

*Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice: Cinema Soundtracks in the 1980s and 1990s.*

By Annette Davison. (Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series.) Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004. [x, 221 p. ISBN: 0-75460-5825. \$69.95.] Music examples, illustrations, bibliography, index.

*The Soul of Cinema: An Appreciation of Film Music.* By Larry M. Timm. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2003. [vi, 346 p. ISBN: 0-13030-4654. pbk. \$60.00] Music examples, illustrations, bibliography, index.

“Music and Moving Image.” Edited by Gillian B. Anderson, Thomas L. Riis, and Ronald H. Sadoff. Special Issue, *American Music* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2004).

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The modest, but rapidly growing body of scholarly literature on film music has recently been following two different tracks, one of traditional musical analysis and studies of film music as part of production history, the other a kind of application of critical literary theory to the position or “stance” of music in film in different circumstances and with different functions, with the aim of exploring narrative or “narratological” (and social-theoretical) models in film-musical situations. *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice* by Annette Davison is part of the latter stream.

The general editor’s *Preface* states the aim of the series: “research in the area of popular musicology wherein authors are concerned with identifying musical practices, values and meanings in cultural context, implementing methodologies and theories developed in cultural studies, semiotics, poststructuralism, psychology and sociology in repertoires of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.” The volume by Davison is essentially

a two-part work that asserts a central thesis in terms of the “New Musicology”; using four movie case studies for her general discussion of a range of aesthetic, economic, and production practices in the second half, the study is primarily concerned with practices of scoring “non-Hollywood films” made after 1980 which demonstrate “an interesting—and often critical—relationship to Hollywood scores and soundtracks . . . read in relation to the re-emergence of classical scoring in the mid-to-late 1970s in the Hollywood blockbusters which gradually became more visible and ubiquitous (p. 2).” Taking this idea a step further the author concludes in her epilogue that film scores and soundtracks operate as signifiers of institutional difference (types of cinema) and as such offer a means by which a deliberate critical or anti-Hollywood stance may be asserted by the creators of a film made outside of Hollywood cinema. The main basis of discussion is “alternative scoring practices,” by which the author means novel

use of source (“diegetic”) music as well as scoring, and also an unconventional relationship between music, narrative, and images, carried out systematically by the director with the aim of distinguishing a film stylistically from the “classical” film score. The author casts her thesis as a model, intended to bring the reader into conversation with other disciplines. During the course of the work, however, the thesis statement is greatly overshadowed by the analytical section and the style of discussion within it.

One or two difficult issues begin to surface early on in the introduction. For the thesis to maintain its precise shape, as a theoretical argument that points up contrasting choices in scoring and soundtrack practices against the conventional scoring of Herrmann, North, Goldsmith, Williams and others, there really needs to be a clearer definition and more precise use of certain terms. “Non-Hollywood” for example, refers to soundtracks used in movies “made after 1980, *outside of and in relation to Hollywood*” (sic) which

is on the face of it like driving an automobile that one asserts has only a minimal relationship to the combustion engine inside of it. “New Hollywood(s)” is (are) not in my view well defined here, precisely because in her view “conceptions of transformation during this period differ greatly contingent on whether issues of economics, aesthetics, technology, industry and institution, or audience . . . are being addressed,” a situation that indicates problems with the terminology. These aspects should point to the same transformation in order to be termed a practice, and since, as the author admits, they do not, this may be a symptom of a broader fallacy or lack of convergence in her methodology which she does not correct or even discuss.

For the historical discussion and delineation of periods of film-making, the author allies herself with others in seeking to demarcate historical changes through changes in production medium. The difficulty, as others who have applied this model for similar purposes have found, is that changes of medium do not always coincide with other historical markers or developments. Davison makes much of the divorcement of studios in 1948 that resulted in the contracting out of many aspects of production, but admits that there was no concomitant change in production method or style of musical score. She also argues that there is a “New Hollywood” in 1975, marked by the production of *Jaws* with expanded technical means (pp. 42-9), but notes that the blockbuster continued after that as before, and she expresses surprise that “classical” conventions of scoring prevail in this “New Hollywood”. If the author is going to theorize, then this requires her

to re-examine her theories. Her assertion that these conventions were in abeyance for fifteen years before *Jaws* is unsupported by any systematic evaluation of this on her part, and on the face of it, would appear inaccurate. Conspicuous by its absence (except for a brief mention) in a study of alternative scoring practice is Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a landmark score of 1968 produced unconventionally and one that introduced at least one new style of music to the repertory of film.

Incidentally, though she strayed from this path for her discussion, it seems that a more thorough study of the scoring of the blockbuster or “popular” film in this period beyond the sketch of the film production phenomenon provided by her secondary sources would have yielded a great deal of supportive, bridging material to one of her stated hopes and objectives—that is, her call for further research to be done in the realm of social psychology and audience reaction (epilogue).

The topics are generally better when connections are made between the media and scoring practice. For example, does the choice of conventional scoring with orchestra help to compensate the viewing of miniaturized reproductions of movies on VCR’s and small TVs in this period? This interesting point was not developed; surely both Marshall McLuhan and Theodor Adorno would have enjoyed a discussion of this idea. Beyond the thesis statement the outline for succeeding chapters is a theoretical re-framing firstly of classical cinema which, following Kalinak and others, is defined here as “a “nexus” of style, ideology, technology and economics which, put simply, coalesced during a particular

time.” The second segment draws a distinction between so-called “Old” and “New” Hollywood, or classical and post-classical cinema. Thirdly there is a non-critical survey of what for her are the key theoretical approaches to alternative scoring and soundtrack practice. The author calls this section a summary to guide the reader, but arguably some advances in the critical re-framing could have taken place here. Other developments discussed include the democratization of score production (e.g., studio outsourcing), and close involvement of the director (author) with the music. Some of the subjects raised, e.g., musical score as having a “high production value” and the “institutional” (studio, national) influence on the presentation of film, have very good potential, but only seem to accompany Davison’s writing as tangents.

Throughout the volume the author does not treat music production method, or approaches that take into account musical source materials such as composing autographs, analysis of firsthand accounts of composition or collaboration by living witnesses. There is therefore a lack of evidentiary arguments, which are overall conspicuously absent for a book on scoring *practice*. Without consulting personnel involved in production and composition, or assessing compositional decisions, one cannot claim to assess scoring practice. No criteria are given for the selection of the four films studied. These are arguably not mainstream or popular films, and one wonders whether the book is really about four art films or cult films that use music in unconventional and novel ways. It is also disappointing that music style-critical questions are

not addressed (even within her theoretical framework), except briefly, for Lynch's *Wild at Heart*, a conventional score analyzed with usual techniques.

The thesis development becomes better defined in the interior chapters. As the author critiques other critics of cinema such as the pioneering Bazin, this reader is on the one hand relieved to have some indication as to where she situates her own work with respect to these authors but on the other feels some consternation with her total reliance on them for historical placement and theoretical positioning. She does not theorize on the behavior of music scoring practice but instead ricochets from one film music theory to another uncritically, slumming where convenient, accepting the limits or measure to which they may or may not be relevant to it. If she had tried to relate the argument to sound and musical scoring in her critique of cinema and the realist aesthetic rather than staying only with cinema, some advancement in this area would have taken place. For example, could one theorize that the destiny of film music might be in the direction of source music, or, at the very least, could we speculate that a future development would be the obscuring of the distinction between source music and scoring? We would then "read" Godard in a different way for the film maker, more along the lines Davison wishes rather than in a way imbalanced towards political views. On the other hand, as an ally to Bazin, a non-American critic of Hollywood practice, her procedure of confronting her film theory with critics of Hollywood productions works to some advantage even though the prose is sometimes indeterminate, especially with

respect to field jargon (indeed the reader may spend some significant time trying to determine which elements are more important to her than others in her theoretical applications and arguments).

The literary-critical discussion has a few contestable areas. It also includes a survey of Marxist theories (from the early history of film), some premises of which have been rejected as untenable in recent literature. Instead Davison takes them up again without qualification or revision. A Marxist argument more germane to the reality of film music and probably more effective might have been the treatment of musicians in the industry, following her quoted testimonials of Steiner and others. In addition, while the political ideas adopted by Godard, for example, pertain to his films, the author herself notes that some of these arise from the director's experience of Hollywood films and practice, making the argument for this work circular as regards the thesis.

The thesis asserts that directors adopted an alternative scoring practice to convey a critical attitude towards the Hollywood norm. The lack of music production documentation or little to no direct evidence of directorial or music-collaborative intention undermines this claim, and such evidence is outside the scope of the study. Some statements by Lynch show that he has deliberately and systematically mixed sound effects and music, although many readers will object that he is hardly the first to do this, and some will think of examples within "classical Hollywood scoring." Does scoring practice function as a "signifier" if the audience fails to recognize this? The author does not elucidate this point, one that, if explored, would bring the discussion closer

to the established discipline and methods of semiology.

The first case study is *Prénom: Carmen*, directed by Jean-Luc Godard, with a score consisting mainly of Beethoven string quartets. Davison notes that in this film, and in the others she analyzes, music is intended to be more prominent than in the conventional Hollywood score. The main point of this analysis is the unconventional use of (and purposeful obscuring of the roles of) source music and score. The audience sees the players rehearsing Beethoven quartets, and frequently also hears the quartets when the players are not present. Following other scholarship, Davison connects the rehearsals of the quartet to the making of the film, characterizing the featuring of the music here as a "standard deconstructive manoeuvre." Davison also argues that in this film the presentation of the music (fragments of string quartets) highlights music-formal and technical divisions as a parallel to narrative interruptions and discontinuities. The author's appendix lists the presentation of quartet excerpts in detail according to the film timings.

One theme that surfaces at different points in the book is the theoretical possibility that music in film could be other than subordinate to the images (or achieve independence from the images). Davison's analysis of Derek Jarman's *The Garden* (1990) is intended to show both a broader collaboration in the production of the score and the independence of the soundtrack from the images of the film. She outlines the conceptions of acousmatic music and reduced listening from secondary sources, and argues conceptually but unconvincingly that these show the struggle of

the soundtrack to break free of the images in this unusual film. In this chapter her analysis is more at the theoretical than the musical level.

In the analysis of *Wings of Desire* (*Der Himmel über Berlin*), directed by Wim Wenders, Davison highlights the different perspectives of the angels and mortals. The contrasts between color and black and white signal whether the music is audible only to the angels or also to the mortal characters in the film. She also comments on the contrasting musical styles of the score, and there is musical analysis of one cue.

The main point in the chapter on David Lynch's *Wild at Heart* is the systematic integration of sound effects and voices with the score. The director has combined the musical qualities of these elements of the soundtrack after considerable reflection and with great deliberation, and his remarks are well worth reading. His observations advance this poetic approach further than other film makers, an opportunity for theoretical reflection that the other did not take up.

Generally in all four of Davison's analyses, her strength lies in the connections made in the directors' own theories and remarks and in some of the post-structural analytical situations, as well as their realization in the films, often thrusting the thesis and the literary-critical models into the background.

Davison is asking for a music-scoring practice to convey the weight and meaning of criticism of Hollywood conventions. By this measure the argument does not convince. She has displaced the idealism of artistic expression in film music with the idealism of a politicized apparatus and framework. The value of this contribution is to bring the

resources and methods of other disciplines to bear on film music. It is sometimes difficult to sense the utility of some of these when the music source materials are largely left out of consideration. One may also question whether the heavy terminological apparatus weighs the book down unnecessarily. It is an important exercise for scholars to reflect on the theory of film music, and it is to be hoped that this reflection will grow, and mature in rigor and self-criticism.

In contrast to Davison's heady narratological foray, Larry Timm's excellent survey *The Soul of Cinema: An Appreciation of Film Music* is written in a traditional musical framework. On the front flap we read a quotation of film composer Jerry Goldsmith,

"Many people seem to assume that because film music serves the visual it must be something of secondary value . . . . The thing to bear in mind is that film is the youngest of the arts and scoring is the youngest of the music arts. We have a great deal of development ahead of us."

For each of us conversant with the growing literature in film studies, this quotation represents a watershed for method and approach. While critical theorists are still insisting on the so-called "new" narratological framework for an inquiry into this "recent" art, most of us who appear at the front of a classroom will be thankful that this book is not in that line, instead inserting itself into the stream of musically based and historical approaches to film music.

Timm's volume is intended as a text book for the appreciation of film music at a college level or perhaps at the university level, and the main emphasis is a historical survey of music in Hollywood films, from 1894 to the present,

with rather more incidental, factual and comparative references to foreign and art films. His summary of production and industry practice is also particularly valuable for the students who will use this book.

The reader is oriented immediately to the functions of film scoring as a partner for the film track: enhancement of the images, intensification, emotional reflection, the creation of unspoken thoughts of a character or unseen implications of a situation, paralleling or underscoring the action, creation of comedy, unification and coherence, counterpoint to the action, controlling the pace of scenes and to provide a continuous flow. In this train of theory, he follows the lead of the older monographs of Evans and Prendergast, but with a stronger and more finely articulated discussion of the connection of the music to visual elements, offering good, recent examples. Further to this, he works with many of the musical elements that would enter the mind of a film enthusiast, bringing musical aesthetics into a good entry level discussion through compositional and artistic choices which are easily inferred from the numerous quotations, anecdotes and several valuable question-answer sessions with some composers mainly, as well as some directors. Some good aesthetic questions are raised in film music scoring, such as the level of difficulty in making a decision of what is to be set or perhaps even more importantly, deciding based on knowledge, experience, taste and trends what to leave out, approaches which are important, inform classroom discussion and do not always occur to young minds. This improves on Prendergast, where evaluation leaned on the musical merits of the score without adequate reference



to the films they were designed to support.

The survey is thematically modest (other than those stated in the outset), this, of course, is in keeping with its stated ambitions for the clientele for which it was intended. It is not the type of volume where ideas about film and its social or psychological impact are meant to be developed fully.

I admire the inclusion of the early silent film music scores along with their piano accompaniments and discussion, a kind of underscore that much of this generation of students is entirely unaware of. The workbook pages of review questions are designed for the classroom of musical amateurs and certainly would stand as a useful adjunct to anyone's lecture style. Its inclusion makes the job easier, more streamlined and helpful for the student. Perhaps Timm will expand on these and perhaps add websites containing other valuable and specialized information in the next edition. One can easily imagine that a specialist in the humanities teaching a course in film music could choose to add an additional theoretical framework or method that would mesh easily with the contents of this volume. Many instructors will find this a useful text especially for a single semester course, to which they will add music rudiments and music theory as required, as well as their own approaches to the study of scoring (for example motivic development, use of themes, formal designs, currents of musical style, which have been become distinctive in the past twenty years of American cinema).

Aspects of the industry become very transparent in the book and this is achieved in part by way of industry insider facts and anecdotes, e.g., how a production

is organized, what someone was paid, who was under contract (sometimes even scandals of a sort that influenced the final music) political viewpoints and so on, an objective treatment of the commonly known and unknown that are certain to inspire discussion. Also, the student will come away from the technical discussion with quite a thorough knowledge of production techniques, from click tracks to striping as well as good basics on instruments from the traditional orchestra to the unconventional Theremin, "ethnic" instruments and the digital/electronic realm.

The text offers an extensive bibliography of the history of film. Good exemplars of handwritten scores as well as other plates of formal scores show the student primary, essential points of departure for a study of film music, in that they start to make the composer's efforts transparent. The inclusion of score excerpts such as that of the murder scene from *Psycho* has considerable meaning for students (with some explanation this is even true for those who can hardly follow a score), and effectively situates the work of the composer in the production.

His historical periodization of Hollywood film is refreshingly down the pike with the last chapters preparing us well for the twenty-first century. Certain post-modern composers, most of whom are trained in traditional art music fields, are included in the survey for their cutting edge contributions to film scoring in recent times, many of whom are a growing number of women both in composition and orchestration. The book contains excellent quotations from interviews with composers such as Mark Snow, Rachel Portman, Anne Dudley,

John Frezzell, and Elia Cmiral, all of whom bring something unique to film music composition, both in style and circumstance, a point that should be of interest to popular culture enthusiasts.

The chapter headings and sections parse the abundant material in ways that reveal a straightforward and evocative design; we track easily the development of scoring from the studio system to the demise of the "Golden-Age Symphonic Film Score" marked by Tiomkin's High Noon and its immensely popular send-off ballad "Do not forsake me" (sung by the inimitable Tex Ritter) that touched off a permanent change and shift in emphasis by directors towards the writing of songs (for without it we might not have had Alex North's more famous "Unchained Melody") and the inclusion of popular styles into film scoring up to today. From there we note the highly trained and versatile composers like John Williams returned full cycle to the large-scale symphonic scores.

Interestingly, his periodization of the ages of "Versatility" separates the rise of the symphonic score and the Golden age of film from what has come to be known as the post-modern in all of the other arts including art music. This raises good questions for consideration and classroom debate. This period includes the influx of Europeans such as Legrand, Jarre, Morricone and Lai and the principal works of Herrmann, Rozsa, Mancini, North, Goldsmith and others. Perhaps in a future edition Timm might choose to weigh further their individual contributions rather than introduce them all on the same plane, so to speak. "New faces enter the ranks" describes the widening interest in styles in the eighties, approaches to scoring as well as

the vastly expanded interest of the last two and half decades in the Hollywood Blockbuster. We know without a theoretical test that these recent works are built on the techniques and approaches of the past alongside the innovations of the digital age, social and economic changes in the industry and the demands of the blockbuster audience and director. He allows the films and their musical content to guide his distinctions in this area.

Having considered the narrative-theoretical study of Davison as well as the more traditional approach and framework of Timm's survey, one may ask whether such markedly different approaches can come into dialogue with one another, or even inhabit the same scholarly and artistic world. The wish that they could, at least, inhabit the same journal volume is the premise of *American Music 22:1 Music and Moving Image*. The special issue necessarily includes only a certain small selection of the large number of submissions to two conferences held in 2001, one in Boulder, "Hollywood Musicals and Music in Hollywood" and the other in New York City, entitled, "Music/Image in Film and Multimedia." It begins with a special statement by its three distinguished co-editors Gillian B. Anderson, Thomas L. Riis, and Ronald H. Sadoff which seeks to make transparent the goals of the "conclaves" which were to take how film and music relate to each other and "promote an expanded conversation in two different venues that would cross traditional disciplinary boundaries (with their accompanying jargons) and challenge writers from all camps to define more carefully and thoroughly their own critical and aesthetic arguments" all

with a view to including a general audience rather than the specialist.

Anderson and Sadoff's direction in the New York City venue consisted of special sessions and workshops designed to convey the problems associated with the growing concern by academics and professionals that music has become demonstrably "encoded" (full of predictable clichés) that it has become something of a prison for film composers and consumers. Roundtables focused on surprisingly practical topics such as "Synchronization (control) as Cliché" and "Fixed conventions as Limitations and Branding," the latter having panelists Roy M. Prendergast, Lyle Greenfield and Buddy Baker (a music editor, and two composers respectively) whose insights on brand clichés not only explain how they come about (Prendergast's claims of constant recycling by the music editor and the consequent churning out of clichés and conventions supplies a possible answer to my own questions about those I sense in the Zimmer oeuvre for example). Greenfield's screening of the advertising demo of "Bang Music" shows an advertising-industry preference towards anti-cliché sound. However styles tend to be cyclical, and this too may become cliché. Baker's input describes the making and sustaining of the so-called Disney sound, the trade secret of matching the conventional feature-length romantic Hollywood film score and its over-arching melodic phrasing with the natural movements of the animated characters, in techniques such as "Mickey-Mousing." A final roundtable raised the evocative topic of limits to the use of "manipulative" musical accompaniments to hard-line news stories, so as to avoid the error of demeaning or

fictionalizing a factual story, due to cliché elements. The strength of these roundtables lies in their currency and pertinence for music that is widely heard and an area of musical practice that employs many of us.

Along these lines Sadoff engages this subject with an important article "Composition by Corporate Committee: Recipe for Cliché" dealing on a theoretical level with the impinging elements of the multi-media such as the internet or whether the increasingly encountered audio-video logo is an advance in the world of signification. It is indeed well worth the read for the rhetorical/sensory analysis of Universal's logo.

In addition to these discussions closely related to composition or production there are presentations of the film music theory derived from literary critical theory. Claudia Gorbman, a leading proponent of this type of scholarship extends her own terminology by applying the framework of Nicholas Cook, itself developed for music in multi-media. Like her other writings, this piece illustrates positions (e.g., diegetic or otherwise) and stances (counterpoint or parallel) of music in selected scenes. Stan Link's article, in the same vein, demonstrates an alliance developing some of the positions and narrative metaphors in order to show music and visual time/visual space/linearity and visual film culture (developed from one of the theories by the great Marshall McLuhan) inform film music composition and the process of creating the track. Literary theory in the piece by Mitchell Morris proposes a rather obvious but nuanced gender-theoretical approach to *Cabaret* emphasizing visual and musical connotations.

A group of the papers are forays into unusual if not extremely rare kinds of scoring. Amy Herzog writes of the three-minute films with jukebox -type scores on movie machines in the early nineteen-forties, the so-called “soundies,” aptly advancing the experiential aspects with a popular model. Mark Clague in yet another article on the mysterious world of Disney’s *Fantasia*, among other elements, brings together an excellent discussion of some otherwise unknown production information on omitted characters with racial stereotype, reflecting on the work itself as a social metaphor. The singular sound track technique of Canadian Norman McLaren, who inscribed sounds directly on the celluloid to produce what has been termed animated sound, was undertaken by Robert Russet, who situates this technique in a line of media development with “direct synergistic linkage between sound and image” and advances the study of “hyperanimation.” Music in propaganda films, which otherwise could be thought to be a perfect set-up for examination by narratological theory, found instead in Jason J. Hanley’s piece a rather tame treatment through a study of the use of World War II propaganda films in music videos by two 1980’s rock bands, replete with visual and sonic signifiers.

Of the more traditional approaches to film music studies, Raymond Knapp offered up a hearing of the score of the *Sound of Music* with sensitivity to precise political context and stylistic references. Catherine Moore’s piece on the commercial

aspects of popular songs and film scores tracks an important trend. On a related subject Charlotte Greenspan writes on Irving Berlin and the promotion of his songs in Hollywood films evoking the composite score (*Alexander’s Ragtime Band*). Steve Swayne included part of an interview with Sondheim and detailed production information in his work on the eclectic score of *Dick Tracy*. The overlap between musical comedy and dramatic feature films in the 1940’s is discussed by David Neumeyer who viewed the two genres as influencing one another.

Of related book reviews in the issue it should be noted that Prof. Lerner’s review of Timm’s *Soul of Cinema* is categorically out of line. His privileging of the soapbox, a last ditch attempt to champion the cause of narratological studies over a historical *survey*, was so entirely non-sequitur that even I was a bit embarrassed. It is true that the future holds fewer and fewer good narratological studies that are clearly in his interest area, so here we find a desperate aficionado that would jump on a book for college freshman with such a heavy apparatus.

It appears that one of the stated aims of the conferences was to bring theorists of film music into dialogue with practitioners of the art of its creation and those who write about it in the traditional terms of the composers and the industry. From the set of articles actually printed in the volume of *American Music* one would be inclined to say that the two groups (if not the various interests) have actually little to communicate to each

other (as Gorbman symbolizes in her statement of demarcation of rhetoric and aesthetics placed suggestively at the head of the collection.) As an area of inquiry, then, on the face of it, it will proceed with this dichotomy (if not antinomy) continuing, without any real conversation between the composer’s considerations and the narratological. You say “either” and I say “tomato”. . . . At the very least putting this collection between two covers allows the reader to experience the broad spectrum of approaches.

In the area of literary criticism some credible authors have ventured the opinion that “theory is dead,” and indeed narrative theory seems in that arena largely to have fallen out of use. Perhaps someone ought to tell Claudia Gorbman and her followers. Perhaps the scholars of film music who picked up the attitudes of critical theory later than their literary counterparts will simply put that apparatus away a bit later than its promulgators in the other discipline. If so, what will happen to the study of film music? Will the field be developed exclusively along traditional lines, or are there and will there be influences from our brush with the newer theoretical framework? Its strength lies in its ability to describe the position of music in film, and, potentially, the different ways in which the audience relates to it. It is to be hoped that, as scholarship goes forward, the most useful elements of that theory will be integrated into the historical, analytical study of this very important artistic genre.