the making of *Moulin Rouge*, in relation to the research conducted by Carol Vernallis (2004) and Kevin Williams (2003). This will provide insight into the form and style of *Moulin Rouge*, and a basis for music analysis. Lastly, I offer a brief résumé of the music personnel for the film, before embarking on song analysis.

The rest of the chapter will focus on three freshly-arranged pre-existing songs: *Nature Boy, Your Song* and *El Tango De Roxanne*. I choose *Nature Boy* because it opens the film, and adhering to one of the Red Curtain Cinema rules, it intensely compresses the story of *Moulin Rouge* so that we know the ending as the film begins. In addition, two specially-composed musical segments are introduced and emphasised within the song, as they are later to function as leitmotifs. This ambiguous scoring practice, which mixes specially-composed elements, classical scoring traditions and a pre-existing recognisable song, presents a new space where the inescapable ambivalence of character action is

198

announced "all at once" from the start. I want to explore why this song is particularly apt for such intentions. I choose *Your Song*, which Christian 'composes' on the spot as he sings, because the music simultaneously mocks and celebrates Hollywood Musical conventions and classical scoring objectives in order to expose the bleakness behind the glitter of show-time *jouissance*, the delusion behind the decadence. I want to explore why the combination of Armstrong's extravagant, indulgent score and Ewan McGregor's classically-trained, arch singing voice uttering romantic lyrics, is able to express such polarised experiences, which are already burdened with the knowledge of ensuing tragedy announced by *Nature Boy*. Lastly, I choose *El Tango De Roxanne* for its global, pluralist, timeless, "tasteless" treatment. This song, originally composed and performed by Sting, is about a French prostitute, and it serves to expose the darker stories and the alienated psychological states of the central characters: the violent tendencies of the Argentinian, the seething jealousy of Christian and Nini Legs-in-the-Air, the duplicitous disposition of Satine and the greedy, control freakery of the Duke. This song communicates ambivalence most starkly, in a universally accessible manner, and I will explore why this should be the case.

As for each cue in *Heat* and *Magnolia*, I will describe how each song is heard in the film, and follow this with a theoretical discussion. I will show how the theories of Gorbman and Copland continue to be relevant and important, perhaps even more so; but I will also refer to the theories of Anahid Kassabian, Philip Brophy, Rick Altman and Carol Vernallis, as song is such a significant part of the music narrative in *Moulin Rouge*. Finally, I offer a summary of points made.

Moulin Rouge is the third film in Baz Luhrmann's 'Red Curtain Trilogy', which begins with *Strictly Ballroom* (1992), followed by *Romeo and Juliet* (1996). 'Red Curtain Cinema' is a term coined by Luhrmann and his team for a theatricalised cinematic form. In *Behind The Red Curtain, Collector's Disc* (2006), Baz Luhrmann explains that there are three rules for this form. Firstly, there must be an "underlying myth or story shape that the audience recognises so they understand how the film's going to end when it begins". In *Strictly Ballroom*, for example, two myths are explored: David and Goliath (triumph over impossible odds) and the Ugly Duckling, which Luhrmann describes as "self revelation".

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the myth is "youthful love in conflict with society". In *Moulin Rouge* it is the Orphean journey, "the journey from youthful idealism into the underworld, confronting the notion that there are things you cannot control, and losing that ideal love in journeying to the upper world, growing from your scars". The second rule is to place the underlying myth in a "heightened creative world . . . a land far, far away . . . and yet very familiar". In *Strictly Ballroom*, the heightened world is the competitive arena of ballroom dancing. In *Romeo and Juliet*, it is the futuristic urban backdrop of Verona Beach, where everyone speaks in iambic pentameter. In *Moulin Rouge*, it is the late 19th-century world of Montmartre and the Moulin Rouge. The third rule is to keep the audience "in contract". This means that the audience is to be constantly reminded of the filmic process. Instead of escaping into the film world and resisting reality, Luhrmann intends the audience to be sharply aware of other audience members and the film as construct – "They are not supposed to forget themselves". This identifies the film as intrinsically postmodern. In *Strictly Ballroom*, the device to bring attention to film as human creation is the expression of key emotional scenes through dance. In *Romeo and Juliet*, it is the iambic pentameter of William Shakespeare, and in *Moulin Rouge*, it is the characters breaking into song.

The process of creating Red Curtain Cinema began while working on ideas for *Strictly Ballroom*. Luhrmann and his co-writer, Craig Pearce, discovered that the power of the metaphor, the myth, was lost in the first draft, "in the naturalising of the text". In other words, the text reflected real life too closely. To bring back the metaphor, Luhrmann and Pearce began to investigate theatrical devices employed in Hollywood musicals of the 1930s, 40s and 50s. With an injection of "real artificiality" into the film, the power of the myth returned. So, for *Moulin Rouge*, the intention is to tell a tragic and comic historical story in "break out into song musical form"[1]. However, I would argue that this music narrative achieves much more. The choice of freshly-arranged pre-existing music, which includes recognisable voices and styles from most music genres, enables this historical story to be told in a way which will resonate with a modern film-and-music literate audience, who share a wide range of experiences and ethical positions. The extreme ranges of instrumentation and musical styles – from full symphony orchestra to rave-style can-can

---

[1] Quotes and information from *Behind The Red Curtain, Collector's Disc*, 2006

to unaccompanied solo voice – further invite us to experience emotional intensities through a potent, oscillating mix of "affiliating" and "assimilating" identifications. Even the spoken dialogue refers to music. Well-known hook lines and love-song titles, such as *All You Need is Love, Love is a Many-Splendoured Thing, Love Lifts us Up Where We Belong*, are sprinkled into conversations to provoke amusement, personal association and audience participation. Even though this film is not an opera, these spoken, 'lyrical' sections operate like recitative, demanding that we pay sharp attention as they contribute to narrative progression. Moreover, as director Bob Last indicated in Chapter 2, popular song is a "condensed form" of expression – it can communicate multiple layers of meaning simultaneously.

Before analysing the film in more depth, I want to consider the film musical conventions Luhrmann includes in *Moulin Rouge* to create this sense of 'artificial reality', and which also aid a music narrative. Let us take the Red Curtain rules one by one. Firstly, there is the recognisable story form which enables an audience to know the narrative outcome as the film begins. In an article entitled 'Narrative in Film Musicals', Rick Altman (2002) argues that: "Whereas the traditional approach to narrative assumes that structure grows out of plot, the dual-focus structure of the American film musical derives from character" (p44). In *Moulin Rouge*, this is partly the case. The story is made obvious so that we can focus on the key protagonists Satine and Christian, who convey their situations and emotions through song. However, in this film, narrative is developed through and from song, as I shall demonstrate later in the chapter.

Rick Altman says that in the film musical, "we alternate between the male focus and the female focus, working our way through a prepackaged love story whose dynamic principle remains the difference between male and female. Each segment must be understood not in terms of the segments to which it is causally related but by comparison to the segment which it parallels" (p44). Altman argues that this method should change our understanding and perception of film musical narratives as "gauche and episodic" (p50). A common technique connected to the idea of a dual-focus narrative is 'personality dissolve'. According to Altman, this means that each member of the couple has a surface and a repressed personality. The surface personality of one character tends to correspond with the repressed personality of the other, so the relationship "is a complementary one, each

representing the hidden, neglected aspect of the other" (1987, p81). This is true of Satine and Christian. Satine's surface personality shows that she is socially at ease with all classes, confident and sexually experienced, light-hearted and morally dubious. In contrast, Christian's surface personality shows that he is ill at ease socially and sexually, serious, devoted to art, and morally upstanding. When we consider each of their repressed personalities, Altman's model also works. Occasionally, Satine is portrayed as serious, dedicated, upstanding and lacking in confidence; and Christian as more frivolous, assertive, and with less moral fibre than his surface personality would lead us to believe.

Two other devices associated with the dual-focus narrative are 'audio-dissolve' and 'video-dissolve'. Audio-dissolve refers to the blurring of boundaries between the opposing spheres of the diegetic track, which normally depicts or refers to reality; and the non-diegetic music track, which according to Altman, "lifts the image into a romantic realm far above this world of flesh and blood" (1987, p7). In musicals, there is a free and fluid merging of the two, and Altman argues that this "intermixing is at the very heart of the style characteristic of the American film musical. By breaking down the barrier separating the two tracks, the musical blurs the borders between the real and the ideal" (p7). Video-dissolve refers to the blurring of different times and places in a musical which have come to signify real worlds (usually portrayed as drab and disappointing), or ideal worlds (where everything is exciting and romantic).

Ideas from all of these dual-focus techniques are employed in *Moulin Rouge*, but when we consider that Luhrmann's story is told mostly through freshly-arranged but pre-existing song, and by spoken lyrics which refer to existing songs, the act of blurring, obscuring, and obliterating constructed boundaries is actually brought to our attention. In selecting and subverting these Hollywood musical techniques from the dual-focus model, Luhrmann confounds our expectations of classical film narrative and film musical narrative, and in doing so, empowers an audience to seek and experience pleasures in excess within and beyond the rich milieu of the Moulin Rouge. The Red Curtain rule, of communicating the story's ending as it begins, enables such a wide range of creative intentions and audience experiences, and most importantly, enables a music narrative to be unleashed from the outset. Indeed, the opening song, *Nature Boy*, encapsulates the pervasive myth of the film.

202

The second Red Curtain Rule concerns the creation of a heightened world, which seems far away but still familiar. We are aware that the turn-of-the-century world of the Moulin Rouge is fantastical, with its outrageous characters, wild set designs, rich colours, exuberant dancing and hedonism. Yet through this artifice, truths are revealed. In Altman's volume, *The American Film Musical* (1987), he argues that art "by virtue of its very imaginary status, has the power to express higher realities, truths which would otherwise remain invisible" (p61). Dream, he says, can function in the same way: "we sense that our dreams have the power to render reality more meaningful than it ever could be by itself" (p61). Rick Altman has written prolifically on the film musical and genre, and his observations are especially valid when applied to *Moulin Rouge*. Here, he is expressing something similar to Baz Luhrmann's notion of "artificial reality" – which is achieved through the heightened world where everyone conveys reality by breaking into song as art. Sometimes, these songs express a dream, for example, Satine's solo song, *One Day I'll Fly Away*, and at other times, we are made aware of the artistic process itself, when for example, Christian sings and 'spontaneously' creates *Your Song* for Satine, on the spot.

Moulin Rouge also takes the form of a "backstage musical", which further enriches the creation of the heightened world. Such musicals include characters who are primarily concerned with putting on a show, and whose lives revolve around the city and the theatre. In between these sites – the backstage areas, the dressing rooms, the practice halls – are the places in which truths might be revealed and where there is a merging of real and stage lives. Rick Altman says: "The backstage middle world serves to establish an unexpected continuity between the diametrically opposed realms of reality and art" (p206).

Other famous backstage musicals include *Babes in Arms* (1939), *Anchors Aweigh* (1945), *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), *Kiss Me Kate* (1953), *All That Jazz* (1979) and *Fame* (1980); and *Moulin Rouge* clearly draws on this genre, when we view Satine and Christian's relationship developing behind the scenes, in the practice areas and in the wings. Early musicals focused on the wider entertainment world, referring to the diverse and lively forms of Broadway, vaudeville, minstrel, burlesque, Ziegfeld, the circus, night clubs, Tin Pan Alley, radio, and film[2]. Indeed, Baz Luhrmann draws on several of these

---

[2] Information from Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (1993)

forms in *Moulin Rouge*, but also creates original, modernised versions to give the film a contemporary edge. All of these elements further the Red Curtain objective of creating a heightened world.

The last rule is to keep the audience "in contract", to remind them that they are watching a film and to ensure they participate. This technique, contemporary as it sounds, is also drawn from film musical history. In his introduction to a volume entitled, *Genre: The Musical* (1981), Altman shows irritation with those who deride the musical for being conservative and classical. He argues: "Propounding the politically radical function of reflexive technique in, say, Dziga Vertov's *Man With A Movie Camera*, these critics have been brought up short by the recognition that the reflexive techniques of 'radical' practice are just as common in the supposedly conservative musical" (p6). The film musical, Altman says, constantly reminds us of the artistic process and "regularly transforms itself into an experimental discourse on the status of film viewing – and hearing". He takes this idea even further: "Not only is the musical a gesamtkunstwerk, an art form more total than even Wagner could imagine, but it regularly invites us to consider why we spend our time watching films, what we find in them, how they form our values and psychology . . . to study the musical is to study Hollywood, the cinema, and the things which make them go" (p7). In *Moulin Rouge*, Baz Luhrmann invites the audience to participate in all filmic elements, and to enjoy the process in excess. Choosing the form of a backstage musical enables him to offer intense pleasures to an audience, pleasures which are, in a way, justified by the aim of putting on a show. Indeed Jane Feuer, in *The Hollywood Musical* (1993), says: "Musicals not only *showed* you singing and dancing; they were *about* singing and dancing, about the nature and importance of that experience" (px).

On closer inspection, the backstage musical is an especially apt choice of space for Luhrmann to keep his audience "in contract", and to uphold the other Red Curtain rules of creating a heightened world and exploring an instantly recognisable myth. The traditional backstage musical celebrates the world of entertainment, emphasising that there's no business like show business. The extolling of entertainment is important for three main reasons. First of all, the heightened world of the Moulin Rouge in 19th-century Paris is further intensified by the creation of the show (*Spectacular, Spectacular*) within a show,

which reinforces the idea of film as constructed artefact. The next reason is, that in emulating this form of live entertainment, Luhrmann is able to position his audience as direct addressee. Jane Feuer argues that the Hollywood musical "worships live entertainment because live forms seem to speak more directly to the spectator. To make a verbal analogy, live entertainment seems to be a 'first person' form, a performance which assumes an active and present spectator" (1982, p23). Indeed, she states that "direct address may just as well signify the intimacy of live entertainment" (p37), and this is ideal for Luhrmann to realise his aim of creating audience-participation cinema in the most immediate way possible. Lastly, the backstage musical enables Luhrmann to affirm the joys of popular song, and in doing so, employ song as the dominant narrative form. Feuer (1982) states that "the chief instrument for the privileging of popular song is the song lyric itself" (p49). However, Luhrmann employs specially-composed musical arrangement at least as much as sung lyric to achieve this. For example, Norman Cook's *Because We Can* mixes rave with 19th-century can-can; Craig Armstrong's arrangement of Elton John's *Your Song* includes musical references to renaissance, baroque and romantic composing styles, while simultaneously paying homage to Elton John's 1970's piano track. Luhrmann's film encourages indulgence in music of all forms, by compressing and mixing musical ideas, which is why the songs are arranged so kaleidoscopically, always resisting barriers of taste, value and style. Moreover, it is the music, in conjunction with the lyric, which is best able to narrate the vivid but complicated and challenging experiences of the protagonists. Lyrics of songs which are universally known, already contain tangled meanings through audience personal association or "affiliating identifications". These uniquely-experienced and interpreted words are destabilised further by new vocal grains, fresh arrangements and new contexts. Therefore, lyrics when sung always contain ambiguity. Indeed, they potentially offer as much *signifiance* as abstract specially-composed elements.

The backstage musical also has "a penchant for revealing its own inner gears to the film audience". This trait further reinforces the concept of 'real artificiality' in *Moulin Rouge* and actually underlines it as a contemporary film. Jane Feuer (1982) states that "at first glance the Hollywood musical seems to be an exception to descriptions of the 'classical' film which always tries to conceal its own workings. The musical appears to be constantly breaking through its own glossy surface, more like a modernist film is supposed

205

to do" (p4). In *Moulin Rouge*, we view the stage apparatus, the rehearsals, and even the processes of the show's creation. The sprinkling on and dusting off of stardust is revealed, and this is significant to our understanding of the film. By laying bare the creative processes, Luhrmann is able to convey more complexity in the narrative through music, and this is intensified by revealing the trajectory of creative endeavour. Keith Negus and Michael Pickering (2004) argue that "creativity is a process which brings experience into meaning and significance, and helps it attain communication value". I suggest that this idea is at the heart of *Moulin Rouge*. The authors highlight that the creative process involves "unacknowledged hard graft" until that moment when the "singer becomes the song, the playwright or actress becomes the character, and the artist becomes the painting" (pvii). Those moments are seized upon in *Moulin Rouge* for a number of reasons: to celebrate the creative process, to bring attention to it as an expression of human experience, to enable the audience to revel in intertextuality, and to remind the audience that they are watching and listening to a film.

Near the beginning of *Moulin Rouge*, we view the Bohemians struggling to create a song for their new musical. After much trial and error, Christian sings: *The Hills are Alive with the Sound of Music!*, as if for the first time in history. The act of singing the opening line of such an iconic song, on top of an old rickety staircase instead of a mountain, intensifies the creative process for the audience, and enables them to share in the experience. Negus and Pickering suggest that "experience is not realised, is not given meaning and significance, until it has achieved its communication form. Achieving this form in ways which reach others and resonate within their own experiences completes the creative process" (p23). Christian, as writer of the show within the film, articulates his experience and we, as the audience, are able to see his life reflected in the show. The writers argue that "our experience of the world is shaped and given significance by the act of creation, and that our understanding of the world is realised through the process of communication" (p22). In *Moulin Rouge*, Baz Luhrmann offers us even more than this, through a music narrative with its potential for affiliating and assimilating identifications, separately and commingled.

Moulin Rouge could be described as a 21st-century film musical with an MTV edge and a contemporary-film soundtrack. Certainly, there are traits of the music video within. Apart from those obvious technical and stylistic elements cited by Kay Dickinson as "submission of editing to the customary tempi of popular music, and presentation of shots which defies the standard broadcast rhythm of around three seconds minimum each"[3], other far more subtle and artful techniques are at play in *Moulin Rouge*, which are important to the structuring of a music narrative. Firstly, there is the mutability of ingredients within a music video. Carol Vernallis (2004)[4] argues that "the image gives up its autonomy and abandons some of its representational modes. In exchange, the image gains in flexibility and play, as well as in polyvalence of meaning"(px). When we consider Kassabian's theory of affiliating identifications, and all the richness offered by choosing a backstage musical, we can begin to understand just how active the audience is intended be for *Moulin Rouge*.

Vernallis likens the music video's separate ingredients to a mixing desk, where any one element can be foregrounded or submerged at any time. Vernallis states: "In as much as any element can come to the fore, the world that a video depicts can become very strange. Some of music video's excitement stems from the sense that anything can happen – even an insightful or progressive image of social relations" (px). In *Moulin Rouge*, we are invited to join the party, meet the guests and indulge in their pleasures and fantasies. Hardly raising an eyebrow, we view Toulouse Lautrec greeting Christian for the first time as he falls through a ceiling; Zidler dressed as a bride, singing Madonna's *Like a Virgin* in mock operatic style, with a nod to *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*[5]; and Satine writhing in orgasmic delight at the thought of Christian's 'poetry'. When we know the end of the story as it begins, a music narrative is able to dominate, and it could be argued that full licence is given for anything to happen at anytime, when music video ingredients are added to the mix. One last important point about the music video comes from Kevin Williams. He states: "the segments interconnect rhizomatically rather than linearly or hierarchically. We can read intertextually, extratextually, contextually, and, most importantly for music

---

[3] In Kay Dickinson, 'Pop, Speed, Teenagers and the "MTV Aesthetic"', 2003, p143
[4] Carol Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video, Aesthetics and Cultural Context*, Columbia University Press, 2004
[5] This film musical was released in 1954.

videos, musically"[6]. This is certainly true of *Moulin Rouge,* and the music video ingredients described above enable this.

The film resists definitive classification, as we might expect of a rich intertextual contemporary extravaganza, yet nevertheless, all possible descriptions lead to moving image forms which are dominated by music. While the music in *Moulin Rouge* adopts some classic scoring traditions of the past – signifying emotion, ensuring structural unity and adding special effects – it ironically upturns and mocks other conventions, including those connected to conventional film story telling. In *Moulin Rouge,* the music drives the narrative throughout, and in so doing functions as narrative, causing visuals and dialogue to take on more flexible, subservient roles, as they follow, underline and interpret the music. The film, therefore, is edited to the music, and this overt, brash overthrowing of film narrative technique enables spaces to be created for intense audience participation and knowing luxuriance in intertextual and creative excesses. For *Your Song,* for example, the musical arrangement, editing and shot-types work together to reference the MGM Musical techniques of centreing stars with high-key lighting, and employing the romantic symphony orchestra sound in a blatantly excessive way. At other moments, such as the merry-making at the Moulin Rouge during *Lady Marmalade,* and *Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend,* several glitzy show-biz media are referenced: 'bump and grind' pop videos, the music hall, the circus with Zidler as ringmaster, the lap-dancing club, and, of course, the rave. Visual elements work with a mixture of musical conventions and subversions to reference, overturn and heighten life's experiences and pleasures, including film. *Moulin Rouge* nods directly and indirectly to several classic films, such as: *The Red Shoes* (1948) telling of a woman with artistic ambitions, torn between two men; *The Blue Angel* (1930), starring Marlene Dietrich as Lola, a nightclub temptress; *Sunrise – A Song of Two Humans* (1927) with its fluid camera work and artifice; *Cabaret* (1972) with its costumes, dance sequences and interpretation of the musical for a contemporary audience; *An American in Paris* (1951) starring Gene Kelly, who goes to Paris to immerse himself in art; and *Orphée* (1950) directed by Jean Cocteau who, like Luhrmann, was also fascinated by myths.

---

[6] From Why I [Still] Want My MTV: Music Video and Aesthetic Communication, Hampton Press, Inc, 2003

This film, then, is a deftly-woven intertextual construct which could easily be interpreted as an entertaining romp, with a few intellectual references for the benefit of film buffs. This interpretation would be wrong. In fact, the film is deep, often subtle and complicated, and this is primarily conveyed through the music. The darker postmodern themes of the changeable body, morality, time-space compression, fragmentation and alienation are communicated through the music, and it is there once again that we find a striking and over-riding theme of ambivalence. In fact, of the three case studies, *Moulin Rouge* conveys ambivalence most searingly, as it is so heightened. Opposing emotions are expressed within contexts which are themselves riddled with dichotomies and paradoxes. The world of show business, encapsulated within the Moulin Rouge, revolves around the rigid rule: "the show must go on". Yet within this disciplined environment, the Moulin Rouge players both enact and invite scenes of indulgence and excess. Satine, a courtesan, falls in love with a penniless poet who she thinks is a Duke. On discovery of the truth, Satine continues her relationship with Christian with extreme mixed feelings. She loves him, but is appalled by his poverty and lack of regard for material possessions and money. He cannot propel her from the Moulin Rouge to the silver screen and riches, her ideal world which remains a dream because she resists taking the required actions, making the harder choices. Her increasingly duplicitous actions are intensified as the story progresses. Christian also takes actions with ambivalence. He falls in love with Satine, but is disgusted by her occupation, her overt sexual confidence, and her willingness to be available to any man. Indeed, he is jealous. Therefore, both protagonists even *fall in love with ambivalence*. However, the ambivalence over choices of action the characters express through song is further heightened by their feelings of alienation, indulgence in absinthe, the barely discernable distinctions between the play and 'the play within the play', and the revelation of truths 'behind the scenes'.

Background to the music

The music for *Moulin Rouge* was created in a collaborative process. Craig Armstrong is the composer of "the emotional journey of the film"[7], and is credited as 'score composer and arranger' on the accompanying CDs, songbook and in the film. Chris Elliott is the writer of the witty comedy music and Josh Abrahams mapped out the 'musical script', ie he positioned the music in the film. Marius De Vries was the overall music director. In addition to these music professionals, Baz Luhrmann and Craig Pearce feature as lyric writers for songs, Norman Cook (Fat Boy Slim) created a hard-core rave-style can-can for the 21st century entitled *Because We Can*, and David Baerwald is the composer of the secret love duet, *Come What May*. Many other performers and composers, such as Beck, Bono, Jose Feliciano, Placido Domingo, Valeria, Christina Aguilera, Lil' Kim, Mya, Pink and Missy Elliot are also involved to provide a rich, temporal mixing of musical references. Much of the artists' work is heard only fleetingly in the film, but the CD enables the *Moulin Rouge* fan to savour the complete songs at home, and even create new versions of them via the *Moulin Rouge* songbook.

Craig Armstrong, the Scottish composer and arranger, who also worked on *Romeo and Juliet* with Luhrmann, explains that "lyrics and songs are part of the story of the film, so it's completely seamless – it's not as if the music is separate in any way. The actual story is constructed round the choice of songs". This technique of placing songs first in a film is similar to Quentin Tarantino's narrative method. As reported in Chapter 2, Tarantino contemplates "the right song to the opening credit sequence"[8] well before the writing of a script. *Moulin Rouge* is created, as mentioned before, partly like a pop video, where music dictates the story and the editing. However, this extended quasi-pop video draws equally on music from the past and present, and, in doing so, pokes fun at both the pop video and the musical. This subversion results in darker versions of each. Yet, within his bold and modern statement, Armstrong also mentions the classic Hollywood scoring objective of ensuring continuity through music. He rebuffs and embraces the classical score

---

[7] Baz Luhrmann's description of Armstrong's role in *Behind the Red Curtain, Collector's Disc*, 2006
[8] Quote from Tarantino in Jonathan Romney and Adrian Wootton, *Celluloid Jukebox: Popular Music and The Movies Since the 50s*, BFI Publishing, 1995, p130

simultaneously. Later in *Behind The Red Curtain* he says: "Not only will the music serve the film, the music can also work on its own and I think that's important for Baz's film because visually it's so strong . . . you have to put something really strong musically beside it because his work is so powerful". There are hardly any unheard melodies in this film. In *Moulin Rouge*, the music is the dominant film element, the one which drives and moulds the others. The music is the main narrative device, and other elements are there to serve it. So, in one sense it could be argued that Luhrmann endorses classic cinematic techniques entirely, by his intention to serve story. It is just that Baz Luhrmann's story is told by breaking into song. I want to focus now on three pre-existing songs – *Nature Boy*, *Your Song* and *Roxanne*, to illustrate further how the changing contemporary score is upturning traditional film narrative, to demonstrate the power of the freshly-arranged pop score, and to show how this loud, glitzy, sexy score is actually communicating a core of ambivalence.

Analysis of *Nature Boy*

Polite audience babble, an orchestra tuning up and applause are the first elements we perceive. These concert hall sounds, heard against a blank screen, set us up for a grand evening of music – perhaps an opera, a symphony concert, or a musical. These expectations dissolve immediately. From the moment we see the red velvet curtain rising, we are aware that we are watching a film, and that it is going to be an ironic intertextual construct. The title music presents a knowing homage to the silent era of cinema, the music hall, Hollywood musical, and traditional classical score, with snippets of *The Sound of Music* and Offenbach's *Can-Can* lusciously arranged for the romantic symphony orchestra. Flickering credits in black and white signify early cinematic attempts. *Nature Boy* begins. This song, written by Eden Ahbez in 1947, was made most famous by the Nat King Cole recording of 1948. Other artists, such as Frank Sinatra, John Coltrane, Miles Davis and Harry Connick Junior, have created different instrumental or vocal versions over the years. For a contemporary audience, this song may or may not be recognisable, but to most it will be familiar, a song we know from somewhere. There is room for Anahid Kassabian's affiliating identifications to abound, but I will refer to her theory later. For *Moulin Rouge*, Craig Armstrong has arranged the song for full symphony orchestra, but it is only the string

section (apart from an additional few bars of timpani in the second verse) which is heard with the vocal until the very last word of the song. At this point, percussion, wind and brass enter loudly and Christian begins to narrate his past experiences with present insight.

The song lyric tells of a rather serious, shy young man who leaves home to travel the world, to discover that *the greatest thing, you'll ever learn is just to love, and be loved in return*. The Nat King Cole version is in the crooner style, dreamy, communicating a philosophy of life, or a myth, in which love represents ultimate knowledge and experience. The 1948 arrangement, by Nelson Riddle, is for the 'lush orchestra', so typical of the period. The inclusion of a solo flute reinforces the classic story structure and theme of naïve country boy leaving home to explore the mysteries of the world. The chromatic melody line hints at exotic, faraway places. The lyric has a fairytale feel about it:

There was a boy, a very strange enchanted boy,
They say he wandered very far, very far
Over land and sea . . .

The words "They say" add a folksong element, as if the song has been handed down from one generation to another. There is a sense of nostalgia. Towards the end of this short song, the narrator sings:

And then one day, one magic day, he passed my way
While we spoke of many things, fools and kings
This he said to me.
"The greatest thing, you'll ever learn, is just to love
And be loved in return".

By enclosing the young man's words in quotes, an intimacy, a first-hand experience is communicated, and this gives the song a directness even though its meaning is ambiguous. Craig Armstrong describes the song as "an interesting, opaque piece of music"[9] which

---

[9] Quotation and information from *Behind The Red Curtain, Collector's Disc*, 2006

212

becomes a theme for the character of Christian, returning at pivotal moments, such as the death scene. Within Armstrong's arrangement, two leitmotifs are also established; one to signal Satine's own ever-hastening tragic demise, and the other as a more general signifier of death. The word "opaque" aptly describes the lyric, and is particularly appropriate for the music. The lyric is opaque in that we never know what happens in the boy's travels, whether he continues to be melancholy or whether wider experience teaches him new ways of thinking. This mystery enables the listener to create a unique interpretation of the song in the spaces left for reflection. When we consider Luhrmann's aim of creating audience participation cinema, this is certainly a wise choice of song. Already we can see binaries forming: transparent/opaque; simple/complex; near/distant. These opposing themes, however, are not weighted to one side or the other. No, in this film, as with *Heat* and *Magnolia*, there are few clear-cut ideologies expressed, and this ambiguity is conveyed especially through the music. This is a contemporary, audience-activating score of ambivalence.

The melody and harmonies are, as Craig Armstrong suggests, "opaque". The structure of the melody is vaguely in strophic form: verse one begins with the words *There was a boy* and the second verse begins *And then one day*. Each verse ends with a little 'coda', a tailpiece, which is different, lyrically and melodically, each time. The first time, the coda is heard as an aside, an extra. The second time, the coda communicates the most important line in the song: *The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love, and be loved in return*. The music is in a wistful minor key. In the film, the actor John Leguizamo sings the song in F sharp minor[10]. The melody is an immediately memorable vehicle for the fairy-tale words, and the deceptively simple melody line enables harmonies to travel into unrelated tonal territories, perhaps to reflect the young man exploring new places. It is not clear whether he enjoys these experiences or not, and the ever-changing harmonies underline this ambiguity, making the song multi-layered and "opaque". The Nat King Cole version is wistful, dreamy, and reminiscent of Debussy's *L'Après Midi d'un Faune*, with its emphasis on the flute, and I refer to this version as arguably, it is the most well-known. In *Moulin Rouge*, *Nature Boy* presages the ambivalence that underpins the film – and I focus on this now.

---

[10] Musical illustrations of *Nature Boy*, appearing later in the chapter, are taken from the official *Moulin Rouge* songbook and are in Fminor.

Low strings play a long pedal point, immediately connoting a sense of unease. A grey, flickering screen appears, with a small male figure dressed in black and white, looking out of the frame and into the distance. His face is painted chalky white, and eyes kohl black. This is the artist Toulouse Lautrec (played by John Leguizamo), who is later to befriend Christian and become his mentor. We see and hear the groan of the Moulin Rouge windmill slowly turning in the background. The voice enters.

MOULIN ROUGE Clip 1

5.1 Toulouse Lautrec sings Nature Boy

5.2 Lead sheet with lyrics for introductory bars of Nature Boy

The grain of the actor's voice is distinctive. He sings the song in character, with a slightly French accent, in a plaintive, theatricalised style (his "pheno-song"), but the grain (his "geno-song") is childlike, hesitant and strained (Barthes, 1977). This is not an easy song to sing, with its chromaticisms and awkward leaps, and this adds tension to the voice and our experience of it. This voice is important. In this new context, the singer's words tell Christian's story, the myth of the Orphean journey. The vocal "grain" in *Nature Boy* signals sadness, which is reinforced visually by an unsmiling face and a distanced look. Armstrong's slow-moving, subtly rising chromatic string arrangement overtly signifies the tragedy to come. From the introductory low strings and the first few sung words, the audience is participating in one of the Red Curtain rules – the end of the story is evident as it begins. The combination of four layers of musical meaning – lyrics, voice, melody and arrangement – come together to communicate extreme bi-polar views on life and love in an

215

intensely compressed way. The other rules of Red Curtain Cinema are also evident: the heightened creative world of turn-of-the-century Paris is unravelling before us, and we begin this Orphean journey through song, which in turn draws our attention to the film as construct and our role as a participating member of the audience. All of these components are heightened by the music telling the story, (more so than the lyric acting as a vessel), which challenges our expectations of film experience, and conjures a sense of reality through artifice.

When we hear the words *enchanted boy*, the smiling, bright-eyed face of Christian appears in sepia for a moment, providing a stark contrast to the score and the rest of the cinematography. On the words *very far* we view an overhead shot of Paris at the turn of the century, before heading towards the entrance of Montmartre, where a "fire and brimstone" preacher urges us to "turn away from this village of sin". The camera pushes past him and pulls us along dark alleyways where absinthed, debauched prostitutes tout for business, and ravaged men seek solace in sex and booze. These images are shown in fluid black-and-white camera work, creating a heightened world of excess set in a clearly constructed collage of computer-scanned sepia photographs, built sets, actors and song. Again, reality is conveyed through artifice. The second verse begins, along with a rising string quaver motif which is to become symbolic of Satine's plight – and we hear the same figure later, in Satine's solo song *One Day I'll Fly Away*.
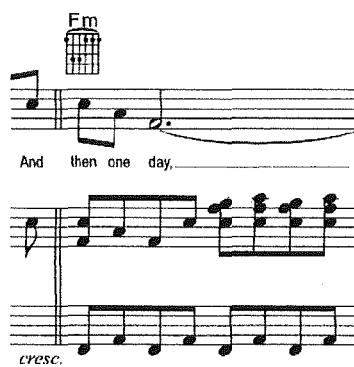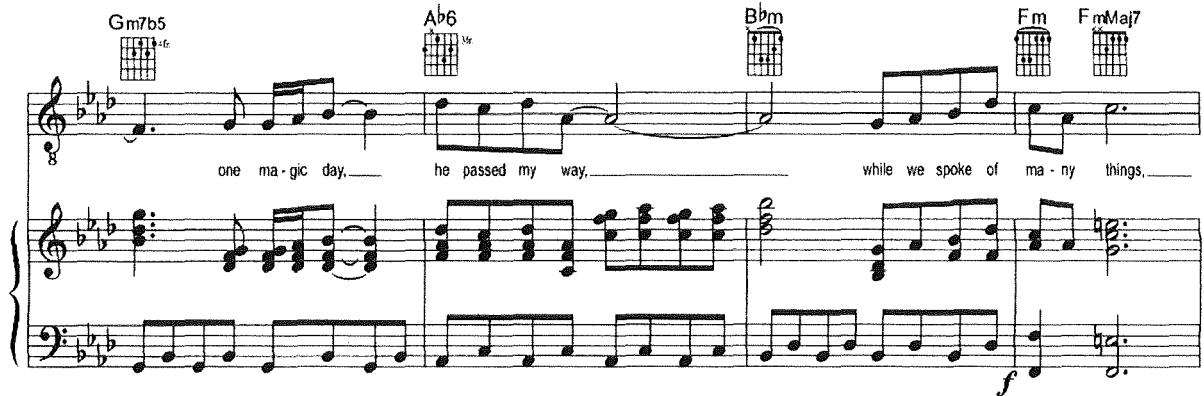
5.3 Rising-quaver motif, signifying Satine's tragic demise

We view Christian in his apartment, nursing a bottle of beer, sitting on the bare wooden floor, head in arms. The flat is strewn with sheets of paper, and we quickly realise that Christian is a writer – his Underwood typewriter is an icon we remember for the rest of the film. Beside it there are several empty absinthe bottles. At the last line of the song, which expresses a central message in the film, we see Christian sitting at his desk. As Toulouse Lautrec sings: *The greatest thing, you'll ever learn, is just to love and be loved in return,* the words are simultaneously typed out by Christian. These words, quoted from the young man in the song (by Toulouse Lautrec), and now appearing on the opening page of Christian's new book, alternate with extreme close-ups of Christian's face in chiaroscuro lighting. This is artificial reality, and it is redoubled here through every note played, and every letter typed, clarifying to the audience that every action taken is burdened with ambivalence.

On the last word of the lyric, *return*, the full orchestra, including brass and timpani, enters forcefully, forewarning of the tragedy we know will ensue. In fact, we have already come to recognise the motif sounded with *return*, as we also heard it with the words *very far, very far* in the first verse, and *many things, fools and kings* in the second verse. This is the other leitmotif within the song that acts as a death knell.

217
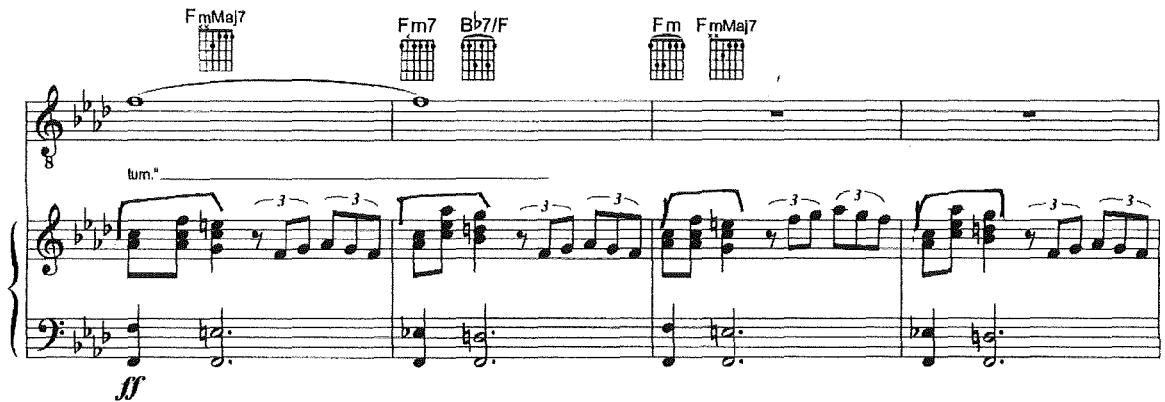
5.4 Death-knell motif first introduced in Nature Boy

After this leitmotif is heard four times, the music quietens and we hear Christian's voice for the first time – doom-laden, shaking and muted. He quietly utters the following words: "The Moulin Rouge, a nightclub, a dance hall, and a bordello, ruled over by Harold Zidler. The kingdom of night-time pleasures where the rich and powerful came to play with the young and the beautiful creatures of the underworld. The most beautiful of all these was the woman I loved – Satine, a courtesan. She sold her love to men. They called her the "sparkling diamond" – and she was the star of the Moulin Rouge". As he speaks, black-and-white images change to vivid colour, and we view the wild excesses of the nightclub: grotesquely made-up can-can dancers lifting frilly skirts high to reveal "a world of entertainment" below, an older man cavorting with a young girl, a garish clown, the red-cheeked Zidler with his show-time, lipsticked smile. Everyone is having an ecstatically wonderful time – no place for the reflective and serious here. In addition to Christian's melancholy voice, narrating the past in the present, the quiet, sombre string music, hesitantly hanging around the tonic key of F sharp minor, provides a contrast while these "silent" images appear dream-like on the screen. This technique of writing "anempathetic music" (Michel Chion, 1994), or musical counterpoint, is hardly new, as related in previous chapters. However, the fact that there is no weighting towards a clear meaning is new. While the *Nature Boy* melody, the arrangement and the tone of Christian's narration express sadness and loss, the lyric and images convey a "jouissance" (Barthes, 1977), a heady adventure into pleasures previously denied, and the ultimate love affair with Satine, the "sparkling diamond". This song tells the condensed story of the whole film, and we are

218

presented with opposing truths which urge the audience to participate. These bi-polar dynamics are heightened if there are "affiliating identifications" with Nat King Cole's dreamy original version, with his rich, velvety voice singing *rubato*. In this new version, in a different context, John Leguizamo's delivery is starkly different. His sad, strained voice consciously negotiates every note and beat. There is no *rubato* – the singer's theatricalised style is painstakingly accurate – even a little stiff. There is equal emphasis on the mind and on the body as this song is performed. The excessive brain-addling absinthe drinking and the loud, louche behaviour of all at the Moulin Rouge, are brought into sharp relief by Christian's narration and Toulouse Lautrec's tortuous singing. Audience members are instantly positioned as empathetic addressees, and are invited to consider a central question, which is never answered – was it all worth it? – from the start. This is a swan song for Christian, and where the score of ambivalence commences.

Nature Boy is perhaps the most important musical component in the whole film. It is the opening cue (segueing from the frivolous musical romp after the Twentieth Century Fox Corporation brand music), and it establishes the three Red Curtain Cinema rules. *Nature Boy* informs us of the story's ending as it begins; it introduces us to the "heightened world" of turn-of-the-century Montmartre and the Moulin Rouge; and it keeps the audience "in contract" by telling the story through song. However, this is not all. Unlike the self-contained songs in *Magnolia* which are heard in their entirety only once, segments of *Nature Boy* are heard in various guises at other points in the film. Sometimes lines are sung *a cappella*, and there is a more extended version sung by Toulouse and Christian to bring the film to full cycle. In this way, the song functions as a leitmotif, in addition to the two musical segments within the song mentioned above. The only other song to operate in this way is a specially-composed song entitled *Come What May* – the lovers' secret duet. The musical components of *Nature Boy*, therefore, are emotively referenced later in order to remind us of the ending, to further underline the theatricalised cinema rules, and to heighten audience experience of the unfolding events. In addition to this, the recognisable song, with its fresh arrangement by Craig Armstrong, is an ambiguous cue, as it is not quite pre-existing and not quite specially-composed. The melody and lyric have been heard before in many versions, and even in other films, such as *The Boy With Green Hair* (1948)

and *Untamed Heart* (1993), but never within this context or instrumentation. This ambiguous scoring technique is different from Elliot Goldenthal's impressionistic score which resists precise interpretation of screen events; and from Aimee Mann's cues which are most likely to be experienced for the first time in *Magnolia* when first released. In *Moulin Rouge*, Craig Armstrong and Baz Luhrmann offer an entirely different and original interpretation of a known song, in a new context, in an anomalous way. The film is set in 1900, and here is a song composed in 1947. These ingredients challenge an audience, keep them "in contract" and simultaneously offer the flexibility the composer and director require, to tell a story in a modern way with spaces for *signifiance* and self-reflexivity.

To add to this musical complexity, Luhrmann and Armstrong call upon classical scoring techniques throughout the film with varying levels of respect or subversion. As *Nature Boy* refers to the faraway past, recent past and present in such a condensed manner, all classical scoring techniques are relevant, and revealing in their application. Indeed, for *Nature Boy*, classical scoring techniques are employed mostly with respect, but they are utilised overtly, and self-consciously. In *Unheard Melodies* (1987), Claudia Gorbman states: "In a film, where narrative is the excuse for, the cement of, and the raison d'être of the film's existence . . . we forsake contemplating that abstract arrangement and rearrangement of sound which is music, because it is nonrepresentational and nonnarrative and does not inhabit the perceptual foreground of the narrative film" (p12). At first glance, these comments appear out of date, even irrelevant. In fact, every comment is apt, but from a new perspective. *Moulin Rouge* is a narrative film – story is paramount – but the story is told through song and instrumental music. These facts tell us that the film is not a pop video (which does not need or rely upon narrative) or a film musical with its "dual-focus" narrative driven by character. In *Moulin Rouge*, therefore, music is the *raison d'être* of the film. It signifies more, becomes more representational, is intrinsic to narrative creation and perceptively foregrounded. In addition, familiar sung words heard upon a recognisable melody, with fresh vocals and instrumental arrangement, are able to yoke opposites together to compress time and space, to heighten human experience, and to encourage a range of "affiliating identifications". The four layers of lyric, melody, arrangement and voice (both "pheno" song and "geno" song) are able to communicate complexity and uncertainty when heard conspicuously against scenes of excessive indulgence. While the

characters viewed may be fully participating in wild debauchery, the music implies that Christian, the song's nature boy, has mixed feelings about these activities for himself and others. While the lyric expresses a dreamy, positive outlook, the vocal delivery, instrumentation and melody express ensuing tragedy.

Claudia Gorbman's model and theories are, therefore, still relevant for two reasons. Firstly, the model is "a discursive field rather than a monolithic system with inviolable rules" (1987, 73). In other words, the model is malleable, bendable and adaptable. Secondly, music itself, as Gorbman says, is the most flexible film element of all. She argues: "Music in film mediates. Its nonverbal and nondenotative status allows it to cross all varieties of "borders": between levels of narration (diegetic/nondiegetic), between narrating agencies (objective/subjective narrators), between viewing time and psychological time, between points in diegetic space and time (as narrative transition)" (p30). Of course, Gorbman is talking about specially-composed abstract scores in the classical style, but we can see in *Moulin Rouge* that music, which includes songs, continues to operate like this, and even more so, when it functions as narrative. It is also significant that *Nature Boy*, as it appears in *Moulin Rouge*, has an indefinable style. It is specially arranged for romantic symphony orchestra in the classical Hollywood style, but the song's associations with the "lush" orchestra, references to jazz chromaticism, to live theatre through John Leguizamo's vocal delivery, and to artists from Frank Sinatra to David Bowie, Sarah Vaughan to James Brown, enable it to cross further borders, globally and emotionally. As Dai Griffiths argues: "cover encompasses a wide range of related but subtly different terms or sets of terms: song, record, track; performance, rendition, transformation, appropriation; allusion, reference, sample" (2002, p61). When a cover is placed in film, there are many more layers for consideration. Moreover, songs contain globally-recognisable characteristics. Luiz Tatit (2002) argues that Brazilian slow 'mid-year' songs have universally appealing traits which can be applied to any slow song. These are: prolonging of vowel sounds; gradual building up of melody; meaningful oscillations in pitch; descending phrases indicating affirmation; ascending or suspending phrases indicating continuity of communication; and prevailing alterity – expressed musically through a slowing of melody progression, with the melody acquiring a "searching impulse", and lyrically as the subject "who needs another in order to constitute his or her

221

own identity". These characteristics can be applied effectively to *Nature Boy*, but I will refer to the special qualities of songs in films in the conclusion to this chapter, and in the next chapter. For the moment, we can see that songs, as well as instrumental music, can cross barriers and be adaptable.

Let us return to the points Claudia Gorbman makes above on music's flexibility. *Nature Boy* is heard diegetically and nondiegetically as it tells the story, moving from Toulouse Lautrec's vocal delivery of the song on screen, to off screen. As the song is the narrative agency, it is able to convey Toulouse Lautrec's objective narration but also Christian's subjective interpretation of the story, with ambivalence. The song alternately and simultaneously informs us of actions and the psychological, and it transports us across a condensed period of time. Music is operating as it always has in film, but it is working harder, more overtly, with a greater purpose and with more representational elements than ever before. The fact that *Nature Boy* is a song enables certain elements to signify precise ideologies, such as *the greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return*, but the instrumental arrangement provides a much more ambiguous space, which can accommodate opposing themes. On the one hand, the employment of a known song in strange surroundings resists ultimate signification. On the other hand, as most classical techniques are employed, the score works hard to manipulate us emotionally.

Let us now examine the classical scoring techniques within the *Nature Boy* cue. Firstly, there is employment of the song as leitmotif, as discussed. The arrangement of the song yields two leitmotifs: the rising quaver movement on strings, symbolic of Satine's plight; and the chromatic three-note figure signifying a death-knell. Sung words are also reiterated (mostly by Toulouse Lautrec) to remind us of the story's ending and the message of the film. While the main themes or leitmotifs are commonly heard at a film's beginning, themes within a fresh arrangement of a known song are not. Songs employed in films tend to be self-contained, pre-existing and heard only once. As the music tells the story, these themes are made clear. As discussed above, the death-knell motif is heard several times within the song. Arguably, music is working harder to tell story with more repetition, several themes and a range of emotions. Within one song, we see that *Nature Boy* is also adhering to several other classical film music principles: it is providing *unity* with the variation and repetition of the themes as it constructs narrative, *continuity* as it transports us

seamlessly between scenes with rhythmic fluency, *signifiers of emotion*, and, of course, *narrative cueing*. As music is operating as narrative, it works exactly as indicated in Gorbman's model, both referentially and connotatively. The music functions referentially as it indicates points of view, establishes setting and characters and supplies formal demarcations; and connotatively as it interprets and illustrates narrative events. However, music with its increased status is able to be more potent, more expressive, more vivid and more assertive. For example, in addition to "interpreting" and "illustrating" narrative events, the music *tells* us of the narrative events, while simultaneously expressing emotion, and providing continuity and unity. To refer once more to Philip Brophy, like *Boogie Nights*, *Moulin Rouge* is a "timbrel text which must be listened to in order for it to be read". *Moulin Rouge*, therefore, employs "vertical narration" as Brophy calls it, through songs. However, *Nature Boy* not only tells us what is happening in the opening scenes of the film "all at once", it tells us about the whole film "all at once" (2004, p50). In *Nature Boy*, therefore, we can see that Claudia Gorbman's model is still working, but that each component of the model is utilised simultaneously, and with more potency when music transforms into narrative.

Analysis of *Your Song*

Christian visits the Moulin Rouge for the first time. The scenes of singing, dancing and impassioned merry-making reach such frenetic heights, that audience members feel they are at the party. The mercurial, multifarious camera work, converging on kicking thighs, frilly underwear, gyrating bodies, lascivious glances, and general outrageous behaviour, is edited to *Lady Marmalade*, a come-hither disco classic, originally performed in 1974 by Labelle. The track here, produced by Missy Elliot and performed by pin-ups Christine Aguilera, Lil' Kim, Mya and Pink, adds an extra frisson with the kind of postfeminist, rampant raunchiness evident on MTV. The women – the dancers viewed on-screen and the musicians heard off-screen – are not just show-girls with attitude, they are women with *cojones*[11]. Shortly after this sexually-charged scene, in which Satine also sings *Diamonds*

---

[11] Spanish equivalent of machismo.

are a Girl's Best Friend, Christian arrives at Satine's boudoir to read his poetry, in the
hope that she will approve it for *Spectacular, Spectacular*.

On entering the room, a cross-purpose conversation begins between Satine and
Christian, with sexual innuendo in every phrase. The editing is markedly slower. After
being pushed onto the chaise-longue, and surviving Satine's exciting sexual fumblings,
Christian begins to recite his poetry, or rather, Bernie Taupin's lyric composed in 1969:

It's a little bit funny, this feeling inside,

I'm not one of those who can easily hide.

These words send Satine into ecstasy. Overhead shots show her squealing with delight and
writhing on the floor, while low-level shots, in contrast, look up to the inhibited, uncertain
Christian who remains standing, at a distance. Naïve, confused, frustrated and a little
disgusted, he keeps his self-control until the lyric reaches the words:

5.5 Christian's first sung line in Your Song

At this point, Christian bursts into unaccompanied song with echo-effect, enabling the sung
line to appear natural, and the previous spoken lyric, artificial. He finally succeeds in
capturing Satine's attention. His voice of genius also causes all the lights in Paris to come
on, and the eavesdropping Bohemians to cease their revelry. The editing slows to a long
take and close-up on Christian as he sings more of the song. A cut to a close-up on Satine's

224

still face shows that all movement has stopped. Gradually, lower strings enter in a descending melody, reminiscent of the ground bass in early operatic arias by Purcell or Monteverdi. *Your Song*, by Elton John and Bernie Taupin, is resoundingly familiar, and with this unfamiliar setting and arrangement, it is especially potent. In its new historical context, the song compresses time and space both in the film, and for audience members, who are invited to bring 'affiliating identifications' to the music. *Your Song* stops the relentless action of the film and offers time for reflection. It reveals Christian as different and alone. Unlike the typical clubbers in the Moulin Rouge, he has integrity, is thoughtful, and has a moral conscience. The love song, given space and time to communicate in its own universal language, represents both central characters as they seize the moment together. As the more familiar piano arpeggio accompaniment enters the arrangement at the words, *How wonderful life is when you're in the world*, Christian turns to look out on Paris, bright-eyed. As the arrangement starts to build, the camera work quickens slightly, but does not detract from the song. A choir is heard singing a counter melody, and two-shots of the lovers are established. Christian's singing approach changes. On the words *green* and *blue* from the phrase *You see I've forgotten if they're green or they're blue*, he introduces improvisation and melisma for a more contemporary sound. As Christian updates his style, communicating a more liberal, yet resolute representation of himself, a tenor-voiced moon (Placido Domingo) takes the song into a magic night at the opera. Out under the stars and above the clouds, Christian dances and sings with an umbrella, intertextually referencing Gene Kelly in both *An American in Paris* and *Singin' in the Rain*[12]. Finally, the couple dance together in the style of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, but in a Disney dream-world setting.

---

[12] These film musicals were released in 1951 and 1952 respectively.

MOULIN ROUGE Clip 2

5.6 Christian and Satine dance under the singing moon and stars

The foregrounding of this anomalous music enables the audience to reflect upon the action so far, to focus on the lovers' plight, and the psyche of Christian. In this song, Rick Altman's theory of "personality dissolve" is relevant: Christian's "suppressed personality" is able to be revealed as he takes the lead, shows himself to be stronger, socially secure, confident and traditionally masculine. This is reinforced in the arrangement with foregrounded brass, traditionally associated with strength, courage and honour in films. Satine, on the other hand, shows her suppressed personality by acting acquiescently, vulnerably, almost naively, as if falling in love for the first time. Viewers can also simply enjoy the song. If they are familiar with Elton John's performance and distinctive piano accompaniment, they will knowingly hear the different arrangement in the film, and possibly savour the two together. Craig Armstrong's arrangement is intentionally overwrought, to carry the audience into a fantasy world – at least for a moment. Beginning

226

with the lower strings, the song quickly builds to include the full symphony orchestra with added choir, foregrounded brass, and solo tenor voice. Armstrong refers to music from the faraway past (early opera but also classical and romantic opera); the 1970s with nods to Elton John's original version, particularly the quaver piano passages; Hollywood scoring practices such as the use of strings to connote emotion and romance; and contemporary pop ballads with their soft, steady rock rhythms, penchant for strong melodies, and abrupt modulations towards the end of bars. Unlike Elton John's original, rather mellow version in which piano and voice dominate, this version nods to the iconic piano track of old, but adds familiar ingredients from other musical and cultural spheres to make it more fantastical, yet intensely familiar. The Red Curtain rule of creating a heightened world which is still recognisable is certainly working here. So, how can this be a score of ambivalence? Surely the music is urging the audience to lose themselves in the text and forget their worries, just like Satine and Christian? Surely this music is just for entertainment?

Actually, Armstrong's creative, excessive score, which at times is mixed to overwhelm the singers, brings our attention to the constructed artifice of the music, the film, and the self-constructed sham lives of the protagonists. Music, camera work, lighting and action work together to create a dream world which we know to be ephemeral. The stars, gold-dust, midnight blue sky and magical music highlight the fantastic world in order to emphasise the human qualities of the couple. We remember that at this stage, Satine believes Christian to be a rich and powerful duke who could help her "fly away" from the Moulin Rouge to superstardom on the stage. She is helplessly falling in love with her dream man, who is, in reality, a poverty-stricken poet. While her attire is overtly provocative, and her body language poised and seductive, we are also made aware of her vulnerability. When Christian begins to sing, and the camera moves to a big close-up on Satine's face, her blinking, breathing, wayward strands of crinkly red hair, laughter lines, and thin, pale face reveal the fragility of the mind and body. Here is Satine, a courtesan. Her body is not her own: it is used and controlled by others for the benefit of anyone but herself. Satine's mind is also not her own. Harold Zidler dictates her every thought, and persuades her to stay in the Moulin Rouge because that is all she is worth. Like a wind-up doll, her body and mind are activated by others. Before *Your Song* begins, she is performing for Christian in the only way she knows. The artificiality of the song lays bare

227

the unadorned reality of her situation. Satine is falling for an impoverished writer who she thinks is a duke, but she abandons the seduction performance when she sees that Christian is not impressed. She enters a dream world where she can be natural. This naturalness is reinforced by the recitative-style of the lyric and melody-line, which follow the rhythms of the everyday speaking voice. The over-the-top musical arrrangement brings this to our attention, as it contradicts the style of the lyric and melodic line. Added to this, the world Satine has stepped into is her own ideal world, a world free from pretence and denied feelings. For a transitory moment, she escapes the world constructed by Harold Zidler. This song stresses the ambivalence she feels towards her 'real' life, the life she resists taking action to escape, and her real desires.

At the same time, the song expresses reality for Christian. He is genuinely falling in love with a woman he wishes were not a courtesan. He woos her, as if for the first time, and reverses their roles. Christian takes charge, but lays his heart open to Satine in beautiful song, which he is composing as we view. This technique of employing pre-existing lyrics and music to convey the genius of Christian's poetry brings our attention once again to the song as construction. As the song is so well-known, the lyrics become more potent in their new context. The hook lines in the lyric

Hope you don't mind, I hope you don't mind that I put down in words.
How wonderful life is now you're in the world.

are intensified, as we know that Christian's time with Satine is already running out, and that this song, telling of the past, is also expressing the present. So, on examination, *Your Song* provides another vehicle for opposing emotions to be equally expressed. The sentiments of ambivalence, first expressed in *Nature Boy*, are continued in *Your Song*.

In this cue, classical film music objectives are exaggerated, and this is only possible because film music is burdened with such entrenched audience expectations. As Kathryn Kalinak states: "Musical conventions which become ingrained and universal in a culture function as a type of collective experience, activating particular and predictable responses" (1992, p12). In *Your Song*, these conventions are exaggerated mostly for entertainment, but also to convey mixed feelings, both within and outwith the diegetic world, to keep the

audience "in contract", to create the "heightened world" so that the myth is clear, and to lay reality bare. The music is able to magnify musical conventions by bringing them to the fore and by employing them excessively. Therefore, we can see classical objectives working harder again in order to communicate more. All of the scoring traditions are called upon, except of course, the rule of inaudibility. The music signifies emotion, but in an over-the-top manner, by drawing not only upon the full romantic symphony orchestra, but also opera, mass choirs, the iconic Elton John ballad piano track, and Ewan McGregor's arch singing style. In its hybridity, the song is able to sweep across a wide range of cultural borders and emotions simultaneously, instantly, and intensely. Wild emotion is also conveyed by romantic musical traits, such as emphasis on the virtuoso performer (in this case Placido Domingo and Christian as creative artist and performer), expressive chromatic harmony, layers of melodic interest within the arrangement, for example Domingo's lines, the brass fanfares, string figurations, use of *rubato*, and an overall "big" sound.

The music indicates a point of view and establishes Christian's character, but as with *Nature Boy*, the music works harder than merely being connotative and referential. In addition to interpreting and illustrating narrative events, the music and lyric tell us what is happening, aided by the screen action which moves in time with the music. With the song's aptitude for "vertical narration", it is able to be read in musical layers, and when these are added to the fantastical screen dynamics, a rich and intricate text is revealed with room for interpretation, signification and *signifiance*. The abstract classical scoring techniques, with their 'assimilating identifications', operate to manipulate us into the realms of fantasy and ecstasy, while the known elements of the song encourage 'affiliating identifications', and opportunities for self-reflexivity. However, the sung words also declare Christian's viewpoint and the fact that he and Satine are falling in love. Simultaneously, the knowledge of the tragic ending taints the scene, tearing holes in the romantically painted canvas. The music, in its stark opposition to Christian's present reality, lays bare the hollowness of death, the vulnerability of both characters, the alienation of Satine, the fragility of the mind and body, and the existentialist belief that our choices are made with "anguish, abandonment and despair".

Even then, this is not all the music achieves. In the traditional method, the song provides unity and continuity, and as it is brought to the fore, it gives way for pop video

229

elements to surface. At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned two theories from Carol Vernallis' work (2004), which are pertinent to *Moulin Rouge*, and particularly to this song. Firstly, the mutability of pop video elements is one of the defining characteristics of the form. Vernallis says: "The image gives up its autonomy and abandons some of its representational modes. In exchange, the image gains in flexibility and play, as well as polyvalence of meaning" (px). Another distinctive characteristic is the way the individual elements of a pop video imitate the separate tracks on a mixing console. She states: "In as much as any element can come to the fore, the world that a video depicts can become very strange. Some of music video's excitement stems from the sense that anything can happen". While *Your Song* is heard, both these theories are in operation, and Baudrillard's world of simulacra reveals itself. We are presented with aural and visual references to an array of musicals, films, and styles as noted above, but they represent no more than themselves. They are not burdened with "historicity" as Jameson (1977) says, they can mean anything or nothing. Therefore, the music and images are able to move seamlessly and effortlessly into a world of singing moons, heavenly choirs, stardust, make-believe and beyond. When music functions as narrative, much wider and more complicated ideas can be simultaneously expressed.

Analysis of *El Tango De Roxanne*

The Duke agrees to finance *Spectacular, Spectacular* but insists on retaining the deeds to the Moulin Rouge. Reluctantly, Zidler signs them over. Meanwhile, Satine and Christian continue with their clandestine affair, supported by the Bohemians – but the Duke is suspicious. The Show's ending mirrors the lovers' own story exactly: the courtesan chooses the poverty-stricken sitar player over the wealthy Maharajah. During a rehearsal of the final scene, Nini Legs-in-the-Air swaggers up to the Duke and tells him: "This ending's silly. Why would the courtesan go for the penniless writer? Oops! I mean, sitar player". The awful truth dawns on the Duke and he brings the rehearsal sharply to a halt by announcing: "I don't like this ending!". The cast is shocked into silence. The Duke, exasperated, demands good reasons for the choice of the sitar player. Christian, now equally provoked, shouts: "Because she doesn't love you! – him". Satine soothes tensions by inviting the

Duke to discuss the situation over supper (and sex). Christian is horrified and begs her not to sleep with him. Satine tries to reassure him and whispers: "He could destroy everything. It's for us. You promised me you wouldn't be jealous – *Come What May*". The inclusion of the secret love duet title, which is sung rather than spoken, reinforces the over-riding actions of ambivalence in this scene. Christian lets Satine go to the Duke, but wishes she would stay with him. Satine agrees to sleep with the Duke, knowing she is compromising Christian's trust and her own integrity.

As Satine appears before the Duke, veiled and dressed in black lingerie, the cast wait in sombre mood in a noirish, low-lit Moulin Rouge. Christian's voice-over returns, and we remember he is narrating the past with present hindsight: "She had gone to the tower to save us all". Here, in the past, he rages with anguish. Nini Legs-in-the-Air does not help. Brazenly, she perches on his knee, laughs, and shouts spitefully in his face: "Don't worry Shakespeare – you'll get your ending once the Duke gets his – end in". Christian shoves her away, and she is calmed, stroked and kissed on the shoulder by the Unconscious Argentinian. These overtly gentle gestures soon change, as the Argentinian is angry with Nini. Through her jealousy, she has betrayed Satine, Christian, and the entire cast of the Show. A "live" solo virtuoso violinist strikes up, playing dramatic, intricate phrases across the full range of the instrument, to set the scene for heightened emotions. A piano and Spanish guitar accompany. The Argentinian strides out of the darkness and onto the dance floor, attracting the attention of all at the Moulin Rouge. He screams at Christian: "Never fall in love with a woman who sells herself – it always ends bad!"

This passionate, angry man describes a dance he knows from the brothels of Buenos Aires. "It tells a story of a prostitute" (lights shine on Nini, and everyone knowingly laughs) "and a man who falls in love with her" (big close up on Christian). "First there is desire, then passion, then suspicion, jealousy, anger, betrayal. Where love is for the highest bidder, there can be no trust. Without trust there is no love". As he speaks, tango rhythms begin and he dances almost violently with Nini, propelling her forcefully across the floor, exposing her treacherous behaviour. She has prostituted herself, her friends and the Show. As in *Strictly Ballroom*, the central axiom – the truth hurts – is "danced out", and here, it is also sung out. Artificial reality is particularly poignant and intense as cross-cutting to the tango rhythms reveals how the evening is progressing for Satine and the Duke. Chiaroscuro

lighting reinforces horror movie iconography in their scenes, for example the giant fireplace, flickering candles and gothic architecture. Dominating the mise-en-scene is the Duke, now cast as Dracula, and Satine as his female victim.

The song *Roxanne* begins. The Argentinian, with his gravelly, baritone voice and Spanish accent, takes this iconic white reggae song into an underworld of prostitution and dark emotions, where it feels at home. Sting's original song from 1978 is, of course, about a French prostitute called Roxanne. The Police version is quite fast, with Sting's electric bass and Stewart Copland's drums emphasising the first and fourth beats of the bar, as opposed to the traditional reggae pattern of stress on the second and fourth beats. Craig Armstrong's arrangement leans on the first beat and last quaver of the bar, so rhythmic similarities are clear. In Sting's original version, the mild reggae pattern is reserved for the verses, perhaps to connote a certain exoticism. This rhythm is abandoned in the chorus for continuous fast quaver movement, which takes it into the realms of harder, British punk. In *Moulin Rouge*, the song is transported to Buenos Aires, Paris, to any city in the world. It becomes a larger, more inclusive song, embracing universal themes of love and betrayal, jealousy and hurt. Armstrong's arrangement, starting with the solo violin, builds to full symphony orchestra and chorus, pushing it into opera, and high art. This song touches all classes and all races in the film, just as the Moulin Rouge welcomes merry-makers from all walks of life. The globally-recognisable, classless tango rhythms, with their connotations of sexually-charged bodies and male domination, are a perfect choice for this scene.

In the Moulin Rouge, we see Christian seething with sexual jealousy, which permeates the scene, and the Argentinian employing masculine force to punish Nini Legs-in-the-Air, who becomes Roxanne in the song. In the tower, the Duke wants to own and control Satine, to prevent anyone else "touching his things". These three men reveal their particular weaknesses through performance of the song: Christian, understandably upset at Satine's decision to sleep with the Duke, is nevertheless suffering from jealousy, a selfish emotion; the Unconscious Argentinian is, of course, angry with Nini, but throwing her violently around the dancefloor and eventually knocking her out is animal behaviour; the Duke wants Satine to be a special present, to wrap and unwrap as he chooses – he does not love her. The darkness of the music reinforces the complex emotions and character motivations here, not all of them noble or overt.

232

Armstrong's intentionally chromatic arrangement is based around the key of G minor. The introductory "live" solo violin line prepares us for extremes, "intensities", challenges and discomfort. The solo violin, playing *rubato* and with an improvisatory feel, hints that anything could happen – the psychic fields are wide open. As the tight tango rhythms begin, the music grabs hold of the scene, marshalling the dancers into action with their strong, dramatic steps.

MOULIN ROUGE Clip 3

5.7 The Argentinian and Nini in mid-tango

Craig Armstrong's music squarely matches the powerful screen dynamic, reminding us of his view that Luhrmann's films require equally robust music which can stand on its own. Here is a score to be reckoned with. It demands attention and controls the other screen elements. In this scene, the music presents a fully embodied experience for the audience, engulfing us with its potent rhythms, and encouraging us to collude with the

233

impassioned dancers moving across the screen. Arguably, we too are dancing out the tango and exploring a range of mixed emotions and fantasies.

The lyric in Sting's original version has been compressed. Verses one and two have been merged into a single verse, which summarises both. The most recognisable melody lines, and arguably the most memorable sections of the lyric, are employed here to foreground the familiar as a way of anchoring some meaning, while simultaneously provoking further enigmas. The sung words make it clear that we are focusing on two prostitutes: Satine, a high-class courtesan, and Nini Legs-in-the-Air, a lowly can-can dancer and woman of the night. Added to this there is Nini's "prostitution" of her rival, her friends and the Show. *Roxanne* is also about jealousy, the dominant emotion in these scenes. The song questions the morals of the characters, and invites audience participation and viewpoints. While Satine, in these opening moments of the song, is selling herself to the Duke to save the Show, she is still wrong to do so. She could be accused of being a casting-couch cutie. When she arrives at the tower she tells the Duke: "The boy has a ridiculous obsession with me. I indulge his fantasy because he's talented. We need him but only until tomorrow night". Satine, while beautiful, is always a chameleon, adapting to every situation. She tells both her suitors what they want to hear, and we know that she really would prefer Christian to be a rich Duke. The new truncated version of the song lyric reinforces these problems:

> *Roxanne, you don't have to put on that red light,*
> *Walk the streets for money.*
> *You don't care if it's wrong or if it's right.*
> *Roxanne, you don't have to wear that dress tonight.*
> *Roxanne, you don't have to sell your body to the night.*

While we might empathise with the dying Satine, struggling for her own survival (and that of others), these words suggest that, in fact, she really does make choices, and that those choices increasingly heighten the ambivalent tone of the film. As we view Nini being hurled around the dance floor, an enigma is created: why is Satine favoured? Nini is certainly jealous of Satine, but she is not deceitful. Her choices of actions clarify her

234

emotions and cause uncomfortable truths to be revealed – truths which others choose to keep to themselves. The lyric, with its reinforcement of the word "don't", highlights what these women "do", regardless. Once again we encounter binaries with fine lines of division: truth/lies; good/bad; generous/ungenerous; selflessness/selfishness. The lyric actually provides a contrast to actions on the screen while also reinforcing the themes of prostitution and jealousy. The insistent tango rhythms underpin the certainties of the dance steps and the outwardly decisive actions of the two female protagonists. However, the solo violin, playing in an improvisatory manner, leap-frogging between octaves, and emphasising notes off the beat and out of the established key, opens up spaces for doubt, reflection, unease and discomfort. Again, the depths and complexities of the scenes are conveyed through the music, and nothing is absolutely clear.

El Tango De Roxanne in fact contains two songs which initially segue into each other, and are then performed in tandem, in counterpoint. Craig Pearce and Baz Luhrmann wrote the lyric for the next section, and Marianito Mores composed the music. Craig Armstrong, just to remind the reader, is the arranger for the whole song. The next section of the song is sung by Christian. For now, we forget Nini and focus on the two lovers. This new melody line is still heard over the tango rhythms, but does not reflect them. The first three lines of the song are sung on only two low notes, so that we may focus on the words, and experience a build up of tension:

5.8 Christian's vocal entry in El Tango de Roxanne

In the next line there is a dramatic leap of a tenth (from Eb to high G) at the words;
It's more than I can stand.

5.9 Demonstration of dramatic leap in Christian's vocal line

The leap, occurring on the word "more", signals the start of the voice singing an octave above, a range which McGregor's tenor voice can comfortably bridge. The note values here are also simple – a basic mixture of crotchets, quavers and dotted crotchets. As Armstrong's arrangement extends to include the full symphony orchestra, playing Baroque-style fast-running quaver passages in increasing volume while still maintaining an underlying tango beat, Christian's vocal line becomes ever simpler rhythmically. For the words *Why does my heart cry feelings I can't fight?*, semibreves and minims are the only note values used.

5.10 Christian's vocal line – a force for good?

This type of line is reminiscent of Lutheran church music, particularly Bach cantatas and chorales. While this film is not in any way religious, I suggest that Craig Armstrong arranges these lines to provide a complete contrast to actions on screen and the musical complexities. Christian's lines, therefore, seem isolated from all other actions and sounds. This separation of the high vocal line reinforces his feelings of alienation, but also his innocence and quest for the truth. His high tenor voice singing words like *You're free to leave me but just don't deceive me* comes across as a moral force, exposing all iniquities below, evangelising like a secular god, a force for good. By combining the symphony orchestra with a large choir, and still maintaining the tango patterns, Armstrong transports the song to all spaces and times, while simultaneously injecting a certain Baroque grandeur to the song to make it universally affecting, but not entirely manipulating.

On the final words of this particular verse, *I love you*, a cut takes us to the Duke, who is seducing Satine with words and diamonds. "I will make you a star", he purrs, and then shows her an ornate diamond necklace. "Accept it as a gift from this Maharajah to his courtesan". The music drifts back to improvisatory-sounding strings exploring atonal territories. "And the ending?" Satine asks. "Let Zidler keep his fairy-tale ending" is the reply. We wonder if Satine has already weakened. Does she really desire money over Christian? These doubts are expressed in the unclear tonality of the music and the dancers – who have come to a standstill. Le Chocolat senses a problem and discreetly leaves the Moulin Rouge. Christian cannot contain himself and walks out while the original melody line of *Roxanne* and *El Tango De Roxanne* sound in counterpoint. A *Romeo and Juliet* moment occurs as Satine looks down upon Christian from the balcony of the tower, with her diamonds glinting in the moonlight. He looks up pleadingly, and she sings the line *Come What May, I will love you to my dying day*. The Duke immediately realises the situation, and horror code conventions invade the screen. Determined to possess Satine regardless, he proceeds to chase her with violation on his mind. The solo violinist dominates all film elements as he plays fast quavers near the bridge for a more visceral sound, and then heightens the pitch, (echoing Herrmann's iconic score for *Psycho*), as the Duke roughly breaks the snap of the necklace. He strips off Satine's dress and throws her onto the bed. We view the Duke as a horror-film malefactor, in menacing low-level camera angles, canted frames and chiaroscuro lighting. The grand, ornate, over-the-top music

238

crescendoing into a frenzy, harnesses the scene, and we view rapid cross-cuts and close-ups of Satine, the Duke, Nini, the Argentinian, Christian, and Le Chocolat. As Satine is pushed around by the Duke, Nini is thrown between several male dancers and handled with contempt. Suddenly, the Duke is knocked out – Satine has been saved by Le Chocolat, a secret admirer who has always been her protector. We remember Le Chocolat catching Satine safely in his arms when she fell from the trapeze in an earlier scene. Without a word of thanks to Le Chocolat, Satine and Christian embrace. Le Chocolat, with his usual enigmatic expression, quietly leaves. The music stops.

These scenes heighten the ambivalence characters experience over choices of action in the film. This is mostly brought to our attention by the sung words and arrangement, which deflect from the otherwise decisive, confident choices taken on screen. The lyric of *Roxanne* is riddled with opposing themes of admiration and disgust, fantasy and reality, possession and rejection, 'right' and 'wrong' and these are reflected in the music. The quasi-religious, Baroque-style choral passages and fast-running quaver movement for the lower strings imbue the deeply secular themes of the body, prostitution, lust and jealousy with a grandeur, universality and timelessness. The tango, with its strict metre, straightforward chord structure, and associations with traditional masculine bravado, imposes itself on the screen dynamic, to expose the extremely mixed, oscillating feelings of the characters. As Nini is pushed around the dance floor, her bodily movements and facial expressions show that she is both guilty and pleased with her actions. The men dancing with Nini openly enjoy handling her body, while showing disgust at her behaviour. In the first half of the song, Christian strides purposefully around the rehearsal room, but the music tells us that his mind is heavy with angst over his decision to let Satine go. This turmoil is further reinforced when his own vocal enters the musical fray in a style which contradicts the secular rhythms and associations of the tango. Satine, smiling and seductive in black lace, conceals her revulsion for the Duke. The full symphony orchestra, oratorio-style choral arrangement, improvisatory solo violin line with its exotic chromaticisms, the sexually-fired tango rhythms, Christian's arch singing style, and the gravelly voice of the Argentinian combine to create "intensities" of human experiences and emotions. These

overtly opposing musical traits and their respective connotations charge the scene with ambivalence and elevate it to a grand scale.

Claudia Gorbman discusses how music, "especially lushly-scored late Romantic music, can trigger a response of 'epic feeling'". This is so apt in relation to *El Tango De Roxanne* in *Moulin Rouge*. Gorbman states: "In tandem with the visual film narrative", music "elevates the individuality of the represented characters to universal significance, makes them bigger than life, suggests transcendence, destiny" (1987, p81). In adhering to classical scoring objectives, Craig Armstrong employs music to signify emotion, in this case epic emotion, but in a way which condenses and communicates several emotions simultaneously. No one emotion dominates – is it jealousy or fear or love or hate or lust or disgust or anger? I argue that they are all expressed within the music, and as this music is partly pre-existing and partly specially-composed, Armstrong is able to persuade an audience this way and that simultaneously, and on several levels, through the potency of the lush, late romantic, original score with its rich array of distinctive musical elements such as chromaticism, a solo virtuoso violinist, hints of the exotic, and bigger orchestral sound, all yoked together with the tango and a modern white reggae song about a woman of the night. Moreover, even though the sung lyric is pre-existing, it does not offer any relief, with ideological clarification. Instead, it underlines the lack, the absence, the dearth of a fixed perspective, but *not the need*. No, this music expresses the contemporary in its plurality. The music acknowledges and celebrates difference in ethics, class, race, and constructions of gender all at the same time. A 'heard' pre-existing song, freshly arranged, and drawing on world music, western art music, religious music, white reggae and tango, which dictates the visuals, is a potent way to communicate this. Gorbman says: "In dominant cinema, this capacity of music to refer to commonality, destiny, and the like, is exploited for producing emotion and pleasure", but when there is ambivalence and plurality in the score and on the screen, this epic feeling intensifies further as *all* emotional and ideological strands are amplified, to assume universal dimensions.

All of the classical scoring objectives identified by Gorbman and Copland are working in this scene, but harder. They are brought to our attention to keep us in contract, to exemplify the myth through artificial reality, and to remind us of the tragic ending. Narrative cueing is adhered to, but this scene tells a multi-strand, global narrative through

240

the music. As Gorbman says: "Music, via the well-established conventions, contributes to the narrative's geographical and temporal setting, at the beginning of a film or during a scene within it" (p83). In this scene, the world is compressed through musical style and singing voices as focus flits from the Argentinian, to Satine from Paris, to Christian from London, to Le Chocolat from a place unknown. Similarly, time is condensed. While the film is set in the Moulin Rouge in turn-of-the-century Paris, the musical references are from all times, and all places. Connotative cueing is also in operation, but again from pluralist perspectives. Gorbman states: "Narrative film music 'anchors' the image in meaning. It expresses moods and connotations which, in conjunction with the images and other sounds, aid in interpreting narrative events and indicating moral/class/ethnic values of characters" (p84). As discussed, *El Tango De Roxanne* adheres to this objective, but on various levels simultaneously. The music connotes a range of details about the narrative "all at once" as Brophy says, and this is because it is telling the story as much, if not more than the visuals. Unlike the cue *Wise Up*, in *Magnolia*, which linked the characters in their psychological turmoil and caused them to sing their story one by one, *El Tango De Roxanne* tells all the stories at the same time through musical counterpoint, and a mixing of musical styles.

Other conventional Hollywood composing techniques associated with narrative cueing abound in these scenes. For example, "mickey-mousing" is employed in the way the tango rhythms mark the steps of the dancers. This technique, named after musical practices used in early Disney films, makes actions on the screen explicit. However, while this technique is evident, it is employed in reverse. Instead of music imitating screen events, the dancers and editing move to the music. The "stinger" is also employed in *El Tango De Roxanne*. As Gorbman states, this is "a musical *sforzando* used to illustrate sudden dramatic tension" (p88). The music builds to a quick, frenzied level as the Duke realises Satine's deception and seeks to violate her body. Meanwhile, the male dancers throw Nini around a circle like a rag doll, with increasing contempt and harshness. When the music reaches its ultimate crescendo, the Duke is knocked out by Le Chocolat, as is Nini by the Argentinian's force. At this point, the other type of stinger is evident. As Gorbman says: "Silence can also sting" (p89). In the silence which follows, the "anguish, abandonment and despair" of all action choices are brought starkly into focus. Both stingers achieve more

241

dramatic effects than stingers in classical film, as they are developments of a partly pre-existing song which has been firmly established on and off screen in a 'heard' manner. The story is mostly told through this song, which dictates the movements in the screen dynamic. This narrative, of tempo, melody, harmony, instrumentation, sung words with vocal grains and visual accompaniment, is elevated to the *sforzando* by the specially-composed elements, and then abruptly stopped. This halt in the music is all the more dramatic as the narrative itself has stopped.

As the music is so dominant in these scenes, it easily adheres to the final classical scoring objectives of formal and rhythmic continuity. The music travels seamlessly through the cross-cutting between the scenes of Christian, Nini and the dancers, to those of Satine and the Duke. The musical details, such as the tango rhythms, grain of the Argentinian's voice, chromatic figurations of the violin, are repeated, varied and developed as the scenes gather tension. Quasi leitmotifs are employed within the song's arrangement and the sung words themselves, to provide links throughout. Yet all the time, plurality is communicated by the inclusion, perhaps even quotation, of so many musical styles, which "blend and clash" (Barthes, 1977, p146). Here we have illustration of how classical scoring objectives have become, arguably even more important. By bringing them to the fore, and thereby creating Brophy's idea of a "timbrel text which must be listened to in order for it to be read", a multi-stranded, global, urban narrative can be expressed, heard and considered. Classical film music principles are experienced and employed anew, and are more reflective of increasingly complicated and challenging contemporary existence.

In the final scene, after Satine has died, *Nature Boy* returns, a subtle reiteration of the film's message: *The greatest thing you'll ever learn, is just to love, and be loved in return.* John Leguizamo's grain, after all that has happened, sounds tragically weak and uncertain, and the final few lines of the song are sung by Christian himself. This film, while on the one hand entertaining, wild, amusing and knowing, is also riddled with harsh experience, which finds little relief or comfort. We are not sure whether Christian really accepts the moral – Satine gave him love and anguish in equal measures. She was true and untrue to him, as she was to herself and others. The actions of this quixotic character provide Christian with extreme highs, quickly succeeded by devastating lows. In classic

242

Hollywood films, the 'unheard' musical score would normally steer us steadily to these 'preferred' emotional spaces, via assimilating identifications, and we would be clear about the moral elements of good and bad, who to hate and who to love. This score refuses such certainties. The scores in *Heat* and *Magnolia* also resist any fixing of meaning or truth. Instead, these three film scores demand audience participation and individual interpretation, and they offer unique possibilities for audience creativity. While Kassabian's theories of assimilating and affiliating identifications can be partly applied to the songs in *Moulin Rouge*, we also know that Craig Armstrong's specially-composed cues and fresh arrangements of known songs inhibit the theories from working effectively. Armstrong's specially-composed cues are intentionally excessive, and if we are manipulated into any preferred ideological perspectives via assimilating identifications, we are knowingly, and sometimes amusingly transported into such territories for only a transitory moment. Likewise, in the final bars of *Your Song*, we hear and see a mocking of musical techniques and actual musicals, for example *Singin' in the Rain* – a backstage musical just like *Moulin Rouge*. In this situation, we would certainly experience affiliating identifications as described in the song analysis above. Yet, the fresh arrangement, drawing on renaissance, baroque, classical and romantic music, while offering a nodding reference to Elton John's original piano-dominated version, encourages us to remain sharp, conscious, and knowing. At the same time, we are invited to explore other avenues – for further enjoyment, for the release of tension. Throughout the film, we are constantly made aware of real artificiality. We never quite lose ourselves in the film or the music, retaining complete freedom for personal gratification. Film musical techniques, particularly those from the backstage musical, are employed to keep us active. These include the positioning of the audience as direct addressee; the celebration of entertainment; the laying bare of the creative process by revealing the "hard graft" in the rehearsal areas and in the use of the technical apparatus; and, of course, the privileging of song over speech, and music over all film elements.

The grains of the voices are also important in *Moulin Rouge*, for providing both a sense of artificial reality in order to convey truths, and also for providing *signifiance*. Ewan McGregor's singing voice – a classically-trained tenor imbued with 'pheno-song' arch stylistic traits – does not appear at ease with the iconic pop song, *Your Song*, originally

sung by Elton John. This brings our attention to the constructed essence of the song, its performance and creative process – Christian is supposed to be composing this song as he sings. Yet, the awkwardness of his singing style brings a distinctive quality to his voice, standing out as it does in this iconic pop song with an arrangement from the distant past, immediate past and present. So, Christian's voice develops a grain which opens signifiers to communicate ambivalence. He writes this song for Satine to declare his undying love, but he is repelled by her flirtatiousness, disgusted by her overt sexual appetite and bemused that he, a penniless poet, should be the centre of her attention. Open signifiers are also enabled by the employment of certain music video techniques as discussed earlier. When film is edited and dominated by music, image and dialogue become more subservient, more flexible, and, therefore, more polysemic. There is also the sense, as Carol Vernallis points out, that anything can happen, and this encourages us to give full rein to our individual fantasies, memories, ethics and emotions. However, Luhrmann's film is not a musical, nor is it a pop video, but he draws on elements from both to enable him to create a story through music which will resonate, entertain, and express contemporary urban experience in all its complexity and plurality. This is particularly evident in *El Tango De Roxanne*, with its score of epic emotions, conveyed through the lush, late romantic score with overt references to white reggae and the tango. Truffaut once said: "If we had to list the most shattering and moving scenes in movies, we would have to cite many of these Hollywood 'singing comedies'"[13]. Truffaut was, in fact, talking about film musicals, and Luhrmann subverts elements of them to pluck and tear the emotions more tellingly, leaving them jangling, and unassuaged. The Red Curtain Rule of employing a recognisable myth in order for us to know the story's ending as it begins, charges the film with tragedy, as we realise the conventional happy ending is not to be.

Scores which are not straightforward convey a more accurate sense of contemporary existence; and this existence is far more complicated than ever before. I am arguing in this work that the score is increasingly important in the cinema, that it continues to employ classical scoring aims and objectives, but that even though the music is often foregrounded, it resists temptations to moralise or manipulate. Michel Chion (1994) argues

---

[13] Quoted in Bruce Babbington and Peter Williams Evans, *Blueskies and Silver Linings: Aspects of the Hollywood Music*, 1985, p3

in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* that "there are two ways for music to create a specific emotion in relation to the situation depicted on the screen" (p8). "Empathetic" music directly expresses the screen dynamic, eg sadness, fast movement, etc, while "anempathetic" music exhibits "conspicuous indifference" to actions. This theory is practically identical to ideals set out by Adorno, Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov, who considered that good film music writing is more effective when heard in counterpoint to the image. Chion reserves a mere sentence for music which is neither wholly empathetic or anempathetic. He says that such music has "no precise emotional resonance". It is just such music which characterises my chosen films, makes them contemporary and relevant to a participative audience, which will have a wide range of morals and experience. It is scores of ambivalence which provide that audience with spaces for reflection, intellectual stimulation and embodied pleasures. These scores are mostly loud, overt, calling out for attention, and it is such scores which are able to operate as narratives, dominating other film elements and causing them to be subservient. Such scores, I argue, express a more truthful analysis of the contemporary human condition, and they almost invariably develop into music narratives.

Coda

By asking the musicological question – how does the music in contemporary Hollywood film convey the complexities of urban existence? – I have uncovered 'astounding sounds'. These are the elusive, eclectic cues that enrich and inform the three existential, multi-layered films; and within these cues I have unearthed a number of fresh ideas about the contemporary film score. The exploration of my case studies, with their ambiguous scoring practices – the impressionistic score of *Heat*; the songs written conterminously with the creation of *Magnolia*, their straddling of diegetic and non-diegetic spaces; and the freshly-arranged pre-existing songs in *Moulin Rouge* – reveals that composers and directors are able to subtly or overtly subvert classical film music techniques to convey more about the contemporary human condition. In not sticking to the rules, these "not quite" scores can convey a much wider range of emotion, be non-judgmental in persuading us this way or that but to no particular ideological perspective, and intensify audience experience by inviting us to consider the clashes expressed within the music, which altogether more accurately reflect a world which, as Strinati says, "rejects the claims of any theory to absolute knowledge, or of any social practice to universal validity"[1].

These are the scores which cause or express unrest, and neither emotions nor ambivalence are easily conveyed through dialogue and visuals alone. Indeed, could it be argued that visual actions and dialogue are burdened with too much signification to express ever-complex, and often indefinable interiority and angst? Is it only the strangeness of music, with the abstract wordlessness of a wayward, specially-composed score, or the sung lyric, with its destabilising "grain" and unsettling instrumental arrangement, that have the capacity to cope with ambivalence and interiority? In the future, could music narratives become the norm in films which explore diverse, difficult, secular choices of action for survival in the city? As we come to the end of this study, I want to explore this potentially controversial question through the main themes of intention and ambivalence, existentialism expressed through music, the importance of developing a critical film

---

[1] Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1995.

musicology, and the increasing prominence of songs within film, all of which are related to film music narrative. As we go, I want to consider the important question – where to now?

Intention and Ambivalence

The title of this PhD is *Astounding Sounds: Intention and Ambivalence in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music*. The musical sounds explored are 'astounding' in their employment and in their facility to express the complicated emotions which dialogue and visuals do not, cannot, or only partly achieve. This has been uncovered by examining the functions of music at specific moments in each of the three films. For every cue analysed, I have asked the critical musicological question: what is the intention of the music in these scenes? How does it work? What are its objectives? To my surprise, I discovered that Claudia Gorbman's model was sharply relevant to the asking of this question throughout the study, and most of all in the analysis of popular music in *Moulin Rouge*, where I expected it to be redundant. Arguably, the classical Hollywood score is so ingrained in our psyches that it can tolerate subversion, mockery and even excessive treatments. Like a great song, it manages to retain its identity regardless of arrangement, singer or context. The knowing subversion of classical techniques in contemporary film ensures that the score gains potency. Never before has there been so much need for a critical film musicology, which can enable the examination of these new forms of narrative.

The words 'intention' or 'function' are common parlance within traditional musicology. They are employed to unravel how music works without recourse to discussion of audience. In the analysis of a fugue by JS Bach for example, typical musicological questions might be: what is the function of a *codetta* here[2]? What is the intention of including an extra voice? What is the objective of employing *stretto*[3]? In the process of answering these questions, understanding of musical style, tension, release, harmony and form is gained. For so-called 'absolute music', such as a fugue or sonata, where there are generally no references to other art forms, emotions, literature or painting, such questions and answers are relatively straightforward. However, when analysing

---

[2] A codetta in a fugue is an extension of a fugue subject.
[3] The overlapping of musical entries.

programme music, sometimes known as tone poems, the question of intention begins to reveal potentially more interesting answers. Even though programme music is not usually accompanied by words or images, the title of a work such as *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Paul Dukas (inspired by Goethe's poem), impels us to make imaginative connections between the music and the story. A musicological examination of the work might include the ways in which the music depicts the various actions or emotions in the story. In this type of analysis, where scores are available, it is also worth remembering that intentions, or musical objectives, are traceable to the originator of the music, even though there is some distancing between what the composer intended and the performance, as the score travels to the conductor, the musicians, and finally to the recording engineer. Brian Eno describes this as the "transmission intervals in a classical sequence"[4], and in these transmissions there is always a degree of loss.

When a piece of music operates within a film, the meaning of the words 'intention', 'function' or 'objective' remain unchanged. In this critical film musicology, I am still asking the question – how does music work? What are the intentions of employing this music or that music? The difference is that the process of analysis needs to be conducted in *stages and strands*, a technique I discovered and refined as my research progressed. I think this is particularly true of song, (which I will address later when I focus on song in film), but also of instrumental music. For example, to apply my film musicology to *Heat*, I firstly watched the whole film several times in order to select cues for analysis. After choosing the cues, I repeatedly watched the chapters featuring those cues, in order to understand the operation of music *within* the film world. I then listened to the selected cues, over and over, using the soundtrack CD, to glean as much musical detail as possible. For *Heat*, as no published scores were available, I also notated elements of the cues to aid understanding. I then watched the film again, often with the sound at high volume, to check on precise details of the music as it is heard with screen actions, sounds and dialogue. Music in new Hollywood films is there to be savoured in the film world, but also out there in the 'real' world, as soundtrack CD or download; and as my chosen cues are often resisting classical scoring objectives, and expressing more or different ideas to the visuals and dialogue, the

---

[4] In Brian Eno, 'The Studio as Compositional Tool' in Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (eds), *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, New York and London, Continuum International Publishing, 2006, p129.

sounds themselves are crucially significant in the creation of meaning, marking the introduction of newer production techniques. This is what I mean by *stages and strands*, and why I think, after all I have said about the need for a film musicology that focuses on music as it is heard and experienced in film, that it is nevertheless important to conduct a musicological analysis of the cues in isolation, as self-contained pieces of music with their own forms, styles, harmonies, melodies and moods. Goldenthal's admission that he aimed "to create a series of experiments . . . that were impressions of the film but weren't exact cues"[5], gave me a steer as to how he intended the music to work, and Claudia Gorbman's model helped me to establish this, revealing why and how classical scoring objectives were resisted or subverted. The application of film musicology enabled new functions of music to be uncovered.

In classical Hollywood film I would argue that the functions of specially-composed music are nearly always limited. This is because of music's subservient role, to aid narrative or to privilege narrative or to make the story clear. In new Hollywood films, the range of possibilities for musical expression has extended, so much so that in certain films, and particularly those with eclectic scores, the operation of music is less prescriptive. These developments coincide with postmodern, pluralist existence in the 21st century. Therefore, in examining the cues in *Heat*, we can identify clear objectives in the theme *Of Helplessness*, which plays as the mother discovers her daughter has been killed by Waingro. The melodies, harmonies and orchestration forcefully *tell* us that Waingro is evil, that grief pervades the scene, and in the manner of a classical score, the cue paves over cuts, adds a sense of movement in an otherwise low-action scene, and at this point securely underlines the narrative. The director and music editors decided that this music should be mixed to a high volume in order for it to be conspicuous; and as there is no dialogue and little action, the music becomes the primary narrative force. This is a scene where ideologies are clear cut, and the music is able to stand out in an otherwise polysemic soundtrack. Here, therefore, musical language is clear, even blunt, as it contains noticeable, heard classical techniques.

However, Goldenthal's more impressionistic cues, those which merely suggest a picture or hint at a mood, arguably contain unlimited objectives as they persuade an

---

[5] From the interview conducted with Goldenthal in *Into The Fire, Heat Special Features*, DVD, 2004

audience this way and that, but to no particular outcome. In addition to this, when we consider the specially-composed score as an embodied, dynamic, abstract form, the operations of the music become more important in a film which refuses to offer a sermon on traditional ethics. Individuals, with their unique thoughts and feelings, absorb the sounds according to their own perspectives on the world, and their current predicaments in life. The classical score of old, telling us how to think, keeping our personal ideologies in check as the film's view of the world unravels, is now elusive, impossible to grasp. The ephemerality of a score such as Goldenthal's invites us to chase meaning through music, causing it to be imbued with more significance than ever before.

However, questions of intention remain, including the consideration of whose intentions? In my earlier discussion of traditional musicological analyses, I noted that musical intentions notated on manuscript can be traced back to the composer, even if there are "transmission intervals in a classical sequence" according to Brian Eno (2006, p129). All I mean by this is that we generally know who wrote the music. In film, there are several "transmission intervals", as I noted in the chapter on *Heat*. Elliot Goldenthal composed the selected cues, but Mattias Gohl produced them, arranging them into new versions. The next "transmission intervals" are between the music editors and the recording engineers. Michael Mann's viewpoints will also have been expressed at some point in the journey from Elliot Goldenthal's original scores to the mixed and edited cues we hear in the film. In 'The Death of the Author' (1977), Barthes argues: "Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (p143). Caught up in the film world, comprising the various moving texts to be read including costumes, dialogue, visuals, sound and music, arguably the original notated score and the identity of the original composer are far from our minds. Instead, as Barthes says: "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (p148). This returns us to the importance of a film musicology which acknowledges that the score has developed to coincide with postmodernism, that it is now more open-ended, with spaces for *signifiance*; and that the music might be working towards that very purpose. Therefore, intentions or objectives for the musical score have changed and I argue that film music has been "uplifted" in the process.

On June 24th 2010, I attended a conference entitled 'Humanism, Philosophy and the Arts'. In the opening lecture, Professor Richard Norman of Kent University declared: "Good art is unique and irreplaceable, it can't just be reduced to a message" and instead provides a "freshness of vision – authentic emotion". I would argue that this is true of the contemporary film score, which ensures that avenues of thought are not closed off, and where an ever-widening understanding of human existence can be expressed and absorbed. Film musicology can determine how and why this is achieved in a medium which increasingly turns to music to express the inexpressible, the interiorities, the mix of perspectives and emotions which characterise contemporary life.

The film music narratives I have dissected reveal a core of ambivalence. This is conveyed quietly in *Heat*, through the unheard, impressionistic abstract music; overtly in *Magnolia* by dominating songs at specific moments; and excessively in *Moulin Rouge*, to simultaneously illustrate decadence and delusion. Throughout the study, I interpret the word 'ambivalence' to mean the co-existence of opposing emotions in an individual's mind when faced with challenging choices of action, whether they be in the past or present. Zigmunt Bauman discusses ideas on ambivalence in his book *Modernity and Ambivalence* (2007). He says: "Ambivalence, the possibility of assigning an object or an event to more than one category, is a language-specific disorder . . . The main symptom of disorder is the acute discomfort we feel when we are unable to read the situation properly and to choose between alternative actions" (p1). It might be possible to argue that music always functions as a "language-specific disorder" as music in motion can never be frozen in time like a photograph or film still. Elements of it are always wayward and abstract, irreducible to labels or fixable meanings, particularly when we consider the embodied features of music in the "grain of the voice", or "affiliating identifications" which offer spaces for *signifiance* and reflexivity. However, here within sociology is a definition of ambivalence which aptly describes and presents a new slant on the role of music in my three case studies. It is the *cause* of disorder in *Heat* as it is only through music that ambivalence is conveyed; the *intensifier* of disorder in *Magnolia* where the feelings of characters are heightened through music; and the *exposer* of disorder in *Moulin Rouge*, in which sights and sounds of excess mask harsh experience and alienation.

In each of these contexts, music performs as action codes. By this I mean that musical sounds, whether they be abstract instrumental scores or songs, are able to move a story along as if they are part of a causal narrative. In dominant cinema, these actions would either be *seen* (eg woman rips up photograph of ex-lover) or *heard* (eg woman screams "I hate you!"). In my case studies, music itself causes, tells or activates the audience and characters to think differently about screen events, thus instigating "disorder". This is the power of an ambivalent music narrative, and there is a lifetime's project ahead in identifying other such music narratives, in order to reveal the increasing diversity of embodied experience in the city. One obvious place to start would be a consideration of potential music narratives in the work of the three directors in this study. Michael Mann, Paul Thomas Anderson and Baz Luhrmann have employed music innovatively and strikingly throughout their careers. Where music is pre-eminent, there are possibilities for narratives within. It would be interesting, for example, to compare the title music and opening scenes from an episode of *Miami Vice* from the 1980s with the title music for Michael Mann's feature film *Miami Vice* made in 2006. A film musicological analysis could be employed to ascertain how music works with dialogue and visuals, and whether music is mostly heard to resist traditional scoring traditions. In those moments of resistance, what alternative stories are being told? The switch from film to TV is not such a giant leap to make. The hybrid score of the series and of the film, the MTV aesthetic which pervades both forms, and the fact that Michael Mann's approach to the TV series is cinematic, means that the forms are already hybridised. However, it would be even more interesting if the theatrical film trailer could be included in the analysis. As music is so important to the construction of Michael Mann's films, what music might be chosen to sell the film, and tell a condensed story of the whole film? The DVD blurb for the film states: "Crockett and Tubbs are gradually pushed to the edge, and suddenly, the distinction between cops and player becomes dangerously blurred". What are the musical ingredients which encapsulate the film for the target audience? How do they communicate the fine lines between law and disorder in the city?

Another interesting exercise would be to compare and contrast Elliot Goldenthal's score for *Heat* with his new score for Michael Mann's latest film, *Public Enemies*, set in the 1930s. Would there be differing sounds to reflect time periods? Would music tell of

252

bricolage masculinities across both films? Would Goldenthal choose to write an impressionistic score for *Public Enemies*, or choose to underline the issues at stake more clearly with more traditional scoring? If so, why might that be? What do we learn from the music, that is not possible to be communicated though visuals and dialogue? These are only a few of the musicological questions to be asked, which might uncover the stories untold by dialogue and visuals.

Bauman discusses the social construction of ambivalence. He states: "There are friends and enemies. And there are *strangers*" (p53). "Against this cosy antagonism, this conflict-torn collusion of friends and enemies, the *stranger* rebels. The threat he carries is more horrifying than that which one can fear from the enemy. The stranger threatens the sociation itself – the very possibility of sociation . . . the stranger is neither friend nor enemy" (p56). The scores I have analysed are strangers to Classical Hollywood cinema, and in their strangeness they have laid bare the intense discomfort of mixed feelings, uncertainties and never-ending angst. Bauman describes the stranger as a "member of the family of undecidables" and quotes Derrida, who considers that undecidables "'can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, resisting and disorganising it, without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics'" (p55). Throughout the case studies, music swayed us this way and that, and to extremes of conflicting emotions and perspectives, but refused to constitute that "third term". This was particularly evident in *Heat* and *Moulin Rouge* as the films ended. Hanna held McCauley's hand as he lay dying, showing his respect and compassion for a fellow professional. Christian mourned Satine, but a central enigma, arising from the opening song, remained – was she worth the heartache for this Nature Boy? All along, music, or "the stranger", enabled wide-ranging feelings to be expressed and intensified by resisting consummation, or the constitution of any "solution". As the music played across the final frames of each film, such extremes were heightened as music had, arguably from the start, usurped expectations of a happy, satisfying dénouement.

Finally, Bauman says: "Undecidables brutally expose artifice, the fragility, the sham of the most vital separations. They bring the outside into the inside, and poison the comfort of order with suspicion of chaos. This is exactly what strangers do" (p56). The application of Bauman's idea reveals the potency of film music narrative in its

unconsummated state, a status it can only reach through subversion of the classical score. In *Heat*, the stranger that is music suggests softer, gentler, more fragile, bricolage masculinities which provoke "suspicion of chaos", particularly within McCauley's meticulously ordered, macho world. In *Magnolia*, the opening song *One* is the unwelcome and persistent stranger that shines a harsh light on the "sham" game show, and its contestants, on the cocksure swaggerings of characters such as Frank TJ Mackay and Jimmy Gator, and on the "fragile" Claudia, Donnie and Linda, who all persist in their patterns of self-destructive behaviour. In *Moulin Rouge*, Zidler's insistence that "Everything's going so *well!*" is "poisoned" by the strangers, who are the freshly-arranged pre-existing songs, telling the real story, comprising a peppery mix of *jouissance* and bleakness. These musical strangers need further extensive probing, with a "tasteless" regard for all types of outsider.

One idea, as a development of the thinking in *Moulin Rouge*, would be to examine television programmes such as *Glee* with "break out into song" moments. The central question would be a critical musicological one: what are the intentions of music in those sections? Do they tell story, or do they reveal character detail? Are they as "gauche" upon musical analysis as they first appear? What other surprising finds might be uncovered? Again, the shift from film to TV is not so significant. The increasing hybridity of cultural forms, particularly those which include heard, hybrid scores with MTV moments, are more connected than ever before. Much more film musicological analysis could be conducted into television soaps such as *Hollyoaks*, which draws heavily on the MTV aesthetic (and even horror film traits) to express turmoil and complication. Other TV dramas, such as *Blackpool* (2004), *Red Riding* (2009), *Holby City*, and *Wallander*, employ music in unexpected and arresting ways to challenge expectations, to destabilise genres, to present a wide range of philosophical perspectives and none in particular.

The series *Blackpool*, for example incorporates the characters singing and sometimes dancing along to classic hit pop songs such as *Don't Stop Me Now*, *Just Can't Get Enough* and *White Wedding*. The writer and creator of the series, Peter Bowker, explains in the CD soundtrack cover that he intended to write "a musical drama set in an arcade". Here, therefore, is another intensely hybrid form referring to other media such as the music hall, the film musical, serious TV drama, the thriller, romantic comedy, the pop

video, gaming, pub entertainment and end-of-pier shows. Bowker reports that he talked to BBC staff "with enthusiasm about Dennis Potter, Rock Follies, *Moulin Rouge* and *Ally McBeal* – ground-breaking works which challenged audiences, particularly through music. Bowker decided that musical numbers would be the most apt forms of expression for such a setting. He claims: "the rough and ready fantasies of the arcades, the karaoke culture that underpins the entertainment Mecca that is Blackpool, the idea of a holiday as a chance to reinvent ourselves, but most of all because songs can be funny and sad and real and dreamlike all at the same time". The work of Philip Brophy springs to mind. Bowker even explains the reasoning behind each song, although he states that he generally employed songs to push the plot along, or to amplify "the emotions or passions of the moment". I think a film musicological analysis would be apt to uncover more about how the songs work, and why Bowker should choose to blur diegetic and non-diegetic spaces with music to which characters sing along. While Paul Thomas Anderson employed a similar technique with the song *Wise Up* in *Magnolia*, the reasons for doing so in *Blackpool* are most likely to be quite different. The TV series tells significant sections of the story through song, and as this series is about broken, illicit and potential relationships, wide-ranging feelings experienced "all at once" are sharply, poignantly and most appropriately conveyed through song.

It would also be interesting to go back in time and study other innovative TV dramas such as Dennis Potter's *Pennies From Heaven*, and discuss the potency of songs in such a context. What were the intentions of these songs? Why were they so unnerving at the time, and would they have the same impact today? An underlying question I would be asking is: are more telling details of contemporary human existence expressed through the score, and through song in particular?

Music and existentialism

The thread of existentialism runs through the case studies. Each film considers individual choices of action in challenging urban environments. Each film maker uses music to reveal the burdens of "anguish, abandonment and despair" that characters experience over their choices. In *Heat*, Michael Mann is most concerned with choices which cannot be undone,

and which bring us to who, what and where we are. In *Magnolia*, Paul Thomas Anderson is concerned with the angst surrounding choices made largely by patriarchs, at the expense of others, and especially children. Indeed, it could be argued that the choices, or sins, of the fathers actually limited choices for their children. In *Moulin Rouge*, Baz Luhrmann is arguably concerned with choices of the self, whether they be for self discovery, self aggrandisement, or pure self indulgence. None of these choices are judged, only presented as diverse, modern, embodied experiences with wide-ranging complications. All of the characters who make these choices know, or come to realise, that they are, in fact, free to choose their actions. In each film, there are stark reminders that "there is no reality except in action . . . Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realises himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is". They come to recognise that "what is not possible is not to choose. I can always choose, but I must know that if I do not choose, that is still a choice". Perhaps the most powerful ideas of all, expressed in the films, are "when we say that man chooses himself . . . we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men". In other words, an individual "places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders".[6] This philosophy is most profoundly expressed through the music, and it is there that indefinable interiority and embodied responses to responsibilities for actions are situated.

In the opening scenes of *Heat*, we view McCauley alighting from the train, as the music gently but precisely mirrors and emphasises this action as the first in a chain of actions which eventually cause his downfall. The first few hushed bars of this minimalist, impressionistic music contain widely-spaced, slow, restrained and sustained notes played by the Kronos Quartet. The mediant is scarcely evident, and these musical ingredients together convey a sense of melancholy. It is clear from the outset that McCauley is the tragic anti-hero, through the score alone. From that moment on, the music accompanying McCauley suggests that his choices of action weigh heavily upon him, that he chooses not just for himself but also for his aides. Even though he is on the wrong side of the law,

---

[6] Quotations from Jean-Paul Sartre's lecture 'Existentialism is a Humanism' given in Paris in 1946.

McCauley's choices are "authentic"[7] as opposed to those riddled with "bad faith"[8]. Through music, Goldenthal and Mann reveal how difficult it is to lead an authentic life in "facing a situation which is always changing, and the choice remains always a choice in the situation"[9]. As Mann's films examine the fine lines between the men on either side of the law, choices are increasingly challenging, and this is where the ambivalence lies. Leading an authentic life always involves the harder choice, the one which sacrifices the easier choices. Hanna, therefore, has mixed feelings about bringing McCauley down, but he recognises the "authentic" choice he has to make, so decides to act accordingly.

In the coffee shop scene, the two men establish common ground through body language and dialogue. They each express a dislike of a "regular life" full of "barbeques and ball games". They experience bad dreams, protect their partners from the murky details of their professions, and take pride in their work. Both characters are leaders of men in their chosen professions, and neither can or wants to do anything else but what they do. They are both, in fact, leading an authentic life, the life that is right for them. However, it is exceedingly difficult to do so, and this is what the music expresses. Later in the film, Hanna makes his authentic living clear after discovering his wife, Justine, is having an affair with Ralph. Hanna reminds her that: "I say what I mean and I do what I say". Justine mockingly responds: "How admirable". In fact, Justine is revealed to be leading a life of "bad faith". She admits and accuses: "I may be stoned on grass and Prozac, but you've been walking through our life dead. Now I have to demean myself with Ralph just to get closure with you". Justine is making the easy choices of relying on substances, and using Ralph for sex and company, just as Claudia did with the nameless man in *Magnolia*. McCauley, on the other hand, lives by his 30-second rule. This system keeps McCauley focused, on the straight, provenly successful road for him, whether we approve or not.

What I am suggesting here is that there are links between existentialist thought and contemporary scores, in films which resist character recourse to any supernatural or higher being for guidance, forgiveness or comfort; films which place the individual in

---

[7] To aim for an "authentic" life in existentialism is to make positive choices of actions – to choose to choose in a situation, with complete responsibility and without regret.

[8] "Bad faith" in existentialism is making a negative choice, a choice which seeks "to invest and/or separate facticity and transcendence" (Gary Cox, 2009, p61). In other words, a choice in "bad faith" resists the challenges of confronting a situation in all its complications. It is self-distraction, or self-evasion.

[9] Further quotes from Jean-Paul Sartre's lecture 'Existentialism is a Humanism', 1946

complicated, ever-changing circumstances and consider the varied and variable choices they make in order to survive. These choices are generally not judged, but through dynamic, evolving musical movement, or ambivalent sound forever in transit, we are able to *hear* the principles of existentialism being examined and debated within interiorities which may not be ultimately definable. I think there could be something in the idea of existentialist music, which develops from my ideas expressed on ambivalence. For example, in *Magnolia*, the song *Wise Up* advises, cajoles and provokes the characters to instruct themselves in song to "wise up". These individuals finally choose to "wise up" instead of choosing not to choose, which has been the cause of their "bad faith" and traumatic existences. In choosing to choose, they make a positive choice for themselves and all of mankind. This choice, which represents a transition to a more "authentic" life, is not easy. It involves the hardest choice, as each of the characters has to confront their individual weaknesses and predicaments, shot through with "bad faith" habits of self-destruction and delusion. The lyric, arrangement and grain of the voice convey this intense ambivalence, the complicated emotions they experience. Could this be a score of existentialism? This is new territory that I would like to explore beyond this current project. A central question might be: how does music work to convey the struggles involved in reaching an "authentic" life? The recent series *The Wire* might be a place to start.

Songs of *signifiance*

Intrinsic to the expression of urban existence in all three case studies are songs – eclectic songs, with lyrics, vocal grains and musical arrangements drawing from all times, places, tastes and values. These are the songs and sounds of postmodernism. In exploring these songs, I discovered that the more ambiguous scoring practices yield wider and richer perspectives on any given developing situation in a film. When songs are employed self-consciously, and even brought to the attention of the characters themselves, they become narrative forms. This is particularly the case in *Magnolia* and *Moulin Rouge*, where songs are able to tell story, convey interiority and mixed feelings, structure form and pace, perform as action codes and cause visuals and dialogue to adopt more malleable, subservient roles.

In the first two chapters of this study, debate arose over the employment of pre-existing songs in films. The debate fell into two discrete camps: those against the popular song in film and those in support. The most common criticisms of songs are that they are "heard", blunt, unsubtle instruments, causing an audience to listen, forcing "narrative to cede to spectacle"[10]. In the songs I explored, I discovered that songs can be apt, subtle, flexible, dominating, explicit, ambiguous, persuasive and forceful methods of communication, particularly when they upturn traditional narrative forms and the classical score itself. I hope to have illustrated why this might be through musicological analysis of the grain of the voice, instrumental arrangements of ambivalence, and sung lyrics which may or may not suggest similar sentiments to those expressed through the arrangements. This is why a film musicology involving *stages and strands* is so important, and particularly for songs.

I explained earlier in this chapter how I approached the analysis of Goldenthal's specially-composed music in *Heat*. For songs there are many more stages and strands. For *Wise Up* in *Magnolia*, for example, I firstly listened to the song as it is heard in the film several times over, noting the pacing of the camera work, and how the images served the music. I then listened to the CD soundtrack, focusing on the three layers – lyrics, musical arrangement, and voice. Even within these three layers, there are further strands of meaning. Take the lyrics as they are *written and heard in the mind*. There are the meanings of the words, not always clear and fixable to a single interpretation; the metre of the lines, the phrasing, the potential sounds of the words before they are sung; the self-contained possibilities of the lyrics without music – how do we know which came first, music or lyrics?; personal associations with these lyrics if they are pre-existing. All these factors combine to destabilise, to resist reducibility. Then there is the musical arrangement – its melodies, harmonies, rhythms and instrumentation, and a consideration of how the arrangement builds. Lastly, there is the voice, but within the voice there is the vocal melody, the grain, the phrasing, the breathing, the dynamics. When the strands are combined, questions of intention become particularly potent. What is the function of the arrangement? Does it reflect the words or not? If not, how and why not? Does the grain of

---

[10] Quotation from Claudia Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, London, BFI, 1987, page 20.

the voice reflect the lyric? Does the vocal melody reflect the lyric? How does it move with the arrangement – does it in fact move against it?

When the song is then reinstated within the film, the character's voices also need to be taken into consideration. It was at this stage that I discovered the performers were not hitting the notes, in some cases not even attempting to; and against the secure, confident singing of Aimee Mann, the ambivalence was revealed. In addition to these factors I needed to consider how the music was working across non-diegetic and diegetic spaces, and how all other film elements were reacting as the song played, and the characters sang along. I turned to Claudia Gorbman's model, even though it was intended for specially-composed instrumental music. This did not matter. Indeed, I had already discovered both the relevancy and the limitations of the model for analysis of song. As I have demonstrated, song can work like a specially-composed score, and it can do more – all at the same time. For the songs in *Moulin Rouge*, I conducted a similar exercise, but also included a study of former versions of the songs. This enabled me to consider how audiences might listen to and remember past and present versions simultaneously. I also discovered that songs heard in full gain potency. Self-contained songs offer stories in themselves, with developed themes and motifs for individual interpretation, imagination, "affiliating identifications" and embodied participation, all of which lead to *signifiance*. Philip Brophy argues that films "emblazoned with modern soundtracks" allow song "primacy of place in their radiophonic narratives where story is not 'told' but more broadcast, transmitted and mixed"[11].

Whether it be Elliot Goldenthal's impressionistic, specially-composed score for *Heat*, or Aimee Mann's songs for *Magnolia*, or Craig Armstrong's freshly-arranged songs for *Moulin Rouge*, these postmodern scores resist ultimate meaning, or classification, refuse to steer us to preferred perspectives and happy conclusions, insist on retaining the status of "stranger", and so are the most potent of all film elements to express the challenging and emotional choices that determine our existence. These are scores of the city, whose resilient inhabitants transcend their problems and negotiate the tenuous crossing into the 21st century, and it is within these scores that the contemporary psyche is laid bare.

---

[11] Quotation from Philip Brophy, *100 Modern Soundtracks*, London, BFI, 2004, page 12-13.

Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor, and Eisler, Hans, Composing for the Films, (originally written in 1947 for Oxford University Press), London, The Athlone Press, 1994

Adorno, Theodor, 'On Classes and Strata' in Scott (ed) Music, Culture, Society, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000

Adorno, Theodor, 'On Popular Music' in Frith and Goodwin (eds) On Record, London and New York, Routledge, 2003

Allen, Michael and Kuhn, Annette, 'Sound' in Pam Cook (ed) The Cinema Book, London, 2007

Altman, Rick, Genre: The Musical, London, BFI, 1981

Altman, Rick, The American Film Musical, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana Press, 1987

Altman, Rick, Sound Theory, Sound Practice, London and New York, Routledge, 1992

Altman, Rick, 'Cinema and Popular Song' in Arthur Knight and Pamela Wojcik (eds) Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2001

Altman, Rick, 'Narrative in Film Musicals', in Steve Cohan (ed) Hollywood Musicals, The Film Reader, London and New York, Routledge, 2002

Anderson, Tim, 'Reforming "Jackass Music": The Problematic Aesthetics of early American Film Music Accompaniment' in Kay Dickinson (ed), Movie Music, The Film Reader, London and New York, Routledge, 2003

Aylesworth, Thomas G, Broadway to Hollywood: Musicals from Stage to Screen, London Bison Books, 1985

Babbington, Bruce, and Williams Evans, Peter, Blueskies and Silver Linings: Aspects of the Hollywood Musical, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1985

Barthes, Roland, Image Music Text, London, Fontana Press, 1977

Barlow, Priscilla, 'Surreal Symphonies: L'Age D'Or and the Discreet Charms of Classical Music' in Knight and Pamela Wojcik (eds) Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2001

Bauman, Zygmunt, Modernity and Ambivalence, Cambridge and Malden, Polity Press, 2007

Beard, David, and Gloag, Kenneth, Musicology the Key Concepts, London, Routledge, 2005

Beech, Dave, 'Garibaldi Fought Here' in Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds) Pop Fiction – The Song in the Cinema, Bristol and Portland, Intellect Books, 2005

Benson, Peter, 'Root, Tomato, Tallith: Three Objects', Philosophy Now, London, Issue 77, February/March, 2010

Bernstein, Leonard, 'On Musical Semantics' in Scott (ed) Music, Culture, Society, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000

Beynon, John, Masculinities and Culture, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002

Blackman, Lisa, Hearing Voices: Embodiment and Experience, London and New York, Free Association Books, 2001

Blakeston, Oswell, 'Disconnected Thoughts on Music and the Cinema', Close Up, Volume 3, Number 4, New York, October, 1928

Blitzstein, Marc, with comments in 'A Symposium of Composers on Music in Films', Films, Volume 1, no 4, 1940

Bordwell, David, and Thompson, Kristin, Film Art: An Introduction, International Edition, New York, St Louis, San Francisco, Auckland, Bogotá, Caracas, Lisbon, Madrid, Mexico, Milan, Montreal, New Delhi, Paris, San Juan, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, McGraw-Hill, 1997

Bourdieu, Pierre, Distinction – A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, New York and London, Routledge, 1979

Brackett, David, '(In Search of) Musical Meaning: Genres, Categories and Crossover' in Hesmondhalgh and Negus Popular Music Studies, London, Arnold, 2002

Brackett, David, 'Music' in Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss (eds), Key Terms in Popular Music Culture, Malden, Oxford and Victoria, Blackwell Publishing, 2003

Branston, Gill, and Stafford, Roy, The Media Student's Book, London and New York, 1999

Brooker, Peter, and Brooker, Will, Postmodern After Images: A Reader in Films, Television and Video, London, Hodder Arnold, 1997

Brooks, William, 'On Being Tasteless', Popular Music, Volume 2, 1982

Brophy, Philip, 'The Animation of Sound' in Kay Dickinson (ed) Movie Music, The Film Reader, London and New York, Routledge, 2003

Brophy, Philip, 100 Modern Soundtracks, London, BFI, 2004

Brown, Royal S, Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994

Buhler, James, 'Analytical and Interpretive Approaches to Film Music (11): Analysing Interactions of Music and Film' in KJ Donnelly (ed) Film Music Critical Approaches, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2001

Buhler, James, Flinn, Carly, and Neumeyer, David, (eds), Music and Cinema, Middleton, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2000

Burt, George, The Art of Film Music, Boston, Northeastern University Press, 1994

Buscombe, Edward, 'The Wrong Man' in Steven Schneider (ed) 1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die, London, Cassell, 2003

Butler, Judith, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, New York and London, Routledge, 1999

Caley, Matthew, 'Heavy Rotation' in Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds) Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema, Bristol and Portland, Intellect Books, 2005

Carson, Anne, 'The Gender of Sound: Description, Definition and Mistrust of the Female Voice in Western Culture, RFR/DRF, Volume 23, Number 3

Chion, Michel, Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen, New York, Chichester, West Sussex, Columbia University Press, 1994

Chion, Michel, The Voice in Cinema, New York, Chichester, West Sussex, Columbia University Press, 1999

Chion, Michel, Kubrick's Cinema Odyssey, London, BFI Publishing, 2001

Cochran, Alfred W, 'The Documentary Film Scores of Gail Kubik' in KJ Donnelly (ed) Film Music: Critical Approaches, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2001

Cooke, Mervyn, A History of Film Music, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008

Copland, Aaron, 'Tip to Movie Goers: Take Off Those Ear-muffs', New York Times Sunday Magazine, 1949, Nov 6th

Cox, Gary, How to be an Existentialist, London and New York, Continuum, 2009

Darby, William, and Du Bois, Jack, <u>American Film Music: Major Composers, Techniques, Trends, 1915-90</u>, Jefferson, MacFarland & Co, 1990

Davison, Annette, <u>Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice: Cinema Soundtracks in the 1980s and 1990s</u>, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004

Davies, Ann, 'High and Low Culture: Bizet's Carmen and the Cinema' in Powrie and Stilwell (eds) <u>Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film</u>, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2006

Davis, Richard, <u>Complete Guide to Film Scoring: The Art and the Business of Writing Music for Movies and Television</u>, Boston, Berklee Press, 1999

Dick, Leslie, 'Magnolia', <u>Sight and Sound</u>, London, BFI, April, 2000

Dickinson, Kay, 'General Introduction' in Kay Dickinson (ed) <u>Movie Music: The Film Reader</u>, London and New York, Routledge, 2002

Dickinson, Kay, 'Pop, Speed, Teenagers and the "MTV Aesthetic" in Kay Dickinson (ed), <u>Film Music The Movie Reader</u>, London and New York, Routledge, 2003

Dickinson, Kay, <u>Off Key: When Film and Music Won't Work Together</u>, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008

Donnelly, KJ, <u>Film Music: Critical Approaches</u>, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2001

Donnelly, KJ, <u>Pop Music in British Cinema: A Chronicle</u>, London, BFI Publishing, 2001

Donnelly, KJ, 'The Classical film Score Forever? *Batman*, *Batman Returns* and Post-Classical Film Music' in Steve Neale and Murray Smith (eds) <u>Contemporary Hollywood Cinema</u>, London and New York, Routledge, 2003

Donnelly, KJ, <u>The Spectre of Sound: Music in Film and Television</u>, London, BFI Publishing, 2005

Dzenis, Anna, 'Michael Mann' in <u>Senses of Cinema</u>, http://www/sensesof cinema.com/, 2002

Eisenstein, Sergei, Pudovkin, Vsevolod, and Alexandrov, Grigori, 'Statement on Sound' (originally published 1928) in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds) <u>Film Theory and Criticism</u>, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999

Eisenstein, Sergei, <u>Notes of a Film Director</u>, (first published 1946), New York, Dover Publications, 1970

Eno, Brian, 'The Studio as Compositional Tool', in Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (eds), Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music, New York and London, Continuum, 2006

Evans, Mark, Soundtrack: The Music of the Movies, New York, Hopkinson and Blake, 1975

Feuer, Jane, The Hollywood Musical, London, BFI, 1982

Fehr, Richard, and Vogel, Frederick, Lullabies of Hollywood: Movie Music and the Movie Musical, Jefferson, McFarland, 1993

Flinn, Caryl, Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia and Hollywood Film Music, Princeton New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1992

Flinn, Caryl, 'Embracing Kitsch: Werner Schroeter, Music and The Bomber Pilot' in KJ Donnelly (ed), Film Music Critical Approaches, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2001

Frith, Simon, Performing Rites, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002

Franklin, Peter, 'King Kong and Film on Music: Out of the Fog' in KJ Donnelly Film Music Critical Approaches, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2001

Fuchs, Cynthia, 'Interview with Paul Thomas Anderson', PopMatters, http://www.popmatters.com,1999

Fuchs, Cynthia, 'Images' in Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss (eds), Key Terms in Popular Music Culture, Malden, Oxford and Victoria, Blackwell Publishing, 2003

Gabbard, Krin, 'Whose Jazz, Whose Cinema?' in Kay Dickinson (ed) Movie Music, The Film Reader, London and New York, Routledge, 2003

Gabbard, Krin, and Sharma, Shailja, 'Stanley Kubrick and the Art Cinema' in Stuart McDougal (ed) Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003

Garner, Ken, 'Would You Like to Hear Some Music? Music in-and-out-of-control in the Films of Quentin Tarantino' in KJ Donnelly (ed) Film Music Critical Approaches, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2001

Garwood, Ian, 'Must You Remember This? Orchestrating the "Standard" Pop Song in Sleepless in Seattle' in Kay Dickinson (ed) Movie Music, The Film Reader, London and New York, Routledge, 2003

Gorbman, Claudia, Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music, London, BFI, 1987

Green, Lucy, 'Ideology' in Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss (eds), Key Terms in Popular Music Culture, Malden, Oxford and Victoria, Blackwell Publishing, 2003

Griffiths, Dai, 'Cover Versions and the Sound of Identity in Motion', in Hesmondhalgh and Keith Negus (eds) Popular Music Studies, London, Arnold, 2002

Grossberg, Lawrence, 'Cinema, Postmodernity and Authenticity' in Kay Dickinson (ed) Movie Music, The Film Reader, London and New York, Routledge, 2003

Hagen, Earle, Scoring for Films: A Complete Text, New York, Criterion Music Corporation, 1977

Harvey, David, The Condition of Postmodernity, Cambridge MA and Oxford UK, Blackwell, 1990

Hebdige, Dick, Subculture The Meaning of Style, London and New York, Routledge, 2002

Hesmondhalgh, David, and Negus, Keith, 'Introduction, Popular Music Studies: Meaning, Power and Value' in Hesmondhalgh and Negus (eds) Popular Music Studies, London, Arnold, 2002

Holbrook, Morris B, 'The Ambi-diegesis of My Funny Valentine' in Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds) Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema, Bristol and Portland, Intellect Books, 2005

Horner, Bruce, 'Discourse' in Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss (eds), Key Terms in Popular Music Culture, Malden, Oxford and Victoria, Blackwell Publishing, 2003

Hull, John, 'Sound: An Enrichment or State', Soundscape: The Journal of Acoustic Ecology, Volume 2, Number 1, July 2001

Hume, David, 'An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding' in Yalden-Thomson (ed) Theory of Knowledge, first published Edinburgh, 1748, this edition Edinburgh, London, Melbourne and New York, Thomas Nelson and sons, 1951

Inglis, Ian, 'Music, Masculinity and Membership' in Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds) Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema, Bristol and Portland, Intellect Books, 2005

Jameson, Frederic, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Durham US, Duke University Press, 1991

Johnson, Gary, 'Magnolia', imagesjournal.com, 1999

Johnson, Julian, Who Needs Classical Music? Cultural Choice and Musical Value, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002

Kalinak, Kathryn, Settling the Score: Music and Classical Hollywood Film, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1992

Kassabian, Anahid, Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music, New York and London, Routledge, 2001

Kassabian, Anahid, 'Ubiquitous Listening' in Hesmondalgh and Negus (eds) Popular Music Studies, London, Arnold 2002

Kassabian, Anahid, 'Popular' in Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss (eds), Key Terms in Popular Music Culture, Malden, Oxford and Victoria, Blackwell Publishing, 2003

Keightly, Keir, 'Manufacturing Authenticity: Imagining the Music Industry in Anglo-American Cinema, 1956-62' in Kay Dickinson (ed) Movie Music, The Film Reader, London and New York, Routledge, 2003

Kermode, Mark, 'Twisting the Knife' in Jonathan Romney and Adrian Wootton (eds) Celluloid Jukebox: Popular Music and the Movies Since the 50s, London, BFI Publishing, 1995

King,Geoff, New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction, London and New York, IB Tauris Publishers, 2002

Knight, Arthur, and Wojcik, Pamela, 'Overture' in Arthur Knight and Pamela Wojcik (eds) Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2001

Kolker, Robert, 'A Clockwork Orange . . . Ticking' in Stuart McDougal (ed) Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003

Kracauer, Siegfried, Nature of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality, London, Dennis Dobson, 1961

Kronos Quartet, www.kronosquartet.org

Lafrance, JD, 'Michael Mann's "Magic Act"', in The Film Journal, 2004

Lannin, Steve, and Caley, Matthew, 'Introduction' in Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds) Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema, Bristol and Portland, Intellect Books, 2005

Lannin, Steve, 'Fluid Figures: How to See Ghosts' in Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds) Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema, Bristol and Portland, Intellect Books, 2005

Limbacher, James, <u>Keeping Score: Film and Television Music, 1980-1988</u>, Lanham, Scarecrow Press, 1991

Link, Stan, 'Sympathy with the Devil? Music of the Psycho Post-*Psycho*' in <u>Screen</u>, Volume 45, Number 1, Spring, 2004

London, Kurt, <u>Film Music: A Summary of the Characteristic Features of its history, Aesthetics, Technique and Possible Development</u>, London, Faber, 1936

London, Kurt, 'The Challenges of Composing for Documentaries' in <u>Films</u>, Volume 2, 1940

McCarthy, Barry, 'Warrior Values: A Socio-historical Survey' in John Archer (ed) <u>Male Violence</u>, London and New York, Routledge, 1994

Clifford, McCarty, in Clifford McCarty and Rudy Behlmer (eds) <u>Film Music 1</u>, New York, Garland Publishing, 1989

McClary, Susan, and Walser, Robert, 'Start Making Sense! Musicology Wrestles with Rock' in Frith and Goodwin (eds) <u>On Record</u>, London and New York, Routledge, 2003

Manvell, Roger, and Huntley, John, <u>The Technique of Film Music</u>, Burlington, Focal Press, 1975

Maxwell, Ian, 'The Curse of Fandom: Insiders, Outsiders and Ethnography' in Hesmondalgh and Negus (eds), <u>Popular Music Studies</u>, London, Arnold, 2002

Mera, Miguel, 'Reap Just What You Sow' in Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds) <u>Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema</u>, Bristol and Portland, Intellect Books, 2005

Metz, Christian, 'Aural Objects' (originally published, in Screen, volume 16, no2, 1975) in Leo Brady and Marshall Cohen (eds) <u>Film Theory and Criticism</u>, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999

Middleton, Richard, 'Introduction: Locating the Popular Music Text' in Middleton (ed) <u>Reading Pop</u>, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000

Middleton, Richard, 'Popular Music Analysis and Musicology: Bridging the Gap' in Middleton (ed) <u>Reading Pop</u>, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000

Middleton, Richard, 'Form' in Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss (eds), <u>Key Terms in Popular Music Culture</u>, Malden, Oxford and Victoria, Blackwell Publishing, 2003

Miklitsch, Robert, 'Audiovisual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema in *Jackie Brown*' in <u>Screen</u>, Volume 45, Number 4, 2004

Moore, Rachel, 'Cultural Bolshevism at Capital's Late Night Show: Scorpio Rising' in Afterall, Spring/Summer 2003

Morton, Lawrence, 'The Music of Objective: Burma', in Hollywood Quarterly, July, 1946

Mundy, John, Popular Music on Screen: From the Hollywood Musical to Music Video, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999

Negus, Keith, Popular Music in Theory, Cambridge, Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003

Negus, Keith, and Pickering, Michael, Creativity, Communication and Cultural Value, London, Thousand Oaks, California, SAGE Publications, 2004

Neumeyer, David, and Buhler, James, 'Analytical and Interpretive Approaches to Film Music (1): Analysing the Music' in KJ Donnelly (ed) Film Music Critical Approaches, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2001

Newman, Kim, 'Scorpio Rising' in Steven Jay Schneider (ed) 1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die, London, Quintet Publishing, 2003

Palmer, Christopher, The Composer in Hollywood, London, Marion Boyars, 1990

Pascall, Jeremy, Rock Music, London, Hamlyn, 1978

Phillips', Gene D (ed) Stanley Kubrick Interviews, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 2001

Plantinga, Carl, 'Gender, Power and a Cucumber: Satirising Masculinity in This is Spinal Tap' in Kay Dickinson (ed) Film Music, The Movie Reader, London and New York, Routledge, 2003

Powrie, Phil, 'Blonde Abjection: Spectatorship and the Abject Anal Space In-Between' in Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds) Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema, Bristol and Portland, Intellect Books, 2005

Powrie, Phil, and Stilwell, Robynn, Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2006

Pramaggiore, Maria, 'The Celtic Blue Note: Jazz in Neil Jordan's Night in Tunisia, Angel and The Miracle' in Screen, Volume 39, Number 3, 1998

Prendergast, Roy, A Neglected Art: Film Music, London and New York, New York University Press, 1977

Richardson, Dorothy, 'Continuous Performance', Close Up, Volume 1, August, 1927

Richardson, Dorothy, 'The Mask and The Movietone, Close Up, Volume 1, July, 1927

Richardson, Dorothy, 'Continuous Performance: Pictures and Films', Close Up, Volume, 1V, January, 1929

Roberts, John, 'Always Blue: Chet Baker's Voice' in Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds) Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema, Bristol and Portland, Intellect Books, 2005

Rosar, William H, 'The Dies Irae in Citizen Kane: Musical Hermeneutics Applied to Film Music' in KJ Donnelly (ed) Film Music Critical Approaches, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2001

Romney, Jonathan, and Wootton, Adrian, Celluloid Jukebox: Popular Music and the Movies Since the 50s, London, BFI Publishing, 1995

Sabaneev, Leonid, Music For Films: A Handbook for Composers and Conductors, London, Pitman & Sons, 1935

Sartre, Jean-Paul, 'Existentialism is a Humanism', in Walter Kaufman (ed) Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre, translated by Philip Mairet, Meridian Publishing Company, 1989

Sharrett, Christopher, 'Michael Mann: Elegies on the Post-industrial landscape' in Yvonne Tasker (ed) Fifty Contemporary Filmmakers, London and New York, Routledge, London, 2002

Sharrett, Christopher, 'Heat', in Senses of Cinema, http://sensesofcinema.com 2004

Silverman, Hugh, Postmodernism – Philosophy and the Arts, London and New York, Routledge, 1990

Siskel, Gene, 'Kubrick's Creative Concern' in Gene D Phillips (ed) Stanley Kubrick Interviews, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 2001

Robert Sklar, Film: An International History of the Medium, London, Thames & Hudson, 1993

Smith, Jeff, The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998

Smith, Jeff, 'Popular Songs and Comic Allusion in Contemporary Cinema' in Knight, Arthur, and Wojcik, Pamela (eds) Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2001

Smith, Jeff, 'From Bond to Blank' in Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds) Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema, Bristol and Portland, Intellect Books, 2005

Sragow, Michael, 'Mann Among Men' in Salon Brilliant Careers, http://.salon.com/bc/1999/02/02bc.html, 2000

Steiner, Fred, 'What Were Musicians Saying About Movie Music During the First Decade of Sound? A Symposium of Selected Writings' in Tony Thomas (ed) Film Score: The Art and Craft of Movie Music, Burbank CA, Riverwood Press, 1991

Stilwell, Robynn, 'Sound and Empathy: Subjectivity, Gender and the Cinematic Soundscape' in KJ Donnelly (ed) Film Music Critical Approaches, Edinburgh University Press, 2001

Stilwell, Robynn, 'Music in Films: A Critical Review of Literature, 1980-1996', The Journal of Film Music, Volume 1, Number 1, 2002

Stilwell, Robynn, 'Clean Reading: The Problematics of *In the Air Tonight* in *Risky Business*' in Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds) Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema, Bristol and Portland, Intellect Books, 2005

Strick, Philip and Housten, Penelope, 'Modern Times: An Interview with Stanley Kubrick', London, Sight and Sound, Spring, 1972

Strinati, Dominic, An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture, London and New York, Routledge, 1995

Strinati, Dominic, An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture, London and New York, Routledge, 2000

Strong, Martin, The Wee Rock Discography, Edinburgh, Canongate, 1996

Swynnoe, Jan, The Best Years of British Film Music, Suffolk, Boydell Press, 2002

Tagg, Philip, 'Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method, and Practice' in Middleton (ed) Reading Pop, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2000

Tagg, Philip, 'Functions of Film Music and Miscellaneous Terminology (Zofia Lissa and others), http://www.tagg.org/teaching/mmi/filmfunx.html

Tagg, Philip, 'Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice' in Middleton (ed) Reading Pop, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000

Tagg, Philip, and Clarida, Bob, Ten Little Title Tunes, New York and Montreal, The Mass Media Music Scholars' Press, Inc, 2003

Tatit, Luiz, 'Analysing Popular Songs' in Hesmondhalgh and Negus (eds),

Popular Music Studies, London, Arnold, 2002

Thomas, Tony, The Art and Craft of Movie Music, Bristol, Riverwood Press, 1991

Toop, David, 'Falling into Coma: Wong Kar-Wai and Massive Attack' Blank' in Lannin,

Steve, and Caley, Matthew, (eds) Pop Fiction – The Song in Cinema, Bristol and Portland,

Intellect Books, 2005

Valassopoulos, Anastasia, '*The Silences of the Palace* and the Anxiety of Musical

Creation' in Kay Dickinson (ed) Movie Music, The Film Reader, London and New York,

Routledge, 2003

Vernallis, Carol, Experiencing Music Video, Aesthetics and Cultural Context, New York,

Columbia University Press, 2004

Ward, Glenn, Teach Yourself Postmodernism, London, Hodder Headline, 2003

Weis, Elizabeth, and Betton, John, Film Sound: Theory and Practice, New York and

London, Columbia University Press, 1992

Williams, Kevin, Why I [Still] Want My MTV: Music Video and Aesthetic

Communication, Hampton Press, Inc, 2003

Wolf, Michael J, The Entertainment Economy, London, Penguin, 1999