

Transcription and Analysis Assignment for Music and the Moving Image (2) [MUSI 224]

1 *General description*

In consultation with the course tutor, you should choose a musical sequence from an audiovisual production, e.g. film, TV programme, advert(s). You may, for example, choose an extract from a full-length feature film (not a musical)¹ which is either available for purchase or rental on video/DVD or which has been recorded off air.² This film may be the same as that for which you provided a detailed cue sheet as part of your work for *Music and the Moving Image 1*.

You should analyse in detail one musical sequence (see below), or several such sequences if one single sequence is too short (see below). You are expected to provide full credits and source information on the film or other audiovisual production and its music. You should also provide a detailed musical score of the sequence(s) singled out for detailed analysis (see §4.1. on page 3).

If you choose an extract from a feature film, you should explain that extract's narrative context within the film. If you choose an advert or extract from a TV programme, you should explain the aims and functions of that item.

2 *Aims and rationale*

The main aim of this assignment is to increase awareness of how film music actually works and how it fulfils important narrative functions in the total audiovisual context. This general aim entails registering, documenting and understanding which musical materials are used in what proportions in which order at which time in relation to what visual action.

Since scores of music for the moving image are so hard to come by, analysing such music is a difficult task requiring a good eye and an extremely attentive ear. For this reason, in-depth musical analysis is an important element in this assignment in order to concretise the fine detail of composition work in this field. Since such analysis demands great attention to detail,

1. By 'full length' is meant over 1 hour in duration.

2. In the case of films video-taped off air, please ensure that all opening and all end credits are included in the recording.

it cannot be applied to the whole feature film.

Since the results of your work will be shared by all on this course, this assignment also aims to bring a wide variety of film musical styles, techniques and functions, used by a wide range of film composers, for different purposes to the attention of all participants. Apart from aural and transcription skills (see §4.1.), presentational and general writing skills are also enhanced.

Finally, attention to the kind of detailed work mentioned both above and below provides valuable information and insights into the sort of techniques and aesthetics that you can use (or refuse) in your own work with music and the moving image.

3 Preliminaries

3.1. Filmography and credits

You should provide details of the audiovisual production's composer(s), director, producer, along with the name of the production company/companies and the film's year of release. Filmographic details to most US and British feature films are available in reference works like *Halliwel's Film Guide* or *The Virgin Film Guide*. Information can also be gleaned from such websites as *allmovie.com* and the International Movie Database (<http://uk.imdb.com/>). Main composer credits usually occur towards the end of the opening film titles. Source details of other music used in the film usually appear towards the end of the film's final credits.

If you are using a prerecorded (commercial) videocassette, you should include full source details of that carrier. If you have recorded off-air you should include details of when the film was broadcast on which TV channel.

A **discography** (e.g. of the soundtrack CD or of IOCM you may refer to in your analysis) should also be provided.

For layout norms, see P Tagg's *Assignment and Dissertation Tips*.

3.2. Narrative contextualisation

If you choose an extract from a film or TV programme you should provide a résumé of the main story line, action, visual events in that larger work. This résumé should include short descriptions of important characters and environments that are intrinsic to the mood and character of the work from which your extract is taken. It is also useful to provide readers and seminar participants with an idea of the type of visual narrative employed (e.g. *mis-en-scène* characteristics, camera angles, lighting and editing techniques, etc.). If you choose an advert or extract from a TV programme, you should explain the aims and functions of that item.

3.3. Motivation for choice of material

Seminar participants and anyone reading your work will want to know *why* you chose the sequence(s) in question. What is the particular interest or importance of your sequence(s)?

4 Detailed Analysis

The length of the passage you choose selected may vary according to factors mentioned under 4.1.

4.1. Transcription / Notation

You are expected to produce an accurate transcription of the music in the passage you select. The length of the passage chosen will depend on how difficult the music is to transcribe and on whether or not music is continuous within that passage. The passage should contain no less than one minute of music in cases of music difficult to transcribe and, in other cases, not more than four minutes of music unless clearance to transcend these limits is negotiated with the course tutor.

Transcriptions do not need to be presented as full orchestral scores. You may reduce the score to a manageable number of staves per system (typically 3 or 4), provided it is clear what instruments or sound sources are responsible for which musical events. To facilitate quick reading of your transcription, pitches played by transposing instruments should be notated as they sound, not as they are to be played by the relevant instrumentalist.

4.2. Presentation

The detailed analysis is presented in two parts: (1) a 'score' of events, including not only music (see §4.1.) but also visuals and, where applicable, sound effects and dialogue or monologue; (2) a discursive analytical text.

4.2.1 The 'score'

The score should consist of the following lines: (1) a time grid, starting at 0:00 (zero minutes and zero seconds); (2) a story board consisting of either (i) visual representations of on-screen events or (ii) concise verbal descriptions of those events; (3) the spoken word (if applicable); (4) sound effects (if applicable); (5) the music score (notated). The start of an acceptable student score (64%) is attached to this handout as example 1 on page 5. Other score presentation tips can be gathered from the *Kojak* handout.

Single sheets of landscape manuscript paper (staves running parallel to the long edges of the A4 paper) are available from the course tutor or from the IPM office. You should make enough photocopies of this paper for your sketches and final drafts.

Since your 'score' contains events other than music, you will probably find that in your final draft you will have to cut and paste your music score on to the paper containing the other information.

If using paper larger than A4, you must reduce your work to A4 size before submission. If you are working with A4 paper for your score, it may well be advisable to reduce two of your A4 sheets down to one (see Tagg's *Assignment and Dissertation Tips*).

4.2.2 The analysis

This section of your work consists of a text containing two parts: (i) [a] explanations of any shorthand used in the 'score' along with [b] details of events not contained in or not readily interpretable from your 'score'; (ii) an

in-depth semiotic analysis of the music in your extract — the core of this part of your work.

The most important aspect of the actual analysis part is to discuss how the musical events you have put down in the 'score' create particular moods or effects in relation to the visual, verbal and paramusical sonic events (such analysis also entailing the use of semiotic concepts³).

Finally, your own opinion and evaluation of music in the film is also an important aspect of the assignment. Such opinion and evaluation should of course be based on the observations you have made and on the musical events and functions you have registered

4.2.3 A few extra tips

4.2.3.1 Suggested order in which to do the assignment

(1) transcription; (2) 'score'; (3) filmography, discography, motivation, etc. (4) analysis text.

4.2.3.2 Calculating times

If you use a PC I can let you have a time calculation routine for free. This routine is written in QBasic and runs under DOS or Windows. Otherwise, either (i) multiply minutes by 60, add that number to the number of seconds, do the sum in seconds only and then redivide by 60, the remainder being the number of seconds, e.g. 12:20 – 3:45 = (720+20) 740 – (180+45) 225 = (515÷60) 8:35; or (ii) add or subtract directly, carrying units of 60 instead of 10. In this way you can work out how much of the film contains music and how much is without it.

4.2.4 Checklist

Check that you have covered the following: [1] filmography, discography, etc.; [2] transcription (see §4.1.); [3] motivation for choice of sequence; [4] in-depth semiotic analysis of music in your extract.

4.2.5 Example of notated score

Example 1 presents the first two sheets (mercifully reduced by the student from A3 to A4 and again to A5 by me for the paper-saving purposes of this handout) of a score for the final sequences of *The Usual Suspects*. Please observe the time grid (at top), the dialogue part, the 'action' part (sound effects should be included either here or on a separate line), the metronome marking, the bar numbering, clear instrument indications and legible notation. Instead of a verbal action part (as provided in example 1), story-board pictures may be presented.

3. Handout *Introductory notes to the Semiotics of Music* available at GBP 2.50 from IPM office.

5 Submission

5.1. One transcription section only

The videocassette you submit should be cued up to the point where your transcription starts. This point should be marked as 0:00 (zero minutes and zero seconds) in your transcription. At the top of your transcription you should also clearly indicate that position in absolute real-time terms from the beginning of the actual film and the point at which it ends, for example '1:02:22 - 1:06:33' if the section you transcribe starts at 1 hour, 2 minutes, 22 seconds into the film and ends 4 minutes and 11 seconds later. If the actual film does not start at the very beginning of the videocassette (for example when it is preceded by messages, logos, trailers, adverts, etc.), you must state in real-time terms the point at which the actual film starts (e.g. 'Film starts at 0:09:15').

5.2. Several transcription sections

In exceptional cases you may choose to transcribe several shorter sections on the same videocassette. If you are unable to rerecord these one immediately after the other, you must cue the videocassette you submit to the start of the actual film, indicating that point also in real-time terms in relation to the very beginning of the videocassette to the start of the film (see end of §5.1.). You must also provide exact absolute real-time limits for each section you transcribe, for example '[1] 0:20:10 - 0:22:30; [2] 0:59:50 - 1:01:21' meaning that your first section lasts from 20 minutes and 10 seconds counting from the start of the film to 22 minutes and 30 seconds into the film, etc.). In these cases your transcription should include timings in absolute terms (i.e. from the start of the film), not in terms relative to the starting point of each section transcribed.

5.3. Videocassette identification

Markers have a large number of videocassettes to deal with. Everything – the videocassette's box, the videocassette itself – must be clearly marked with your name. All videocassettes must be submitted in a box. No loose pieces of paper should be pushed inside the box.

5.3.1 Prerecorded (commercial) video

If you submit a prerecorded (bought) video, proceed as follows. Write your name and the words 'Film Transcription/Analysis - MMI2' on a small piece of paper (e.g. a Post-It). Take the video cover's inlay out of the box and stick the piece of paper to its front side. Replace the video cover inlay. Make sure your name and the title of the film are clearly visible on the actual videocassette too.

5.3.2 Home-recorded video

If you have recorded your film off-air (or copied it by other means) on to a (previously) blank videocassette you must label the actual video with your name and the name of the film on the side facing upwards as you put it into the video machine. You must also clearly indicate your name, the name of the film and the text 'Film Transcription/Analysis - MMI2' on the videocas-

sette's protective box. Do not use a Post-It for this purpose as it easily detaches.

5.4. Other media

If you submit a CD, MiniDisc, etc. with your work, you **MUST** put your name and a short description of the contents on both the cover and on the actual carrier. You must also provide a clear and complete list of the contents of the CD, MiniDisc, etc. That list should be securely attached to either the cover or the actual carrier. A loose sheet or a Post-It detaches easily and can be lost.

5.5. Order of presentation

Standard order of presentation is as follows: [1] Cover sheet; [2] Table of contents; [3] Filmography; [4] Basic story/plot of film; [5] Motivation for choice of film and/or of sequence(s) for transcription and analysis; [6] Actual transcription; [7] Analytical text; [8] Conclusions; [9] Appendices (including, where appropriate, bibliography, discography, etc.).

6 Assessment

Consideration is taken to ALL factors listed in this handout. I usually mark according to a grid of seven main factors:

1. Detail and clarity of credits, filmography, discography, bibliography (see §3.1.).
2. Detail and clarity of the film's overall story and of the narrative context of the section you have chosen to transcribe.
3. Clarity and credibility of motivation for choosing both the film and the section to transcribe.
4. Detail, correctness and clarity of the transcription, not only in musical terms but also with regard to sync points, concurrent action, dialogue, sound effects, camera work etc.
5. Clarity of presentation, including layout, comprehensibility, quality of written English, etc.
6. Depth and clarity of analytical text, quality of argumentation.
7. Overall impression, degree of interest, originality, effort.